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NUMBER 134 | SPRING 2021

Pebble Beach Resorts Enters Long-Term Agreement with Toro



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Michael Wells | Chief Executive, Carnoustie Golf Links



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"IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW SOON THE USGA AND THE R&A WILL
BACK DOWN AND ALLOW TRUMP'S PROPERTIES TO HOST MAJORS"

FAIR COMMENT

Whatever you think of Donald Trump and his presidency, it cannot be denied that he is a political figure the like of which has never before been seen in the USA. Whether one thinks that is a good or bad thing probably depends on one's level of partisanship.

I don't think he was good for the USA in the wider world, for diplomacy everywhere, and nor – of immediate concern for those of us in this industry – did he benefit the sport of golf. It was not positive PR to see the 'leader of the free world' playing golf when there were important issues demanding his attention at the White House – and he was, rightly, widely criticised. One can only hope that golf is not, once again, perceived as an elitist sport as a result.

Several tour operators of my acquaintance have decided to take a moral stance – courageously, in uncertain business times – not to place business at Trump golf courses in the UK and Ireland, and no doubt the Trump properties in the Middle East will also witness a backlash.

Similarly, it remains to be seen how soon the USGA and the R&A will back down and allow Trump's properties to host Majors. Any 'blacklisting' is a direct consequence of his actions as US president, but, these are not insurmountable issues for his golf venues.

Commercialism in sport demands short memories and a blind eye to be turned, and we are only a rebranding away from a return to pre-Trump 'normality'. If only it were that simple to put right everything else. **END**



Words

Michael Lenihan
Publisher

CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION ONLINE
at golfmanagement.eu.com

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publishing and communications

FEATURING

SPRING 2021



ALVARO VENEGAS

REAL CLUB DE GOLF GUADALMINA

"I went to England, when I was almost 18, with no English language skills, no job, no anything. I stayed with friends in London and worked as a kitchen porter wherever I could, trying to learn English."

18



CHRIS DUFFY

MODRY LAS

"I think I was the first general manager in the UK – especially among the CMAE which I'm a member of – to lose my job due to COVID, and I haven't been the last. But there seems always to be light at the end of the tunnel."

24



BEN STIMSON

ROYAL GREENS GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB

"Mass participation programmes form a key strategic pillar in Golf Saudi's vision and will be paramount to the future success of Royal Greens in helping to grow golf in Jeddah for Saudi nationals."

28



DAVE KELLY

GALWAY GOLF CLUB

"He said if you fall out with somebody in the hotel game you'll probably never see them again, whereas if you fall out with somebody in the club game, chances are they'll be coming through that door for the next 20 to 30 years."

36



MIKE WALDRON

CAROUSEL GOLFING

"I love the business; one of the great things about it is you meet so many great people, and you're always going to nice places to meet them. There aren't many golf courses constructed around the back of a dingy old gas works."

40

"WE ARE VERY EXCITED AND HONOURED TO ENTER THIS NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH PEBBLE BEACH RESORTS"



COVER STORY

TORO.COM



The Toro Company and Pebble Beach Resorts have finalised an agreement naming Toro as the Official Supplier of golf course maintenance equipment for Pebble Beach Resorts.

The partnership, which was announced in February, will see Toro supply equipment to the world-famous resort on the west coast of the United States which includes four world-renowned golf courses.

Commenting on the new agreement, Rick Olson, chairman and CEO of The Toro Company said: "We are very excited and honoured to enter this new partnership with Pebble Beach Resorts.

"Backed by our experienced and customer-focused distributor team at Turf Star Western, I have the highest confidence that we will be able to provide the very best turf maintenance equipment and support to one of the world's most iconic golf resorts in their commitment to maintaining the highest standards for players and guests."

The Pebble Beach Company owns and operates the world-famous Pebble Beach Resorts, including The Lodge at Pebble Beach, The Inn at Spanish Bay, and Casa Palmero.

In addition, the company also operates four world-class golf courses - Pebble Beach Golf Links; Spyglass Hill Golf Course; The Links at Spanish Bay and Del Monte Golf Course.

Canvassing the spectacular coastline that wraps around California's Monterey Penin-

sula, Pebble Beach is ranked as the number one golf resort in the United States, and has hosted the US Open Championship six times and the PGA Championship once.

More than any other course in America, Pebble Beach Golf Links is steeped in history, with every hole loaded with iconic moments from the annals of golf.

"Like Pebble Beach, the Toro name represents a 100-plus-year legacy of excellence and innovation," said John Sawin, vice president and director of golf for Pebble Beach Company. "We look forward to a long and fruitful partnership with Toro and the Turf Star Western team."

Added Sawin, "Our guests, whether they are competing for a US Open Championship or enjoying a bucket-list experience, expect our courses to be in prime condition year-round. In Toro, we know we have a partner who is as committed to exceeding those expectations as we are."

During the term of the agreement, Pebble Beach Resorts will host a number of important events that will include support from Toro and Turf Star Western.

Pebble Beach Golf Links will host its first US Women's Open in 2023, and the Men's US Open Championship will return for the seventh time in 2027.

Additionally, the annual AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am, Pure Insurance Championship, and the TaylorMade Pebble Beach Invitational events will all include support from Toro and Turf Star Western. **END**

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"IF I WAS HEADING INTO SEMI-RETIREMENT, I COULD AT LEAST ENJOY THE SOCIAL SIDE OF A SECTOR WHICH HAS PAID MY BILLS FOR THE LAST 20-ODD YEARS AND BECOME A MEMBER OF A GOLF CLUB"



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ON THE FRINGE

I don't know about you, but I can't wait for this lockdown to end. Hold on I'll take off my mask so you can hear me better.

As I was saying, I don't know about you, but I can't wait for this lockdown to end. Like many in our industry, I'm hoping that the possibility of employment will open up again. It's been nearly a year since I worked a day in an office and while the opportunity to watch Homes Under the Hammer and Bargain Hunt on an endless loop may appeal to some, it's not for me.

On the plus side – and it's made me even more on the plus side – I have rediscovered the joy of elevesens. This helps pass the endless hours of trawling job sites on the web and tweaking my CV to make myself look the ideal candidate for a warehouse packing job, even though the closest I've been to a warehouse is a visit to B&Q – just one of the potential employers who have rejected the opportunity to add me to their duty roster.

This time last year, my wife and I were very happy in our home of 23 years in east Hampshire. As she pointed out to me recently, we would not have seen ourselves ensconced in a pretty, chocolate-box Somerset village 12 months later, but that's what's happened. And, as beautiful and relaxing as it is, it was a move which was forced upon us by fiscal necessity. But, out of adversity comes opportunity, and, for a couple who planned to semi-retire at 60, it's just brought our plans forward a few years. To survive I still need to find some work either as a part-time staffer or as a freelance, but we are luckier than many, who still have the millstone of a mortgage around their neck. I wish them well as the frustration can affect one's mental health terribly.

Naturally, once all the boxes were unpacked I was online to check out local golf clubs. If I was heading into semi-retirement, I could at least enjoy the social side of a sector which has paid my bills for the last 20-odd years and become a member of a golf club for the first time.

In his leader to this edition of Golf Management, publisher Michael Lenihan says he hopes Donald Trump's actions won't encourage the old perception of golf as an elitist sport. It isn't – but let's not fool ourselves, it's not for everybody either. I'm not a pauper, but I can't afford a membership at the clubs around here.

Neither, it has to be said, can I continue to enjoy my lifetime passion of football at my favourite club – at anywhere between £25 and £60 to see a professional football match nowadays, it's no longer the preserve of the working man (or the semi-retired man in my case).

However, my local bowls club is welcoming members for just £15 per annum, which I'm happy to pay. And I'll restrict myself to the odd social, pay-and-play round of golf and the occasional visit to a non-league football ground. I'm not prepared to give up everything. **END**



NEWS IN BRIEF

GOLFMANAGEMENT.EU.COM/NEWS



CLUBNET APP APPOINT JERRY KILBY AS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

ClubNet App, a club management software company owned by Irish technology company Golfgraffix, has appointed experienced club management consultant Jerry Kilby as their business development consultant. Since 2011 Golfgraffix have been supplying numerous areas of the worldwide golf industry with innovative technology solutions for all facets of the game and have worked with over 1,000 golf clubs worldwide. With the acquisition of ClubNet in 2017, Golfgraffix launched the ClubNet App product which is a full software platform for the management of a golf club.

SEARCH 'JERRY KILBY' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



MOTOCADDY EXTENDS GAME-CHANGING GPS RANGE

Motocaddy has previewed plans to extend its pioneering GPS range from two to five game-changing models this year, while also becoming the first brand to introduce cellular connectivity on its top-end products. "This year is shaping up to be the biggest in Motocaddy's history — beating last year, which itself saw record growth despite the challenges brought about by the COVID pandemic," said CEO, John Helas.

SEARCH 'MOTOCADDY' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



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BRS GOLF HIGHLIGHTS THE TRUE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON GOLF IN 2020

The date is set for golf's return in England and golfers and golf clubs alike are looking forward to March 29 when play will resume. But what has the true impact of Covid-19 been on club operations and golfer behaviour? The results of a comprehensive survey of golf clubs in the UK and Ireland by technology provider BRS Golf by GolfNow highlights the effects of COVID-19 on revenue, membership and attitudes to technology among golf club managers.

SEARCH 'BRS GOLF' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



CHARLETON GOLF CLUB APPOINTS LEGACY GOLF ADVISORS LLP

Legacy Golf Advisors LLP (LGA) has been appointed to manage Charleton Golf Club on the Charleton Estate in Fife, Scotland. The Bonde family, owners of the Estate, are embarking on a development plan for the Estate and growing the golf business is key to this, and have appointed LGA to work alongside the current team at Charleton. Offering management support across all departments, LGA plans to focus on increasing membership numbers, sales, marketing, and agronomy.

SEARCH 'LEGACY GOLF ADVISORS' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



QUINTA DO LAGO ECO-BLUEPRINT SHINES LIGHT TO PATH AFTER LOCKDOWN

As one of Europe's premier golf destinations, Quinta do Lago is well aware of the need to adapt and change and has created a blueprint for the return of golfers and their families post-Covid-19, with the long-term focus on sustainability, mental wellbeing and the environment. The Portuguese resort has laid the foundations for life after the pandemic by promoting a multi-tiered plan with the emphasis on outdoor living and incorporating three key principles: to foster nature, conserve resources and support the community.

SEARCH 'QUINTA DO LAGO' ONLINE

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TROON ABU DHABI EXPERIENCE THE EXTRA BENEFITS OF THE AIR2G2

Troon Abu Dhabi is using the Air2G2 Air Inject from Campey Turf Care Systems to further their aeration programme at Abu Dhabi Golf Club, Saadiyat Beach Golf Club and Yas Links Abu Dhabi. Keeping these world-renowned courses to the highest standards is the job of group head mechanic Troon Abu Dhabi Properties, Richard Koen, who oversees the machinery used by each greenkeeping team. Initially sceptical, Koen now sees the Air2G2 as a vital part of the operation.

SEARCH 'AIR2G2' ONLINE

golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



BIENVENUE, BIENVENIDO TO WOMEN'S GOLF DAY'S NEW MULTILINGUAL WEBSITE

In response to the continued growth of its global network, Women's Golf Day (WGD) is unveiling three new language versions of its website to reflect the diverse nature of the WGD community and WGD's commitment to diversity and inclusion. The site is now available in French, Spanish and Japanese – the primary languages spoken by its users – and foreign language content will be also integrated into WGD's social media activity in preparation for the June 1, 2021 event day.

SEARCH 'WOMEN'S GOLF DAY' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



R&A TO SUBMIT PLANNING APPLICATION FOR NEW FACILITY IN GLASGOW

The R&A is submitting a planning application to Glasgow City Council for the construction of a new community golf facility that it is hoped will open in the summer of 2022. The project aims to redevelop the existing public course at Lethamhill to create a family-focussed venue that provides access to a nine-hole course, Par 3 course, putting greens, short-game area, adventure golf and a 25-bay floodlit driving range for visitors to enjoy a wide range of golf activities, including shorter forms of the sport.

SEARCH 'LETHAMHILL' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story

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CAMPEY TURF CARE SYSTEMS APPOINT SOLE INDONESIAN DEALER

PT. Adam Elis Servis, operating as AESCo.SEA has recently been appointed as the sole dealer of Campey Turf Care Systems products for Indonesia. Air 2G2, Imants, KORO by Imants and Campey Turf Care Systems products will all be available from the Jakarta-based company who want to give customers access to machinery that can help them enhance the standards of natural turf pitches and golf courses, of which there are almost 150 in the country.

SEARCH 'CAMPEY' ONLINE

golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



EGYPT'S MADINATY GOLF CLUB CHOOSES CLUB CAR

Club Car has supplied a fleet of cars to Madinaty Golf Club, a new luxury golf destination in the suburbs of Cairo, Egypt. The gated community, which opened in late 2020, boasts a stunning Robert Trent Jones-designed 18-hole championship course and a nine-hole footgolf course, as well swimming pools, fitness facilities, a spa and three fine-dining restaurants. The Troon-managed development has implemented 60 Tempo cars – ten of which are the four-passenger model – and two Utility vehicles for the upkeep of the golf courses and facilities.

SEARCH 'CLUB CAR' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



CALLE CARLSSON APPOINTED EUROPEAN SALES DIRECTOR FOR THE BUCKET PROS

Following the success of The Bucket Pros unique method of increasing driving range revenue in Sweden, the company is now ready to bring their exciting new offering to the European market. "To lead our expansion across Europe required a dream candidate and we are delighted and extremely proud to announce that Calle Carlsson has been appointed as the new European sales director," says Andreaz Lindberg, CEO, The Bucket Pros.

SEARCH 'CALLE CARLSSON' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story

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ALVARO VENEGAS

DIRECTOR OF GOLF, REAL CLUB DE GOLF GUADALMINA



If the experts are correct that it takes just three seconds for someone to evaluate you, then your correspondent shouldn't have warmed to Alvaro Venegas.

Restricted as we are to interviews by Zoom calls, my first emotion when 28-year-old Venegas said "Hi!" was envy. Here was a handsome, young man – two attributes I do not possess – sitting outside his apartment in a T-shirt, with blue sky all around, in 20-degree temperatures. In February.

But I did warm to him. His story is inspiring, and should act as a wake-up call for those whose upbringing has afforded them a well-paid job because they were born with a silver six-iron in their hand.

He explained: "I was born in Cádiz and learned my golf at Arcos Gardens. I used to ride motorbikes when I was younger and, at that stage, I hated golf.

"But the town was offering free lessons and my parents forced me to go along. I met the pro there, Andrew Laird, and I came to regard him as a sort of older-brother figure, a person to follow.

"At first he was my teacher; then he became my best friend and, somehow, I started following in his footsteps.

"I realised I needed to earn a living and get some food for home, so, after three years, I asked Andrew what he thought. I wasn't very academic and he suggested I travel to England and take the PGA exams.

"I went to England, when I was almost 18, with no English language skills, no job, no anything. I stayed with friends in London and worked as a kitchen porter wherever I could, trying to learn English.

"On my days off I would take the Underground to the end of the line and see the golf courses I could visit to talk to the head pro and hand over my CV.

"In a month I'd found a job at Mytime Active. They were really good to me. This was in extremis; I didn't have enough money to survive. When they offered me the interview, I was working six days a week; I asked the restaurant where I was working for a day off to attend the interview and they said 'no'.

"So I had to make a choice: go to the interview or keep working there. So I quit, went to the interview and was lucky enough to get the job. For a month and a half, until I'd raised enough money to rent closer to the job, I was waking at 5am to take two Underground trains and a bus to get to work.

"I loved it and they said I could study for my PGA qualifications. But they quickly realised my English wasn't very good and got me started washing buggies – which was hard work compared to Spain – and my English got better and better."

It was tough, but Venegas realises, now, it was a life-affirming experience.

"It was a real adventure; it changed my life. I went as a kid – I'd never left home or anything – and came back so much more mature. It made me grow both as a person and as a professional.

"My family weren't having a good time and I didn't want them to have to support me and give me money so that was another reason to go. I used to hate golf, but now I'm obsessed with it."

Having spent a few years in England he began to miss Spain and, in 2013, moved to





"WITH MORE REMOTE WORKING, I BELIEVE WE'LL HAVE A LOT OF PEOPLE MOVING TO THEIR SECOND HOMES HERE AND THEY'LL BE LOOKING FOR MEMBERSHIPS"

Anantara Villa Padierna Palace, in Marbella, as a PGA pro, while supporting the director of golf as a de facto golf operations manager.

He admits he didn't enjoy the tuition part of the job – "I wasn't a good teacher" – much preferring the operations side of the business. And, in November 2017, he became director of golf operations at nearby Los Naranjos.

He recalled: "Our main goal was to position Los Naranjos in an international market and we decided to do that through the [customer-service analysis specialist] 59club platform.

"In our first year we were awarded 59club's silver flag for service excellence and the goal was to get a gold flag, which we achieved in the second year, and we did it – on one course with 200 rounds per day – with a staff of just five working each day.

"That's quite a small number of staff to support that number of people and provide a gold-standard service. So, I was looking for a new challenge."

And it came with 'challenges' nobody could have foreseen, as he moved, in February 2020, to Real Club de Golf Guadalmina, at the beginning of the global pandemic. It was a baptism of fire, but he continues to regard every challenge as a positive.

He said: "I got a lot of support from the GM, and the board of directors and we did a lot of back-office work! From February to July 1, the members were trying to buy the club and, now, it's owned by 2,000 members and it's a completely different business: less about profit and more about a better member experience."

And at the end of what must have been a challenging year for both Real Club de Golf Guadalmina and Venegas, the club hosted the final event on the Ladies European Tour in November – the Andalucía Costa del Sol Open de España which was won by Kristine Pedersen of Denmark.

And with a Tour event under his belt, Venegas is looking forward to a better year in 2021.

"I think the future for members' clubs in this part of Spain is going to be very bright," said Venegas confidently.

"After everything we've been through people are starting to realise what is important in life, and, with more remote working, I believe we'll have a lot of people moving to their second homes here and they'll be looking for memberships in clubs in south-west Spain."

He added: "I wanted to prove myself and show I could meet the needs of a larger facility. That motivates me. In the future I don't see myself purely managing golf.

"I'm studying for a BA Hons in international hospitality and hotel management; it's hard studying for so many hours after work, but, thankfully, I passed everything in my first year. So I see myself managing a resort in the future, but we're talking about another five or ten years' time.

"I want to keep studying and keep getting better. I looked at the profiles of people I admire – the people who manage Quinta do Lago, PGA Catalunya, Verdura Resort, and Finca Cortesin – and I realised all had gone through a period of study in hospitality. This study will open doors for me in the future."

The young Spaniard works and studies hard and is clearly ambitious. But one doesn't need to scratch too far below the surface to discover what he treasures most in life. And it's not a fancy job title.

"I'm always looking forward, to my next project, the next challenge. But I've got to be happy. I feel I've been lucky in life. My greatest achievement? It's probably being happy with my world and with my life and just realising that. Particularly at this time, when you see the things happening around you – a close friend of my mother's died recently from COVID – you realise you have just got to be happy. Good things will come in the future."

In advance of our interview the people I spoke to about Venegas said he was a team player and a good motivational leader. With such a refreshing attitude it's not hard to see why. **END**



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OPERATIONS

IMG provide golf club management and specialist consultancy services to some of the finest golf facilities in the world and are uniquely placed to offer operational support through our team of industry leading professionals, who have extensive international experience providing global and local expertise. Our operations team are actively involved in providing the support required to reach the goals and objectives of each facility.

There has perhaps never been a more appropriate time to evaluate the customer service sequence and refine standard operating procedures (SOP's) to ensure member and guest satisfaction. In many countries around the world, golf has seen an unprecedented rise in popularity and a positive trend in membership sales.

Creating tools to retain these new members and loyal long-standing members is a constant and important element for venues and it's arguably more important than ever to make an objective assessment of the club's customer experience.

IMG believe that consistency is the key to building strong relationships with members and guests whilst improving the overall customer experience. Creating thorough standard operating procedures not only helps to cement good relationships with members and guests, but also helps building the club's reputation and the brand which can be converted into tangible income. Creating and implementing these standard processes can save time, improve communication, prevent mistakes and empowers the workforce.

During the review phase of the service sequence, we collaborate with the facility operations team to meticulously map out the desired outcomes for the member and guest journey to ensure this aligns with the objectives of the club, which are then carefully blended into standard operation procedure documents. IMG provide the golf operations team with standard operating procedures that have been crafted throughout our 30 plus years of golf course management experience and are sympathetic to regional and local cultural differences, which underpins our belief that there is no "one size fits all" in today's golf business environment.

A member of worldclass.golf, Zala Springs Golf Resort joined the IMG portfolio in 2019 and features a Robert Trent Jones II designed course, located in the stunning Hungarian countryside. Sonja Gschwendtner, club manager at Zala Springs Golf Resort commented: "Our aspirations of becoming an internationally recognised golf resort through offering world-class service took a leap forward through the operational support provided by the IMG team.

"It has been extremely rewarding to witness the operational staff grow in confidence through the IMG training and implementation of SOP's and hear the positive feedback from members and guests alike." **END**



Words Christopher Stratford
Photography Modry Las, Mark Alexander

CHRIS DUFFY

GENERAL MANAGER, MODRY LAS



As soon as UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced the first COVID-19 lockdown in March last year ripples of apprehension began to spread about probable job losses, including within the golfing industry.

It did not take long before forecasts about the economic consequences of lockdown transformed those ripples into a tide and among the first swept away – within just 15 days – was Chris Duffy, then general manager at Huddersfield Golf Club.

"I think I was the first general manager in the UK – especially among the CMAE which I'm a member of – to lose my job due to COVID, and I haven't been the last," says 38-year-old Duffy. "But there seems always to be light at the end of the tunnel even if you don't always really see it at the start."

The light for this globe-trotter from Teesside was the opportunity to become general manager at Modry Las Resort, PGA National, situated in Choszczno in north Poland and boasting a course designed by nine-time major winner Gary Player.

Duffy and Scooby, his 13-year-old Saluki dog who has been with him since his days in Doha, where he was event manager of the Commercial Bank Qatar Masters and head of operations at Doha Golf Club, have quickly settled in to life in a country that he describes as "beautiful" and an "emerging market" in the golf tourism industry.

"The tagline I use for this resort is 'Where Golf Meets Nature'," he reveals with obvious excitement about a venue owned and created by Arthur Gromadzki, a Swiss-based investment banker who was born and raised in Choszczno.

"The course is great – Gary Player doesn't design a bad course – and you have so much wildlife. You have dzik, wild boar, you've got deer, you've got eagles, you've got beavers. Every hole is individual and Gary Player designed it so that you don't see any other hole than the one you're playing."

This seclusion within the course is emblematic of Modry Las, which Duffy acknowledges is "a bit remote", being around 50 miles from the nearest main city – and airport – Szczecin. "But when you get here," he emphasises, "you really don't need to leave."

"Everything you need is here – the golf course, a recently-opened 2,000 square metre clubhouse, the spa, the hotel accommodation for 50 guests across three types of accommodation."

"We've got clubhouse rooms upstairs, garden suites which overlook the 16th hole, then we've got three cottages which are self-contained with a kitchen and living room, and we've got a private house as well."

"So the place has a variety of accommodation depending on if you're coming with family and kids or whether you're coming as a group of ladies or a group of guys, couples, we can mix and match. Yeah... it's fun."

The climate, particularly during winter, has offered a stark contrast to that which he became used to in Doha, but just as he adapted to the heat there Duffy has acclimatised in Poland, and has also fully embraced the lifestyle.

"I love the lifestyle here," he enthuses. "Just simple things like farmers' markets, you can literally go to the fish farm, which is 5km



"I WANT TO LEARN POLISH, I'M COMMITTED TO COMING HERE, BUT IF YOU TRY TO READ POLISH YOU'VE GOT NO CHANCE. THERE'S SO MANY D'S AND J'S AND Z'S TOGETHER"

from here, you can go to the bio farm where they are growing every vegetable you could want. We have a French chef here at Modry Las who is committed to trying to keep us using as much product from local suppliers as possible."

He patiently spells out names mentioned during the interview, and chuckles when asked about how his Polish is coming along.

"It's the hardest language in the world," he laughs. "Wherever I've worked, whether it was in Qatar or Spain – or Yorkshire – I've always tried to learn or at least understand the language.

"But Polish is a language that is nothing like I've ever heard before and very difficult. I've got the basics – it's like any language, you learn the bad words first!

"I want to learn Polish, I'm committed to coming here, but if you try to read Polish you've got no chance. There's so many d's and j's and z's together. For me, it's more important for me that I can say good morning, good afternoon, good evening, count, say days of the week, months of the year, say how are you? and I'm fine. These sort of things.

"When it comes to members' emails, at the moment I draft them in English and the course manager does the translations for me."

Modry Las currently has 200 members, 150 of whom live outside of 70km away – just over 40 miles – and Duffy hopes to persuade more people in the Choszczno region to take up the game.

"In Poland, golf is still seen as quite an elite sport," he continues, "so one of my missions this year is to break down that invisible barrier at the front gate for the locals; try to get them to come in and use the resort, use the restaurant, create different events at the resort – if COVID allows – things like family brunches or family days, just to try to get people into the resort for events that are not always necessarily related to golf.

"At the moment we have the sort of invisible barrier that, 'oh, that's only for the foreigners', or 'that's only for the rich' and I'm trying to balance that up a bit."

Duffy is also optimistic that Modry Las, which sits a two-and-a-half-hour drive from Berlin, will prove successful at attracting visitors from further afield assuming that there is some easing of travel restrictions.

"I think we're going to have a really good year this year, because the Germans, the Swedes, the Norwegians, the Danish and the Polish, who normally escape to play golf in Spain or France or wherever, in the summer-time, I just don't think that's going to happen this year," he posits.

"I think they're going to look for destinations that are available by car."

It was Huddersfield Golf Club's understandable concerns about the loss of potential revenue from events such as weddings and the like that helped point Duffy towards Poland.

Following his redundancy he decided to reach out to Modry Las owner Gromadzki – who he met at the Club Managers Association of America world conference in February 2020 – but while he regrets having to leave after little more than a year in Yorkshire, he is excited about the prospects at Modry Las.

"This place has so much potential," beams Duffy excitedly. "We have the possibility to expand into other areas such as fishing, kayaking, tennis, cycling, walking – there's so many options here. The potential to grow is amazing.

"But the main focus here is still golf – golf and conferences – and out on the course you've got five tee boxes so if you want to test yourself off the black tees at around 7,200m, go ahead.

"But you can go forward either to white, yellow, red or blue. We also have a nine-hole par-3 course that's lovely, too, for families, and beginners or junior golfers, or people who just want to go and test their short-game skills. It's perfect."

Modry Las Golf Resort has been named Poland's Best Golf Course on five occasions in its 12-year history, emphasising its standing within the country. Duffy plans to extend that recognition much further afield, in Europe and beyond. **END**

BEN STIMSON

DIRECTOR OF GOLF, ROYAL GREENS GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB



"Since moving to the Middle East from the UK in September 2015, I have been fortunate enough to work with some exceptional leaders who have guided me incredibly well through my Troon International journey so far," stated Ben Stimson, director of golf at Royal Greens in Saudi Arabia.

A fully-qualified PGA professional, Stimson began his career working for Crown Golf before moving into his first sales role with Foxhills Resort in Surrey.

A year later, he relocated to the Kingdom of Bahrain, and took up the position of golf operations and sales manager at Royal Golf Club, managed by Troon.

"The operational excellence that you are exposed to by working at Troon International managed facilities is second to none and this has been a huge benefit to the development of my capabilities in the golf industry," he said.

Moving from a typically sales background into operations came with challenges however, and understanding the environment and best practices took the 33-year-old time to learn from the senior team.

After a couple of years plying his trade in Bahrain, he moved to Zorah Golf Club, Ajman in the UAE, and shifted his focus to golf operations dropping the sales element from his role. Then, in April 2019, Stimson's personal journey expanded as he left the UAE to assume the position of director of golf at Royal Greens Golf and Country Club in Saudi Arabia.

"I was extremely excited to undergo my first director of golf role," said Stimson. "It had always been a career aspiration of

mine, so inevitably I was nervous about my capabilities and experience before taking on the role.

"Working at Al Zorah Golf Club was the most valuable part of my career to date, without a shadow of a doubt. At a Troon International managed facility, things are achieved with excellence and Al Zorah was no exception.

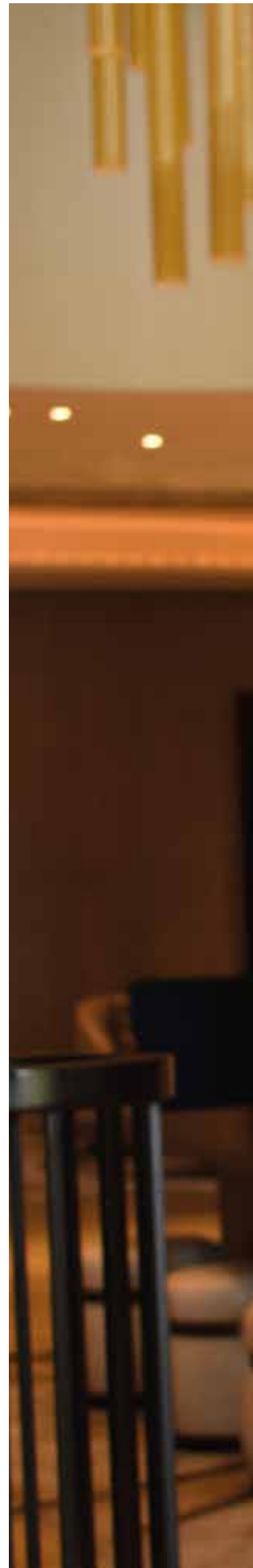
"The time I got to spend with Philip Henderson, the general manager helped me to grow as a leader. The mentorship and coaching, education pathways, personal development and operational standards provided by Philip was very aspiring and I will be eternally grateful for that.

"When I made the move to Royal Greens, my first impression was simply, wow, as the facility has everything," Stimson recalls.

"Furthermore, the club showcased the world's best golfers in only its second year of operation for the 2019 Saudi International, which was a huge achievement for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

"The golf course is extremely well designed, and Dave Sampson and the European Golf Design team have done an incredible job in offering a unique layout that is both fun and challenging.

"For the 2020 Saudi International, Graeme McDowell won the tournament with an overall score of -12, proving what a stern test, the course provides to the world's best, especially when the wind is up. Moreover, the condition of the course is exceptional and the pure dynasty paspalum turfgrass offers members and guests exceptional playing surfaces, all-year-round."





"GOLF SAUDI AND THE SAUDI GOLF FEDERATION ARE WORKING TIRELESSLY TO HELP GROW THE GAME OF GOLF IN SAUDI ARABIA"

Royal Greens Golf & Country Club, situated in King Abdullah Economic City (KAEC) is 120 kilometers away from Jeddah, the nearest city with a population of three million.

"With approximately 150 registered golfers in Jeddah, golf is a developing sport in this region, and a totally different model to the UAE, which has thousands of residential golfers plus a big tourism sector to help provide a sustainable level of business to the facility," said Stimson.

"That said, Golf Saudi and the Saudi Golf Federation are working tirelessly to help grow the game of golf in Saudi Arabia. Mass participation programmes form a key strategic pillar in Golf Saudi's vision and will be paramount to the future success of Royal Greens in helping to grow golf in Jeddah for Saudi nationals.

"The hosting of both the Saudi International and Saudi Ladies International last November – the first ever female golfing event in Saudi Arabia – should help grow the game. Bringing the world's best golfers to Royal Greens and inspiring Saudi nationals [to take up golf] is something we are all very passionate about."

Golf Saudi, headed up by Majed Al-Sorour as CEO and His Excellency Yasir Al-Rumayyan as chairman, collectively have a bold trajectory planned for the future of the game in line with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.

The implementation of these sporting events is a big stepping-stone to help inspire, motivate, and educate Saudi nationals and provide them with playing and educational pathways for years to come.

The development of new courses across the Kingdom, practice facilities and social environments such as crazy golf are all on the agenda in the near future.

Another huge opportunity came in January 2020 with the release of the Tourism visa for international visitors, although the global pandemic has stunted international travel.

"At Royal Greens, we will be working hard to establish relationships with International Tour Operators and showcasing the club and KAEC as a golfing tourist destination," said Stimson.

Located only an hour away from the new Jeddah International Airport and offering world-class hotel facilities, Royal Greens has all the necessary facilities to grow the golfing tourism sector.

February 2021 saw the launch of the Troon Royal Greens Pro-Am supported by Golf Saudi, which was inaugurated to help grow the tourism sector and offer further playing opportunities for the Saudi Arabia National team.

"However, due to COVID-19 travel complications and restrictions, we made the decision to postpone the event to December 2021, and will focus our marketing & PR efforts throughout 2021 to continue to showcase this unique playing opportunity for amateurs and club professionals."

Like most businesses around the world, there is no question that COVID-19 has had a detrimental impact on the momentum of Royal Greens Golf & Country Club.

"We have had to review and amend many operating procedures, and had to close our golf course to members and guests for 96 days," said Stimson, who also confirmed that many staff members were unable to travel back to their homelands due to travel restrictions.

"2020 was a very challenging year, however we are firmly focused on looking forward to a productive and successful 2021 and beyond. We have multiple professional tours events scheduled, and we are excited to watch the course shine in all its glory.

"Overall, the future is very bright for Royal Greens and golf in Saudi Arabia," added Stimson.

"We work very closely with industry experts including Troon International and Golf Saudi, and with this wealth of experience, knowledge and passion, the future is extremely bright.

"Furthermore, we have an incredible team at Royal Greens in all areas from agronomy, sales and Marketing, F&B, finance & HR and facility maintenance and it really is a pleasure coming into work every day and working with like-minded individuals to achieve our overall club objectives." **END**



PALHEIRO GOLF, MADEIRA

PALHEIROGOLF.COM

Words Pete Simm

Photography Nuno Andrade, Peter Corden

It's a well-known fact in golf circles that Cabell B. Robinson has designed some of the most famous and recognisable golf courses in Europe.

Aphrodite Hills, Praia D'El Rey, La Reserva and Finca Cortesin – venue for the 2023 Solheim Cup – the names just trip off the tongue and all bear the stamp of the world-renowned American architect.

But did you know that you'll find another of his finest creations if you venture a little further afield on the continent and head to the idyllic island destination of Madeira?

The venue in question is Palheiro Golf, just a short drive away from Madeira's capital, Funchal.

Opened in 1993, the course is situated within the magnificent Palheiro Estate, which is more than 200 years old.

Arguably one of Robinson's finest course designs in Europe, it is one of three outstanding 18-hole layouts on the Portuguese archipelago with Clube de Golfe do Santo da Serra and Porto Santo, and together, they have combined to impressive effect to help make the island one of Europe's most popular emerging golf destinations.

Palheiro's layout borders the five-star Hotel Casa Velha do Palheiro and meanders through a pristine environment of maritime pine and botanical woodland, garnished with lush, sub-tropical vegetation.

At nearly 1,640ft above sea level, it's pretty spectacular with the location enjoying dramatic views of Madeira's mountainous skyline and the vast Atlantic Ocean, as well as – nestling below, just ten minutes away from Funchal.







"ANYONE WHO HAS BEEN FULLY VACCINATED AGAINST THE VIRUS WILL BE EXEMPT FROM THE MANDATORY FREE TESTING PROCEDURE"

The par-72, 6,656-yard course takes full advantage of Madeira's hilly terrain, with abrupt ridges and deep valleys. It is listed inside continental Europe's top 200 in one benchmark course ranking, and the presence of a splendid hotel, secured a spot for Palheiro in the top 80 in two recent 'best European golf resort' lists.

For non-golfers, Casa Velha do Palheiro offers the ideal place to relax and unwind, with facilities including a luxury hotel, spa with indoor and outdoor pools and more than 20 kilometres of nature trails, bird-watching, restaurants and bars.

Up until recently, Madeira has been more well-known globally for its wine than its golf offering but times have changed, and the islands' golf product is living proof of what can be achieved with a clear and coherent national strategy, and with golf clubs, hotels and tourist boards all pulling in the same direction.

While many sectors of the golf-travel industry have struggled to adapt to the changing needs of Covid-19, it's been a more positive story in Madeira, with the archipelago one of the few travel success stories during the pandemic.

Players from the UK and across northern Europe headed in increasing numbers last autumn to enjoy world-class golf and numerous other attractions in a safe and secure environment.

And Madeira is in prime position to be a favoured destination again when international travel resumes, with Discover Madeira – the consumer-facing brand of the Madeira Promotion Bureau – already having published updated guidelines for incoming visitors who have been vaccinated or have recovered from Covid-19.

In addition to Palheiro, Madeira features two other breathtaking courses – Clube de Golfe do Santo da Serra, also on the mainland, and Porto Santo.

Robert Trent Jones Snr's redesign of Santo da Serra – which dates originally from 1937 – in 1991 created a spectacular 27-hole complex in one of Europe's most beautiful natural landscapes, with views of Porto Santo and the bay of Machico.

The Machico and Desertas nines form the 6,825-yard championship course on which

the European Tour's Madeira Islands Open was held on ten occasions.

The third and fourth on the Machico are regarded as the signature holes, sitting atop cliffs more than 2,200ft above the Atlantic.

If you're looking for something a little less demanding but equally as enjoyable, try the 3,193-yard Serras course which offers a delightful alternative, with lakes and mountain views along flatter terrain.

A short, 20-minute flight – or a two-and-a-half hour boat cruise – will cover the 27 miles between Madeira and the archipelago's eastern-most island, Porto Santo, home to the islands' third course, Porto Santo Golfe, which hosted the Madeira Islands Open between 2009 and 2011.

Laid out by Severiano Ballesteros, the 7,036-yard course, which opened in 2004 and was built to environmentally conscious standards, comprises two distinct nines, spanning an area from sand dunes to basalt cliffs.

The US-style southern route is dotted with lakes, requiring a long, precise game; while the northern route is atop yet more fantastic cliffs, near a stunning beach, also called Porto Santo. The signature hole is undoubtedly the 200-yard, par-three 13th, which requires a shot over a gorge to reach a cliff-top green.

With a selection of quality hotel, self-catering and all-inclusive options, Madeira has all angles covered when it comes to choosing the accommodation and location for a golf holiday.

The choice is just as good away from the fairways, with dolphin and whale-watching trips, nature jeep tours, climbing and canyoning and an array of restaurants serving the finest local cuisine among the treats on offer.

And with stringent rules in place for everyone flying into Madeira airport to maintain utmost safety during the Covid-19 pandemic – anyone who has been fully vaccinated against the virus will be exempt from the mandatory free testing procedure upon arrival, providing they present official documentation – Madeira appears to have all angles covered to allow golf travel to get back to something approaching normal.

Now I'll raise a glass to that. **END**

DAVE KELLY

GENERAL MANAGER, GALWAY GOLF CLUB



Galway Golf Club's general manager, Dave Kelly, was managing hotels until he moved into the club management business in 2014 – in 2022, he is slated to take over as president of the Irish Golf & Club Managers Association (IGCMA), such has been his impact in the sector.

The 46-year-old began his hospitality career in 1990 with junior roles at the Ferrycarrig Hotel, in Wexford, much to the chagrin of his parents, who had failed in their attempts to talk him out of working in the sector.

He explained: "There's no history of hotel management or catering in the family. My mum was a primary school principal and my dad worked with heavy machinery all his life, but it was always something I was drawn to.

"They tried to talk me out of it because of the long, unsociable hours, but I'm glad I did it. I enjoyed the roles I had in that business and sometimes I feel as if I may have won the family round.

"I have two teenage girls now, and neither of them want to go anywhere near the business, though, so perhaps that tells you everything," he smiled. "They think I'm mad!"

Having worked his way up through various management positions to that of GM at the four-star Westwood Hotel, in Galway, it was at the behest of some members he knew that Kelly put himself forward for the vacancy at Galway Golf Club, the first time he had contemplated allowing his hobby – he was a single-figure handicapper while at college – to become his living.

He recalled: "I was involved in a fundraiser that took place at the club every year and got to know some of the members through

that. When the position here became available, I was approached by a couple of them who suggested I might be a good candidate for the club. I put my name forward and I've been here for almost seven years so far as a result.

"I remember one of those members gave me some very good advice on my first day here – he said if you fall out with somebody in the hotel game you'll probably never see them again, whereas if you fall out with somebody in the club game, chances are they'll be coming through that door for the next 20 to 30 years.

"I took that on board and used it as good counsel, as it's very true. Not that I have a habit of falling out with people," he laughed.

"The biggest difference is that you're dealing with recurring members – and recurring memberships – on an annual basis, as opposed to what can be pretty transient business in the hotel game. If you can't satisfy their demands in a hotel they're not going to return – they vote with their feet – whereas the commitment from a club to its member is much greater, so, if there is some discourse between club and member, that's not going to resolve itself quite as easily.

"So, it's important to keep that kind of stuff at bay as much as possible."

He achieved his diploma in hotel management in 1999, at what is regarded as Ireland's national catering college – the Technological University Dublin – and spent a total of 18 years in the hospitality sector; so why did those members – and the prospect of equally long hours – persuade him to change?



"IF YOU CAN'T SATISFY THEIR DEMANDS IN A HOTEL THEY'RE NOT GOING TO RETURN – THEY VOTE WITH THEIR FEET – WHEREAS THE COMMITMENT FROM A CLUB TO ITS MEMBER IS MUCH GREATER"

He said: "I've always loved golf – since I started playing at my home club Enniscorthy aged 12 or 13 – so that was a big part of the appeal, while Galway is probably regarded as the premier members' club on the western seaboard.

"Even though we're looking out over Galway Bay and the Aran Islands we're still pretty much just outside the city centre, so from both a club and location perspective it's seen as one of the best clubs west of the Shannon. So the draw of that – and the golf – was obviously a big factor when it came to making the decision to move."

Like all GMs he found 2020 a testing time. But Galway's popularity and the high-regard in which it is held insured it against some of the pandemic issues and Kelly appreciates his club fared better than many.

"I think we've coped pretty well with COVID," he said. "We're probably the outlier in a lot of respects because of the size of our membership and we have a fairly sizable entrance fee that hovers around the €10,000 mark, which is pretty unusual for a club on the west coast (they also manage to retain upwards of 80 to 90 people on their 'expression of interest' list).

"We sort of buck the trend of most clubs nationally, who will be struggling for members and won't have an entry fee."

Regarding COVID he added: "There's no manual we could refer to, but the two management-development programmes I had completed with the Club Managers Association of Europe were very helpful in putting a structure in place, which at least gave you the foundations to be able to deal with the challenges.

"Our own IGCMA has also been hugely beneficial because we've been a shoulder for each other to lean on particularly over the last 12 months. We have a weekly Zoom call, with upwards of 60-65 fellow club managers often sitting in and where everybody talks about their own challenges and how they've overcome them.

"We adapted pretty quickly and availed ourselves of the government support which was available but which has pretty much dried up since, in our case.

"That allowed us to stay on course while we were closed, keep our staff on the books to maintain the course, and to break even last year. In fact the biggest challenge we had, once we reopened, was trying to accommodate the massive level of demand from our members. We had huge pressure on our timesheets and cancelled all of our non-member business from May right through to the end of the year.

"That wiped about €200,000 off our books, but even then we still had members who were unhappy with more limited access. I understand that."

Mention of the sterling work of the IGCMA turns the conversation to his own elevation into the hierarchy. "I was asked if I'd be interested in putting myself forward for president of the IGCMA for the two-year period from 2022, which was a great honour.

"The AGM is upcoming shortly and I will be delighted to be able to follow John McCormack in the position, if elected. John is widely regarded an excellent manager and is one of only a few certified club managers in Ireland. He's been instrumental in leading the association through the last year and I will have big shoes to fill no doubt."

Such a relatively rapid rise in golf will not have gone under the radar, but, diplomatically, Kelly insists his focus is on the short-to-medium term with his current employer.

He said: "I'm very happy here in Galway. One of the bonuses of working at Galway is its reputation as a premier club so I suppose opportunities to improve on that along the western seaboard at least, would be limited. There aren't many clubs West of the Shannon for which you'd consider leaving Galway.

"My focus is to maximise the potential here at Galway over the next few years – get the much vaunted governance changes and maybe some course upgrade works agreed by the members and progressed into operation.

"I suppose I'd then take stock and see what additionally there is to do. This business evolves like all others; you get one item done and there are two or three more needing your attention." **END**





Words David Bowers
Photography Christina Pettigrew

MIKE WALDRON

MANAGING DIRECTOR, CAROUSEL GOLFING



It takes some cojones to launch a new business aged 50, but Mike Waldron did just that with Carousel Golfing – and celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.

But Waldron, now 75, is prepared to take risks: for here was a man who built – and flew – his own replica World War I bi-plane. His passions for golf and aviation came from a young age, as he was very much a product of his environment.

He explained: “Having grown up at Prestwick, where my dad ran the airport, my enjoyment was across the garden wall. The location of our house meant I jumped over one wall and I was on the golf course, and, over another, I was on the airfield, so I grew up in-between the two loves of my life. As it turned out I went into golf for business and flying for fun.”

He certainly struck lucky with his first job in golf, working with one of the UK’s legendary coaches and administrators: John Jacobs.

Waldron recalled: “I left school and went straight into golf – literally, left school on the Friday and started in golf on the Monday – with John, at Sandy Lodge, in 1963. That exposed me to the teaching of the great man which put me in good stead for my whole career.

“It was a vicious winter; the snow was about a foot deep and my first job was to dig out the practice balls from the snow and return them to John’s teaching bay. At the time I thought ‘I’m not too keen on this pro golfer life,’” he laughed.

“The last pro job I had was on the continent and I had an idea about a golf-bag storage system.

“I rolled it around in my head for some time and, one day, just started the company with about £350.”

Initially, the Carousel was manufactured in Europe and sales were concentrated in the UK and Ireland, but the business grew and he took the simple concept to the USA, Canada and the Caribbean, among other places. He designed the units to be built in component form and assembled on-site, because, as he explained, “particularly with the original model, you’d be shipping air if you sent the complete product.”

He added: “I’d seen something vaguely similar to it but it wasn’t a commercial proposition at all. Mine was a lot more relevant to what was commercial, because designing it to be assembled on site ensures shipping it to wherever is very cheap. You can get 20 units – that’s 240 golf bags-worth – on two pallets.

“It works if you want to store the same amount of bags in the same space; the same amount in half the space; or not build an extra building – all of which are major considerations.

“There are umpteen different reasons why a club may want to install it, but the income generated can be enormous year-on-year, with, potentially, an almost immediate return on investment.

“The 12-bag Carousel unit currently costs £395, so, if a club charges a member £100 a year for storage, that’s £1,200 in the first year with a profit of £800.

“If you have a square of space, three metres by three metres, that’s 84 big golf bags in there, plus an entry/exit metre-wide



"I LOVE THE BUSINESS; ONE OF THE GREAT THINGS ABOUT IT IS YOU MEET SO MANY GREAT PEOPLE, AND YOU'RE ALWAYS GOING TO NICE PLACES TO MEET THEM"

walkway. You don't sell the sausages, you sell the sizzle," he laughed. He laughs a lot, does Mike Waldron.

"They're also very solid. I was asked once, 'how long is the guarantee?' I said 'I don't know really – about 100 years if you like. How long do you want to guarantee a thick metal plate and an iron bar for?'

"At Aphrodite Hills, in Cyprus, the manager wanted a maintenance area for the buggies. They already had a bag store, so I went down there and put all the bags into half the space, which created their buggy maintenance area. They were delighted because they didn't need to construct another building.

"You could argue that it's the simplicity and longevity of the product which has allowed us to trade successfully for 25 years."

But he hasn't rested on his laurels. He also launched the secure Armadillo, after he received a number of enquiries for an enclosed, high-security locker system for bags. It was designed with modern golf bags in mind, although it retains the Carousel's flexibility of installation, with members simply having their own key to deposit and collect their own golf bags.

So, changing conversational flightpaths, what about that plane...?

He explained: "I fly it for my pleasure, but it's also part of the Great War Display Team (greatwardisplayteam.com), which performs all over the UK, and sometimes in Europe, with impressive dogfights with around nine other aircraft.

"I hasten to add I don't fly the aircraft in the display itself, I just shuttle it to the airfields. I made it from scratch – it's a replica of a Royal Aircraft Factory SE5, which was introduced in 1917. It's very exciting to fly because there's a lot of noise and vibration with machine guns and all that sort of stuff – which don't actually work of course!

"I've been flying it for 20 years now and it took me a good few years to make. I started it when I was living in Buckinghamshire. Everywhere I went I made sure I had a big enough garage to take it with me. I moved to Belgium, finished it off over there and started flying it in Belgium."

Which begs the question, of course, from where does a pro golfer get the engineering nous to design not only a ground-breaking golf-bag storage facility, but also the skills to build a replica plane?

Waldron smiled: "I was very lucky because I spent most of my summer holidays with my grandfather who made everything. When I was a kid, if I wanted a bow and arrow, then I made it; model aeroplanes, kites, you just made them in my day – you didn't just place an order and see it arrive complete the next day.

"My grandfather was a wonderful teacher for me; he had great skills in woodworking and metalcraft, and I spent hours in the workshop with him. I must have absorbed a lot of his skills.

"I'm always making something. I'm making another aeroplane at the moment, and building a full-size aeroplane is the same as building a model aeroplane – it's just bigger. And it gets a bit more expensive, but it's pretty much the same system to make and assemble it.

"I sent off to Canada and, for my \$200, got 56 sheets of plans. That's all you get – nothing comes in a box. So you buy lots of wood and metal and nuts and bolts and gradually start making it. Eventually, after quite a few thousand hours, you end up with an aeroplane. Then you start it up and go and fly it!

"It was a great way of relaxing. It was my way of unwinding at the end of a busy day teaching golf."

With 25 years in the golf-club-storage business behind him and 75 years on the clock, you might expect Waldron to wind down and spend time with his five grandchildren, but he has no plans to hang up his clubs... or his joystick.

"I love the business; one of the great things about it is you meet so many great people, and you're always going to nice places to meet them. There aren't many golf courses constructed around the back of a dingy old gas works," he laughed... again.

"I know a lot of people and a lot of people know me. I'm a very lucky guy. It doesn't feel like work to me, so I don't anticipate giving up the job anytime soon." **END**

HYBRID IRRIGATION SYSTEMS

HELPING CLUBS UPGRADE AT THEIR OWN PACE



It's a common misconception that altering, extending or redesigning areas of a golf course always requires ripping out and replacing most, if not all of the existing irrigation system. A hybrid option offers clubs the freedom and flexibility to plan system upgrades and course changes on a hole-by-hole basis.

With over 30 years of international irrigation industry experience, Stuart Tate has worked on some of the largest irrigation projects in the UK and across Europe, and outlines the benefits that many courses can realise from a hybrid solution unique to Rain Bird.

"Let's talk about what's already in place first," said Tate. "Any Rain Bird irrigation system can be upgraded – it's as simple as that – and it doesn't need to be ripped out and completely replaced.

"Our technologies available from the 1980's right up to the present day – satellite (hard wired), satellite decoder and IC – can be upgraded independently and yet still be controlled from the same central control software on one PC.

"New technologies will improve the efficiency of any system, saving water, labour, time, energy and money. A review will uncover any weaknesses and identify where upgrades will add value."

The launch of the Rain Bird IC System a decade ago heralded a new era in irrigation technology. Simple and expandable, with no satellites or hubs (so therefore up to 90 per cent less wire), and no decoders, it revolutionised the way water is managed on golf courses.

"Every golf course is different, but hybrid irrigation solutions suit almost all situations," added Tate. "There's a huge financial advantage in carefully phasing renovations as it's less disruptive to play and allows costs to be spread out over a longer period.

"The best approach is to think about any renovation project in discrete phases. Course areas can be altered or extended and you can upgrade a number of holes to an IC System while retaining existing decoders.

"Timeless compatibility means all Rain Bird Golf products use the same wiring, valve technology and communication protocols. The benefit for the system user is having the ability to upgrade specific course areas no matter what's in place and then easily run all the different technologies from one PC.

"They don't have to worry about running different PC's and programmes independently which is more complex and time consuming."

Bokskogens Golf Club is a venue that has benefited from a hybrid system. Ranked as one of the best parkland golf courses in Sweden, it occupies a beautiful landscape that borders Lake Yddingen and surrounds Torup and Skabersjö Castles.

Opened in 1963, the club has two 18-hole courses, and, with components over 40 years old in places – its existing irrigation system dated back to the 1980's – resulted in uneven coverage with regular hand watering required to maintain high course standards.

Investment in the latest technology would improve irrigation efficiency, give control





"GOOD COMMUNICATION AND EXCELLENT CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE CLUB, CONTRACTOR AND RAIN BIRD DURING THE RENOVATION MADE A BIG DIFFERENCE"

on a rotor-by-rotor basis and an ability to irrigate larger areas up 50-metres wide on a very windy site, enabling fairways to be extended, which was not possible within the limitations of the old single row system.

The club also wanted to easily upgrade and extend the system to cover greens, tees, walkways and surrounds in the future.

The club worked closely with contractor KSAB looking at several options for system replacement and course manager, Björn Larsson, visited three courses in the UK and two in Sweden, seeing the Rain Bird IC System in operation.

Rain Bird designed a solution where the IC System with Nimbus II Central Control and valve-in-head rotors operates as a hybrid with the existing decoder system across 25 holes; 18 on the Old Course fairways and seven on the Kings with Rain Bird 900 and 950 Series rotors installed to extend irrigation coverage.

General manager Thomas Ahlberg said: "Good communication and excellent co-operation between the club, contractor and Rain Bird during the renovation made a big difference. What makes a project successful is everyone helping each other out, co-operating and sharing information, and the site visits to other clubs were tremendously helpful in our decision making."

With a changing climate and warmer summers ahead, expectations are that savings in water consumption in future years will be around 30-35 per cent due to efficiencies and reduced maintenance.

A hybrid system at Ballybunion Golf Club in Ireland is enabling course manager John Bambury CGCS to deliver the club's vision for sustainable links management.

In 2018, an ageing decoder system on the Old Course was upgraded to an IC System with Nimbus II Central Control, which operates alongside the decoder system on the RTJ-designed, Cashen Course.

The new system, designed by AMA's Adrian Mortram and installed in phases by OCMIS, includes targeted watering to fairways, tee areas and walkways; back-to-back rotors on the greens surrounds, and new infrastructure – including pump station, tanks, boreholes and wells – to meet the needs of both courses.

The Central Control running the IC System wasn't located where the old PC running the decoder system was, so the two were centralised to run all 36 holes on one PC through a remote fibre-optic link.

Bambury said: "We are incredibly focused on managing our golf courses in the most sustainable way possible. When our irrigation technician, Shane Kenny, and I were researching the project, we wanted to partner with a company that understood our commitment to sustainable links management.

"Rain Bird quickly became the obvious choice.

"The upgrade has expanded our ability to irrigate areas of the course while using less water, by applying it in an economical and environmentally sensitive manner. Our triple row fairway design ensures we are not throwing excess water into native rough areas and helps promote a finer sward of deep rough.

"On the rest of the course we can apply moisture to surfaces with incredible accuracy, which promotes finer grasses, such as fescue.

"Our management is centred on wetting agents and seaweed products, and having the right irrigation infrastructure helps us get the most from our low-nutrient programme," added Bambury.

"Having one central control and one pump station has delivered efficiencies across both courses, and provides scope for the upgrading of the Cashen Course at a later time."

Stuart Tate says the flexibility the hybrid system offers has given clubs the opportunity to approach renovation projects with greater confidence, something that is likely to become an even more important factor in uncertain times.

"Once you have an IC System in the ground, the irrigation technology is future-proofed," said Tate. "The control of many other course features can be brought into it and automated with a remote-control facility, including transfer pumps, aeration and lighting.

"Taking the latest irrigation technology to any size of project is going to offer every course tangible advantages for the short term and for many years to come." **END**



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The Belfry boasts three legendary golf courses, including the world-famous Brabazon which has played host to the Ryder Cup a record four times, the last in 2002 when Europe beat the United States 15½ to 12½.

The majestic fairways and carpet-smooth greens of The Brabazon form a world-famous stage on which some of golf's most exhilarating dramas have played out. Its meticulous design involves tight fairways, perilous bunkers, lakes and fast undulating greens that have challenged some of golf's greatest players.

As you'd expect, it's a challenging golf course, but a must-play for anyone who's serious about the sport.

Walk in the footsteps of golfing legends – Seve's historic drive onto the 10th green; Sam Torrance's famous putt that won the 1985 Ryder Cup match for the European Team or Christie O'Connor Jr's belligerent 2 iron across the lake at the 18th. More recent changes have seen the 6th hole become one of the most demanding, rated highly by modern-day great Lee Westwood.

The Belfry also features the PGA National with its inland links appearance, which presents a unique challenge with fast running fairways, undulating greens, severe run-offs and 70 strategically placed bunkers.

Hosting two European Tour golf events, the PGA National is fast becoming one of the top golf courses in the United Kingdom, whilst The Derby, a parkland golf course with views across the Warwickshire countryside, completes the golf offering. **END**

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"I'VE NEVER YET MET A GREENKEEPER WHO DIDN'T CARE
PASSIONATELY FOR THEIR COURSE"



Words

Jim Croxton
Chief Executive
BIGGA



Have you ever heard a greenkeeper talk about their place of work? They always use possessive terminology; "at my course we do this" etc.

You may think it is just a way of speaking but I believe it runs far deeper than that; greenkeepers are incredibly passionate about 'their' golf courses, they take personal ownership. I've never yet met a greenkeeper who didn't care passionately for their course – far more than any member realistically could – and yet I've seen many golfers accuse greenkeepers of a lack of care or attention. A strange dichotomy.

I've given it a lot of thought and have reached two conclusions... Firstly, sometimes what the greenkeeper sees or prioritises are different aspects of the course than golfers do. For example BIGGA members are extremely focussed on turf nutrition & health, sward composition, soil quality and moisture content, whereas golfers are generally much more interested in aesthetics and, of course, playability.

Secondly, criticism stings. It really does. Criticising a golf course, however innocently, is effectively a personal insult to a greenkeeper.

Is there a solution? Well I guess the only way to solve either of the two issues is for one side to try and view things from the perspective of the other. Easy to say, but rarely easy to do, which is why BIGGA are committed to the continuing education of greenkeepers including improving understanding of the viewpoints of golfers. **END**



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Hi, Michael!

Welcome to the Charity Competition.

Date Thu, November 19
Course Royal County Down

You are the marker for
Karen Moss
Your marker is
Fiona Hampton

Marker • My Score • Results

Hole 18 Refresh

Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6
Yardage	900	433	400	299	403	400
Par	5	4	4	3	4	4

Karen Moss (72)

Score 4 4 4 4 4 4

Note

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