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NUMBER 149 | WINTER 2024

Iconic Aroeira To Scale New Heights With PGA Partnership





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"MOST GOLFERS ALREADY HAVE A WATER BOTTLE, SO, LIKE MY COLLECTION, SOON, MANY OF THE COMPLIMENTARY BOTTLES WILL END UP BEING RECYCLED"

FAIR COMMENT

I'm a grandfather, so, like many of my age, I'm keen to ensure there's a planet for our descendants to enjoy. Hence, I'm always keen to see the golf sector being environmentally friendly... or 'woke', if that is your preferred description. And, while I applaud any attempt to reduce single-use plastics, protect wildlife, or cut down on CFCs (etc), I think we need to accept that some attempts, while well meaning, may be counterproductive.

I was struck by this very thought when I went to put my clubs in the car for a trip to the airport for another important winter business trip to a golf resort in sunnier climes. (Well, somebody has to do it...)

Alongside my clubs were around a dozen metal, branded water bottles, generously given to me when visiting clubs and resorts around Europe. Almost all of them were a 'gift' to visiting golfers as part of laudable efforts to reduce plastic use at the facility. They're also, of course, branded for market awareness.

But now, I'm inundated with metal water bottles and, however thirsty I might get out on the course, I'm unlikely to consume 12 bottlefuls. At my age, I'd need to keep dashing into the undergrowth.

The idea, of course, is that golfers can refill the bottle from water dispensers in the pro shop and — ideally — around the course. And I'm all in favour of facilities providing free, chilled water, which is why I was keen for this magazine to partner with Bluewater, which installs such dispensers...



Words

Michael Lenihan
Publisher

READ THE FULL COMMENT ONLINE
golfmanagement.online/comment/149



FEATURING

WINTER 2024



CHRISTIAN TAGE

THE SCANDINAVIAN

"I expect to be quite a few years at The Scandinavian to make sure that continuity is here. You build up a good staff, you make sure that the team is even stronger when I one day leave."

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SALVADOR LUCAS

LA FINCA RESORT

"Villamartin is a unique place but there is a big difference between the front nine and the back nine, which has sea views, so some of the existing routing will be changed. We plan to fully renovate the golf course, starting with the irrigation system."

26



GERRY IVERS

THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

"We're identifying opportunities where we can enhance existing properties and deliver a unified standard of excellence across our portfolio. I'm not at liberty to say where we are targeting, but there are active discussions taking place."

30



IAN MCGUINNESS

ROGANSTOWN

"My mother started it all and we do an annual Denise McLoughlin memorial at the club. She was a pioneer. She started Swords, and if she started today, she would have been held out as a pillar for women in business."

34



PATRICK JONES

TEWKESBURY PARK

"Right from the start we decided to push the whole product well up-market, while still staying true to certain key business segments – golf, short breaks, weddings & events, and the conference market."

42

"PGA AROEIRA LISBOA STANDS OUT AS A PREMIER DESTINATION,
NOW COMPETING WITH THE BEST OFFERINGS IN PORTUGAL"



COVER STORY

PGAAROEIRA.COM

PGA Aroeira
LISBOA

Aroeira, one of the most famous names in Portuguese golf, is ready to embark on a new stage of its prestigious history after undergoing a major rebrand and being given a new identity — PGA Aroeira Lisboa.

The renaming of the iconic 36-hole Lisbon venue and its two courses comes at the same time as a major investment in its golf and leisure facilities, creating the only PGA National in Portugal and putting it alongside other leading PGA resorts including the likes of previous Ryder Cup hosts Gleneagles in Scotland and The Belfry in England.

Famously nicknamed as the 'Wentworth of Lisbon' after first opening in the 1970s, the PGA partnership further strengthens the reputation of one of Portugal's premier golf destinations.

"This is the start of a new era for Aroeira — one that golfers, like everyone here, will be very excited about," said Nuno Sepulveda, co-CEO at Details — Sports, Hospitality, Leisure — PGA Aroeira Lisboa's management company. "It is our ambition for PGA Aroeira Lisboa to set a new standard for golf in Portugal, blending tradition and innovation under the esteemed PGA brand.

"With our world-class facilities and two fantastic golf courses, we look forward to welcoming golfers from all over the world."

Commenting on the partnership, Richard Barker, executive director — business development of The PGA, said: "We are delighted to welcome Aroeira to our portfolio of PGA National Branded Properties.

"PGA Aroeira Lisboa stands out as a premier destination, now competing with the best offerings in Portugal. This exceptional development will elevate the golfing experience for visitors worldwide, whether for travel, tournaments or tuition and we are eager to showcase this to our PGA members.

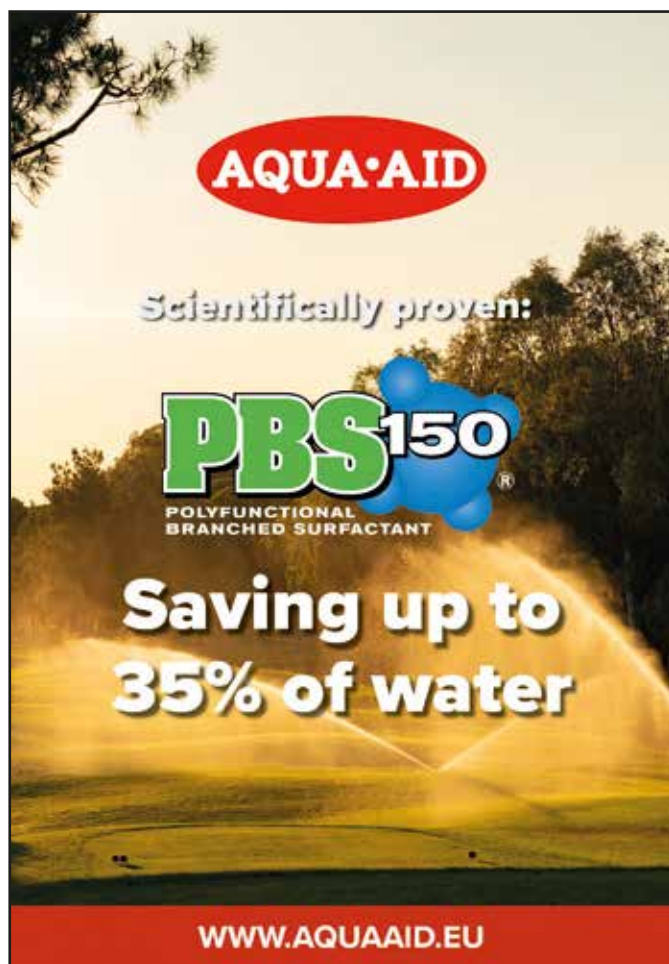
"Furthermore, our partnership with the Details Group promises significant support for PGA members, as we will work together to host future PGA events in Portugal over the coming years."

The new partnership with The PGA will see Aroeira's two 18-hole championship courses being given new names, with Aroeira Pines Classic being rebranded as PGA Aroeira 1 and Aroeira Challenge becoming PGA Aroeira 2.

In addition to making upgrades to the golf courses, other investment will see the creation of a variety of new real estate options from villas to apartments, all designed by leading architects and ideal as an investment opportunity, a primary residence or a holiday home.

These will be complemented by an array of sports and leisure facilities including restaurants, a café and a new clubhouse.

Details — Hospitality, Sports, Leisure — the platform responsible for managing the hospitality, sports and leisure areas of Arrow Global in Portugal — took over management of Aroeira at the end of 2023, with PGA Aroeira Lisboa two of nine golf courses operated by Details in Portugal. **END**



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"SO, IT WAS INEVITABLE THAT WHEN WE DOWNSIZED AND MOVED
TO A BUNGALOW, MY LIBRARY HAD TO BE DISMANTLED"



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BOOKING MY MOVE TO REALITY

The author and cleric Sydney Smith said there is “no furniture so charming as books”. It is safe to say that were Mr Smith alive today he would not be on Mrs B’s Christmas list. I admit I was unfamiliar with his work, but am now a devoted fan, owing to that quotation alone. Nobody who feels that way could be wholly a bad egg.

As in politics, the royal family, and the required calorific intake for an average 61-year-old male, my wife and I have diametrically opposed views on books... at least in terms of storage. Both of us enjoy reading; the difference is that my beloved thinks ownership of six books at any given time should be sufficient. I, however, turned over the entire spare bedroom wall-space to bookcases, knowing that you can never possess enough books. That, I always felt, was an indisputable fact. To be able to hold one’s own at a dinner party one should be the owner of all the ‘classics’ of English literature; even though, as Mark Twain opined, a ‘classic’ is a “book which people praise and don’t read”. For ‘praise’ in my case, you can read ‘own’.

As a sportswriter by trade, I need to be able to determine instantly who won the men’s singles at Wimbledon in 1953; how many England players won just one cap under Sir Alf Ramsey; or who won the Masters in the year of my birth – spoiler: it was Jack Nicklaus, with the first of his Green Jackets. In addition, one must own the books one actually wants to read: the complete set by your favourite author, for example. So, I have almost everything by PG Wodehouse, Terry Pratchett, Ruth Rendell and others. And finally, of course, one must possess a good selection of books of quotations to pepper one’s witterings with a selection of intelligent observations.

Here’s another. It was JD Salinger, author of *Catcher in the Rye*, who said that a great book was one which “... once you’ve finished reading it, you wish the author... was a terrific friend and you could call him up on the phone whenever you feel like it.”

All my books make me feel that way, but Mrs B is not a literary romantic. She believed the spare bedroom floor had a weight limit and that “the British Library upstairs” would soon appear in the dining room downstairs. So, it was inevitable that when we downsized and moved to a bungalow, my library had to be dismantled. I fought hard but was on a loser. I knew that the new home could not possibly accommodate two adults, two cats, and all my books.

Among the ‘some things’ that had to be done was the sale of my superb golf coffee-table books. You know the type: hard-backed, exquisitely produced and superbly photographed. In the depths of a cold winter, I would sit nestling a glass of whisky in one hand while gazing wistfully at stunning golf courses thousands of miles away. Now my books are miles away...

As winter hits I long to be able to revisit those halcyon days. But Mrs B was (rightly) insistent. Mind you, I never asked her to get rid of the photographs of the children. **END**

NEWS IN BRIEF

GOLFMANAGEMENT.ONLINE/NEWS



VERDURA RESORT APPOINTS NEW DIRECTOR OF GOLF SALES AND MARKETING

Verdura Resort has cemented its position at the forefront of European golf after appointing experienced industry professional Blair Harvey as its new golf sales and marketing director. Harvey took up his new position with the luxury Sicilian resort at the start of this month as part of a wider remit with Rocco Forte Hotels. The Scot, an avid golfer and qualified PGA professional having started playing the game at the age of 12, brings with him a wealth of experience in the business and travel worlds having worked for some of the biggest names in golf in the UK, Europe and the Middle East.

SEARCH 'VERDURA GOLF CLUB' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



ECOBUNKER TAKES ON ICELANDIC CHALLENGE AT KEILIR GOLF CLUB

Keilir Golf Club in Hafnarfjörður, Iceland has just completed the second phase of its bunker replacement project with industry leading synthetic faced bunker specialists, EcoBunker. Faced with year round weather challenges and very harsh winters, the team at Keilir have been spending a disproportionate amount of their budget on maintaining the quality of their naturally revetted bunkers. Having received very positive feedback on EcoBunker's work at Royal St Georges, among other projects, Keilir invited the team to address the unique challenges of an Icelandic golf course.

SEARCH 'KEILIR' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



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CHART HILLS OPENS LUXURIOUS ON-SITE ACCOMMODATION, THE BARN

Chart Hills Golf Club has opened the doors to its brand-new on-site accommodation, giving guests the option of a relaxing stay in modern, luxury surroundings. Catering for up to eight guests at a time, The Barn features four beautifully appointed bedrooms with modern en-suite facilities, just a few minutes' walk from the first tee of the club's championship golf course. "We're thrilled to unveil The Barn at Chart Hills, as part of our ongoing commitment to offering the best possible experience for our members, guests, and visitors," said general manager, Anthony Tarchetti.

SEARCH 'CHART HILLS' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



WELLINGBOROUGH GOLF CLUB UPGRADES TO NEW RAIN BIRD CIRRUSPRO SYSTEM

In the midst of the Northamptonshire countryside, in 160 acres of fine, rolling parkland, the 18-hole championship course at Wellingborough Golf Club regularly hosts premier PGA & County golf events. Founded in 1893, the first 9-holes of the original course were laid out by Old Tom Morris. In 1922, the club relocated and, in 1970 purchased the grounds of the Georgian Harrowden Hall in which today's course was built. Soon after the new course opened in 1975, the club purchased the hall.

SEARCH 'WELLINGBOROUGH' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



LONDON GOLF CLUB PURCHASES NEW CLUB CAR TEMPO FLEET FROM BRADSHAW

One of the UK's most prestigious golf clubs, London Golf Club, has purchased 50 Club Car Tempo golf buggies from Bradshaw Electric Vehicles. The club's new fleet of buggies has been acquired as a part of a fleet replacement programme, as well as to enhance both guest and member experience. Notably, the order comes at a time when both the London Club and Bradshaw Electric Vehicles celebrate 25 years of partnership together.

SEARCH 'LONDON GOLF CLUB' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story

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ECOBUNKER PROTECTING NEWQUAY GOLF CLUB FROM THE ELEMENTS

Sustainable bunker experts EcoBunker have completed the first phase of work at Newquay Golf Club, replacing 13 bunkers with its EcoBunker Advance revetted synthetic bunker technology. A beautiful Harry Colt re-designed links that looks out onto Fistral beach, Newquay Golf Club is exposed to all the elements of an oceanic outlook. It was with these features and challenges in mind that Dan Kendle, Head Greenkeeper at Newquay sought out a solution that would improve the course for both his members and maintenance teams.

SEARCH 'ECOBUNKER' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



ARORA GROUP APPOINTS GERRY IVERS AS NEW MANAGING DIRECTOR OF GOLF

Arora Group has appointed Gerry Ivers as its new Managing Director of Golf to spearhead ambitious plans to grow its portfolio of golf properties in the UK and Europe. The experienced golf industry leader, who spent 20 years as General Manager of Queenwood Golf Club, will oversee day-to-day operations at The Buckinghamshire, recently repositioned as a private members' club following a more than £10 million clubhouse renovation, as well as the development of a new course at Ryder Cup candidate venue Luton Hoo Hotel, Golf & Spa.

SEARCH 'GERRY IVERS' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



CABOT HIGHLANDS OLD PETTY OPENS FOR PREVIEW PLAY SUMMER 2025

The Cabot Collection has announced that Old Petty, the much-anticipated Tom Doak design at Cabot Highlands, will officially open for preview play on August 1, 2025. Following the acquisition of Castle Stuart Golf Links by Cabot in 2022, plans were revealed to create a new 18-hole course named Old Petty. This course pays homage to Old Petty Church, adjacent to the property, which was established in 1839.

SEARCH 'OLD PETTY' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



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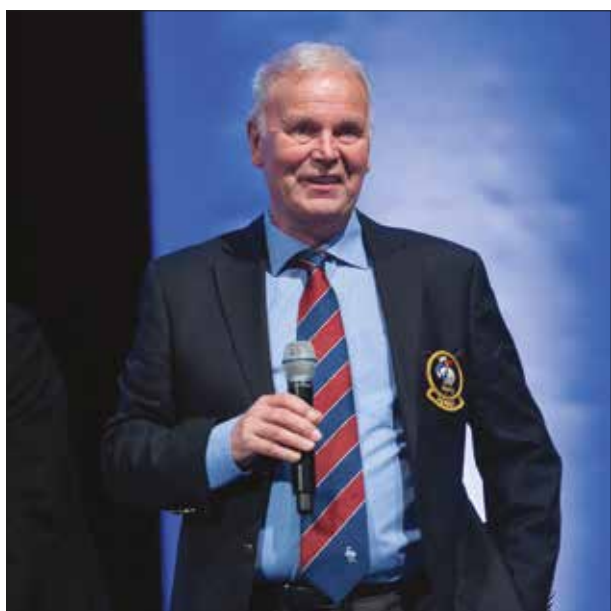
Bluewater



IPSWICH GOLF CLUB'S JOE SIMPSON WINS BIGGA PHOTO COMPETITION AGAIN

An ethereal image of life at Ipswich Golf Club has seen talented amateur photographer and greenkeeper Joe Simpson announced as the winner of the annual BIGGA Photographic Competition for the third time. Simpson's image was chosen by the judging panel as the overall winner with the results of social media voting also taken into account. The stunning shot shows greenkeeper Pete Dunnett mowing the 5th fairway of the Purdis Heath Course as the autumn sun breaks through the morning fog.

SEARCH 'IPSWICH GOLF CLUB' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



FROM IBROX TO BUCHANAN CASTLE, BIGGA'S PRESIDENTIAL 2025 NOMINEE

A former Scottish First Division referee who officiated at European matches before becoming head greenkeeper at Buchanan Castle has accepted the nomination to become president of the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA) in 2025. Ronnie Myles, 67, has immediately stepped into the role of BIGGA Vice President, supporting John Keenaghan for the remainder of his term. Myles will then formally be appointed BIGGA President at the BIGGA Annual General Meeting, taking place in January.

SEARCH 'RONNIE MYLES' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



FOLEY COMPANY ACQUIRES SALSCO EXPANDING ITS GOLF AND TURF BUSINESS

Foley Company has announced the acquisition of SALSCO, Inc., an industry leader in turf maintenance equipment, effective November 1, 2024. Based in Cheshire, CT, SALSCO has been at the forefront of innovation for over forty years in turf maintenance since its founding by Sal Rizzo in 1979.

SEARCH 'SALSCO' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story

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TORO GUARDING THE RESOURCE AT ROYAL COUNTY DOWN

Delivery met expectations, when Toro, Reesink Hydro-Scapes, Adrian Mortram Associates and MJ Abbott Limited united to provide Royal County Down Golf Club with a new system to redefine the areas of irrigation and act as a guardian of the resource in a project about as big as it gets in the UK. The preservation of the traditional links conditions of Royal County Down in Northern Ireland is of paramount importance to links manager Eamonn Crawford and his team, who adhere to a strict links maintenance programme.

SEARCH 'ROYAL COUNTY DOWN' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



GALVIN GREEN APPOINTS FIRST UK & IRELAND SALES DIRECTOR

Golf apparel brand Galvin Green has appointed experienced sales leader Stewart Clare to a new role as its sales director in the UK & Ireland in a move designed to drive sales of its long-lasting and responsibly sourced golf apparel collections in Europe's largest market. Clare, who is based in Derbyshire and has previous golf industry sales experience with Cobra Puma Golf and most recently TravisMathew as head of sales & Product EMEA, has assumed responsibility for enhancing the premium brand's business with existing customers, while also adding more top golfing venues and resort accounts across the UK & Ireland.

SEARCH 'GALVIN GREEN' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



TROON EXPANDS IN ASIA WITH STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH SMARTSCORE

SALTEX has solidified its status as the ultimate event for the entire grounds management industry, putting high-calibre visitors and cutting-edge innovation at the forefront. This year's exhibition at the NEC Birmingham, the 78th edition, drew thousands of industry professionals and volunteers, where in-depth conversations led to strengthened relationships.

SEARCH 'SALTEX' ONLINE
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NEW DESTINATIONS

WORLDCLASS.GOLF



Royal Golf Club in Bahrain has accepted an invitation to join worldclass.golf – the rapidly expanding portfolio of the world's premier golf courses, destinations and resorts.

Nestled in the very core of Bahrain, Royal Golf Club, is a veritable masterpiece that takes pride of place in Riffa Views, standing as the majestic sanctuary for the DP World Tour (Bahrain Championship) hosted under the patronage of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

Remarkably, it is merely a short 20-minute journey from Manama, as well as an equidistant distance from the Saudi-Bahrain causeway.

The club offers the best of both worlds; exclusive membership options are available while visitors are also very welcome. The club's 7,102-yard par 72, 18-hole championship course was designed by golfing legend

Colin Montgomerie as was the Wee Monty 9-hole, par 3 course.

Additional facilities at Royal Golf Club include a state-of-the-art golf academy, two well-equipped meeting rooms, a fully stocked golf and leisure shop, a purpose-built function room, an award-winning international restaurant, family-friendly pizzeria and a café.

Following a personal evaluation, Michael Lenihan, CEO of worldclass.golf said: "Under the management of general manager, Juan Manuel Fuentes Perez, it is evident that the Royal Golf Club is destined to become one of the stand-out destinations in the region.

"The on-course changes have added to the playability of the course, and the improvements to the visitor experience will only add to the appeal of this unique golf destination." **END**



MB GOLF

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Over the winter months we will be running some exclusive offers

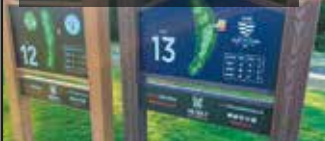
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CHRISTIAN TAGE NYVANG HANSEN

CEO, THE SCANDINAVIAN



Christian Tage Nyvang Hansen knew when he took over in March as CEO at top Danish golf club The Scandinavian that he would not only need to hit the ground running, but he would have to be running at an Olympic sprinter's pace.

The European Amateur Championship was scheduled to be held at his new place of work just three months later, an event that involved 144 competitors from 40 different countries.

"I think my first ten days' work at The Scandinavian were probably the most hectic I've ever had in my whole life," he recalls. "I had meetings from eight in the morning until four in the afternoon and some days we even forgot to put in time for lunch.

"But I had to hit the ground running and I got some knowledge from those first ten days, from outgoing CEO David Shepherd and all the other parties, so the managers at The Scandinavian helped me catch up pretty quickly."

The intensity of both those meetings and subsequent cascading of information to staff proved highly advantageous as it meant that Hansen – who had spent nearly a decade as general manager at Royal Copenhagen Golf Club – got to know his team, and they him, in rapid fashion following Shepherd's departure to The Wisley.

"I definitely got closer to my staff, got to know all their capabilities, how we could work well together as a team," he recalls.

"Even though I have the role of CEO, I really want to be close to my staff and I want to be close to my members, of course, and to my guests.

"This year, for example, for all 48 company day events we have had, I have been a part of it, either welcoming them in the morning or participating in the prize ceremony. In one shape or form, I have been a part of those events even though I have an event manager to execute it."

Now, as Hansen, who turned 45 in November, awaits for the caprices of the weather to decide when The Scandinavian must close its two Robert Trent Jones II-designed courses for the winter, you might expect him to be contemplating a quieter spell at his new 'home'. Not a bit of it.

"My 'to do' list right now is longer than it's ever been going into a winter," he reveals. "I have already done the budget for next year and it's a huge improvement from what I took over and, what we're going to deliver this year, it's going to be fun.

"It's going to be interesting to execute on such improved numbers. Compared to last year at the same time we have plus 59 members, which is approximately five per cent, six per cent up."

A worldclass.golf destination, Hansen gives full credit for the rise in numbers to The Scandinavian's members since the club "does not do campaigns or discounts, we don't do special this and that," and says people were encouraged to join due to "our current members' ability to commend our golf club to their friends.

"Superior quality, high customer service, good food in the restaurant, an overall experience where, if you're looking for the best in golf, and you are committed to your golf game, this is where you should go.





"I DIDN'T EVEN CONSIDER BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL, I LIKED GOING TO SCHOOL TOO MUCH. I WOULDN'T HAVE PLAYED GOOD GOLF IF I KNEW I HAD TO HAND IN AN ASSIGNMENT NEXT DAY"

"Come and join us. That's what our members say and they are the best ambassadors for us."

Both of The Scandinavian's courses – which were opened in 2010 and 2011 respectively – are consistently ranked in the top 50 courses in Continental Europe, a standard everyone is keen to maintain.

"If we are not the highest then we are one of the highest standards in Denmark," says Hansen. "We have an extremely skilled greenkeepers team, we have done well in the past to invest in a way so we can maintain that high course quality, and we are always looking to get another edge to become even better, even stronger."

His short-term goals involve supervising winter work at The Scandinavian that will include establishing the first Titleist PRO V1 driving range in Denmark, making course alterations that focus on ensuring golf is fun while still challenging for the better player, and the establishment of a 'yes' culture "where me and my employees seek solutions, whenever we meet an obstacle".

But it is safe to say that he is already considering long-term plans, too, for Hansen's career shows a pattern of longevity within roles.

"I guess I've always been the sort of guy that is not going to leave before I'm done," he explains. "It makes sense. I want to complete the tasks that I have at hand, I don't want to throw in the towel because I think it becomes too difficult or I can't find the solution right away."

"I expect to be quite a few years at The Scandinavian to make sure that continuity is here. You build up a good staff, you make sure that the team is even stronger when I one day leave. And, of course, that the product is well defined and as strong as it is."

"I'm a little bit old-fashioned in that I've never taken a decision based on what will look good on my résumé, but I always try to take decisions on what I would find an interesting task, what would challenge me, what would make me stronger as a person, but also as a professional within the given industry that I was within."

Hansen has been an elite level golfer for many years, currently playing off a handicap of 0.8, and took to the game very easily af-

ter being used, at the age of ten, as a means to open the door to club membership for his father.

"My dad introduced me to golf when I was ten, primarily because there was a huge waiting list at Royal Copenhagen Golf Club. But he could get in on a family waiting list if I was a member," he recalls. "So he kind of pushed me forward and five years later I was 4.5 handicap. It just felt fun from the beginning."

Although clearly gifted, he says he was too absorbed by academia to devote enough time to practise to get to a level where he could contemplate a career as a player.

"I didn't even consider becoming a professional, I liked going to school too much. I wouldn't have played good golf if I knew I had to hand in an assignment next day and it wasn't done."

Hansen is married and a father to 11- and seven-year-old girls. The eldest has a fascination with celebrity and, thanks to some internet research, discovered her father's national sporting claim to fame.

"She googled my name and said, 'I found you on a website where it says you are a part of the padel history in Denmark, you are kind of famous' and I said, 'no, I'm not,'" he smiles.

Many of Denmark's padel players know otherwise for Hansen and some friends are credited with building Denmark's first court having come under the sport's spell while on a golf training camp in Spain back in 2008, paving the way for padel's popularity in the country.

As well as his Bachelor and Masters degrees, he also has Wine & Spirit Education Trust qualifications and also speaks three languages – "plus a wee bit of French" – but his thirst for knowledge appears unquenchable.

"I have been lucky enough to have parents who liked to take us to visit other parts of the world, experience some things, so I think learning came pretty natural. I've always been good at school, good grades."

"Again it comes back to that thing that you need to finish what you started. I think that followed me all the way round into my work life." **END**





SALVADOR LUCAS

GOLF MANAGER, LA FINCA RESORT



Salvador Lucas, golf manager at La Finca Resort in Alicante, Spain, is a man who I share a few things in common with. Firstly, we were both born in October 1970, with Lucas the eldest by a mere 72 hours.

And secondly, we both have an affection for La Finca and Villamartín – two courses I regularly play – both of which are managed by Lucas under the stewardship of the family-owned Pemar Group.

And with major changes planned for Villamartín – more about that later – Lucas is just about to embark on a journey which may well see him spend more time back where it all began as a caddiemaster in 1991, aged 21.

With no interest in golf, and no desire to take up the sport, Lucas was offered a summer job as a caddiemaster at Villamartín, due to the simple fact that he could speak English. A tennis player, Lucas was informed of the role by the sister of one of his best friends, so applied without really knowing what he was actually applying for.

"To be honest, in those days, the most important requirement was having good English skills, which I had," he explains. "I will never forget the first morning when I arrived, and I asked what I needed to do, only to be told to start brushing the floor.

"Then they told me to start cleaning the golf clubs, so I set about cleaning 400 golf bags, many of which were full of dust as they had been abandoned. It took me the whole day," he recalls with a wry smile.

"It was totally different then compared to now, as in a busy day you had 60 customers, and zero in the middle of the week."

Lucas spent the following 13 years learning his trade, whilst advancing the customer experience at Villamartín, including introducing new golf management software which at the time, was cutting-edge technology.

"When I was the assistant golf manager, we were one of the first golf courses outside Catalonia to introduce golf management software," he recollects. "Everything then was paper based with green fee tickets and I remember using a computer with Windows 3.1 and MS-DOS thinking 'wow, what am I going to do with this?'

"So, I started to study MS-DOS and dBase, which was the programme the software was written in, and shortly after, the software developer started to send me updates to code myself.

"Updates were sent using floppy discs in the post because there was no internet at the time, so I ended up coding the software too. We also used to receive bookings by fax, so I implemented a protocol that would integrate the incoming fax message into the booking software."

When asked if he ever thought about changing career paths and working as a software developer, he says that although he had offers, he was happy at Villamartín, until the GM at La Finca retired, and in 2005, Lucas was invited to succeed him.

"Managing La Finca was a totally different job as it is a pure commercial golf course whereas Villamartín is semi-private with shareholders," he admits.

"At La Finca we had just one-year memberships, so I tried to introduce some kind of club atmosphere even though members



"WE ARE ONE OF THE VERY FEW GOLF COURSES OR GOLF COMPANIES THAT HAS A REVENUE DEPARTMENT"

were not shareholders because there was the possibility to grow the membership. At the time, there was no growth in golf tourism as we didn't have hotels in the area, so we needed to do something for the members.

"But after we built and opened the hotel in 2009, I then became more involved in the commercial operation [of both courses] including accommodation."

And with a Masters in Revenue, Lucas set about reinventing the revenue model at La Finca, opting to controversially dispense with annual memberships in 2022, replacing them with a voucher-based system yielding a better rate of return.

"In the past, the record number of rounds in a year was 57,000, and now we are doing 46,000 which is very good as it keeps the golf course in better shape. It also improves the pace of play," added Lucas, who has doubled the rack rate from €75 when he took over La Finca, to €150 now.

"We are one of the very few golf courses or golf companies that has a revenue department," claims Lucas. "I work with a woman who checks the reports, but I do the analytics, and I plan the strategies, and there is a huge difference after applying revenue strategies."

"Golf is a seasonal business, so you have the opportunity to understand many things, like the pace of sales, and the booking season as well as your markets as every market is different – you get to learn a lot of knowledge, and I love it."

"It's something that I'm very proud of as the company trusted me and paid for me to [study] for my Masters."

With La Finca and Villamartín both part of the same group, vouchers at La Finca can be used at Villamartín, and shareholders at Villamartín can play La Finca, although that status quo could change come the summer of 2026.

Built in 1972, and designed by Robert Dean Puttman, the historical course is starting to show its age, and needs an upgrade, especially the antiquated irrigation system which needs to be manually operated every evening, one of only three courses in Spain with the same predicament.

There are also safety concerns over the current routing – which involves crossing a main road after the first – so architect Tim Lobb has been tasked with remodelling the

layout, removing the second hole and incorporating a new par 3 on land the club hopes to purchase.

"Villamartín is a unique place but there is a big difference between the front nine and the back nine, which has sea views, so some of the existing routing will be changed."

"We plan to fully renovate the golf course, starting with the irrigation system, and increase the size of the greens and improve some of the landing zones. There are currently too many blind shots on the course, and too often you don't have a view to the green."

The crowning glory of Lobb's redesign will be the new par five 18th hole – currently a par four – which will incorporate the clubs existing driving range and a new irrigation lake.

But as impressive as the proposal is, the project, which is estimated to cost €8million, needs to be financed, and with 500 shareholders, the membership needs to be fully on-board with both the course changes, and the extensive revenue changes that have been proposed to their existing contracts.

Whether or not Lobb's design will ever be realised remains to be seen, but if Lucas has his way, then midway through 2026, Villamartín will close for the best part of 15 months and re-open late 2027 as the stand-out destination on the Costa Blanca with shareholders permitted to play La Finca during the renovation works.

Aged 54, Lucas is too young to retire and clearly too involved in the day-to-day operations of both destinations. When he finds time, he is president of the Costa Blanca Golf Association, which represents 26 courses in the region, and spends time in Finland with his Finnish wife, Jenni who works in the travel business.

"We are both workaholics he says, and unless I win the EuroMillions, I want to retire here," he says. "This is my home; this is a great company; and it's a great family business."

"I love this job, and there is no better job even though the salaries can be improved," he smiled. "We work in a lovely environment, and this is what I say to all my employees is that we are so lucky because we work in a business where the people – our customers – come to be happy, and this is one of the things that I love about this business." **END**

GERRY IVERS

MANAGING DIRECTOR OF GOLF, THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE



The Arora Group, the UK's largest privately owned hotel business and owners of The Buckinghamshire and Ryder Cup candidate venue Luton Hoo Hotel, Golf & Spa, has appointed Gerry Ivers as managing director of golf.

With a distinguished career that includes two decades as general manager of Queenwood Golf Club, Ivers has a plan to deliver world-class golf and hospitality experiences, as well as grow the Group's portfolio of resorts in the UK and Europe.

Ivers' journey to the Arora Group has been defined by a commitment to excellence. Overseeing the opening and then managing Queenwood Golf Club for 20 years, Ivers gained invaluable experience in creating a seamless, personalised golf experience for an elite clientele. Queenwood, renowned for its exclusivity and discretion, helped shape his understanding of how to build and sustain a premier golf offering.

"The attention to detail and the importance of cultivating an exceptional service culture at Queenwood were invaluable lessons," says Ivers. "Those principles will be fundamental as we continue to grow membership at The Buckinghamshire and develop Luton Hoo into a world-class destination."

When the Arora Group relaunched The Buckinghamshire as a private members' club in April 2024 following a more than £10 million clubhouse renovation, it set the tone for the Group's aspirations in golf.

Just 15 miles from West London and ten miles from Heathrow, the club combines a championship golf course with a 350-year-

old country house that has been exquisitely transformed into a contemporary clubhouse. The new interiors were created by Kim Partridge, the designer behind Adare Manor's new look.

The upgraded clubhouse now benefits from seven luxury bedroom suites, a fine dining restaurant, a private wine lounge, whisky room, golf lounge and simulator, sumptuous changing rooms and multiple comfy corners where members can work, enabling them to mix business and pleasure.

The club is successfully attracting a new cosmopolitan membership that appreciates the relaxed, informal feel of the club with high levels of service. For Ivers, the goal is clear: "The Buckinghamshire already has a remarkable foundation. My role is to refine and elevate the member experience, ensuring it remains one of the most desirable private golf clubs in the UK.

"Of course, the golf course itself is central to the value proposition and we're fortunate to have a course that is in outstanding condition. But continuous improvement is a priority and while we are exploring some subtle enhancements to the course design, our goal is to maintain world-class playing standards and continue to challenge and delight members."

While The Buckinghamshire's exclusivity is a draw for discerning golfers, Ivers is keen to ensure it remains a welcoming space for families. "We want the club to feel like a home away from home for all our members," he says. "Golf may be the heart of the club, but creating an environment where families can relax and connect is just as important.







"WITH THE GROUP'S EXPERIENCE IN LUXURY HOSPITALITY, WE CAN CREATE AN OFFERING THAT EXTENDS FAR BEYOND THE COURSE ITSELF"

"In today's world, the whole family wants to spend more time together. What The Buckinghamshire offers is a retreat and an escape from the city. It's a safe space and we want our members to feel it is the place they can all spend time at weekends.

"Our proprietors Surinder and Sanjay Arora used to cycle through the grounds of The Buckinghamshire when Sanjay was a child, so they have fond memories of father-and-son and family time here.

"Sanjay recalls being overwhelmed by the beauty of the estate and the sound of the River Colne, which flows by on both sides of the clubhouse. So, the family experience is at the heart of The Buckinghamshire."

Building on the success of The Buckinghamshire, Luton Hoo Hotel, Golf & Spa emerges as another landmark golf project for the Arora Group.

Located just 50 minutes from central London, the historic estate is set to undergo a major transformation with the development of a new championship golf course designed to host major tournaments.

The venue is also a future Ryder Cup candidate venue.

"This is an incredibly exciting project," says Ivers. "We have plans approved, and the new course will be a game-changer for Luton Hoo. It's not just about creating a course capable of hosting The Ryder Cup, it's about designing a venue that offers a truly exceptional experience for golfers and spectators alike."

The development at Luton Hoo sits well with the Arora Group's status as the UK's largest privately owned hotel business with more than 7,000 rooms under management.

"With the Group's experience in luxury hospitality, we can create an offering that extends far beyond the course itself. From five-star dining to world-class accommodation, the vision for Luton Hoo is to provide an unparalleled golf and lifestyle destination," Ivers explains.

The Arora Group's expansion into golf is underpinned by its successful track record in the hospitality industry. With flagship properties such as Fairmont Windsor Park and Sofitel London Heathrow, the Group has established itself as a leader in delivering high-end experiences.

Now, it is leveraging this expertise and looking to create a network of premier golf destinations. The Group is actively targeting golf resort acquisitions in the UK and Europe, aiming to establish itself as a leading owner-operator.

"The strategy is clear," Ivers states. "We're identifying opportunities where we can enhance existing properties and deliver a unified standard of excellence across our portfolio. I'm not at liberty to say where we are targeting, but there are active discussions taking place and it is very much baked into our plans to grow the group both here and in continental Europe."

As with any ambitious project, the Arora Group's expansion into golf comes with challenges. The golf industry is highly competitive, and attracting and retaining members requires constant innovation.

Ivers acknowledges this but sees it as an opportunity. "The key is adapting to evolving expectations," he says. "Our focus is on balancing tradition with modernity and offering value that resonates with today's members."

At The Buckinghamshire, this means continuing to enhance the membership offering, while at Luton Hoo, it involves creating a destination that sets new standards for excellence in the industry.

One of the cornerstones of Ivers' approach is the focus on service excellence. Drawing on his experience at Queenwood, he understands the importance of creating a culture where every team member takes pride in their role.

"At The Buckinghamshire, we operate as a family," he says. "That ethos extends to our members and guests. It's about fostering a culture of collaboration and attention to detail, ensuring that every interaction leaves a lasting impression."

For Ivers, the future is full of promise. The Buckinghamshire is thriving, attracting a new wave of London-centred and international members, while the plans for Luton Hoo are well underway.

"There's an incredible sense of momentum across the Group," he says. "We're not just developing golf properties; we're creating destinations where people can come together to enjoy exceptional golf, hospitality and service." **END**



IAN McGUINNESS

MANAGING DIRECTOR, ROGANSTOWN



Running any business these days can be challenging, as Ian McGuinness, founder, managing director and CEO of Roganstown Golf and Country Club just ten minutes north of Dublin airport in Ireland can testify.

So to be acknowledged by your peers with the award of Fingal Business Person of the Year for 2024, was testament to his hard work and endeavours, both on and off the course.

In truth, Roganstown is much more than a one-man band, and is very much a family affair with the entire McGuinness family employed in some capacity. His brother Colm is head greenkeeper, his sister, Elaine McLoughlin, is director of golf and even his mother, Denise, founded the club.

Originally farmland, McGuinness' mother was a pioneer for golf in the local area and opened Swords Golf Club – adjacent to Roganstown – in 1990.

"It was a family farm, and we redeveloped it," said McGuinness who had a background working for multi-national companies such as Siemens and Microsoft before opting to join the family business.

"My mother was big into golf, and she was a member of Skerries and then Balbriggan where she was Lady Captain," he recalls. "She started Swords Open golf course as a nine-hole and then converted it to 18 back in the 90s.

"My mother was complaining about a draughty old house and my stepfather wanted to retire and none of us were interested in taking over the farm, so we came up with the Roganstown model side-by-side with Swords.

"My mother started it all and we do an annual Denise McLoughlin memorial at the club. She was a pioneer. She started Swords, and if she started today, she would have been held out as a pillar for women in business. She was ahead of her time."

That dream of creating and building a golf and hotel took some years to come to fruition however, during which time McGuinness worked for Microsoft between 1997 and 2004 as EMEA operations director for small and medium-sized businesses before leaving to manage Roganstown on a full-time basis.

"There was a lot of work putting it all together," he recalls after planning permission was granted in 1998. "We had the land, and we knew about the golf business.

"It started off quite small then ended up being a 52-bedroom and leisure centre – a proper country club golf course designed by Christy O'Connor Jnr.

"At the time, I was wrapped up in the Microsoft thing and was working 60 hours a week; I was travelling a lot. I remember having telephone calls out of Seattle with people back here talking about planning and things like bathrooms. I had to make a decision about what I wanted to do," he recollected.

"My folks had to have a certain amount of faith in me to give me the property to develop. There is more responsibility attached to it because it is our own. If it goes wrong, it is my family who are involved."

And on the face of it, the faith put in McGuinness by his folks and the rest of his family has paid off, as today, he is ultimately



"SUSTAINABLE ENERGY PROVISION AND A GREENER APPROACH TO ALL ELEMENTS OF ROGANSTOWN INFRASTRUCTURE IS VERY IMPORTANT TO ME AND THE WHOLE TEAM HERE"

responsible for the overall management of the hotel, spa and both Roganstown and Swords golf courses.

When the course at Roganstown opened for play in May 2004, the course instantly gained widespread recognition within the Irish community, and a crucial part of that success was the involvement of O'Connor Jnr.

McGuinness and his brother Colm – who was previously the course superintendent at Swords – approached O'Connor during the planning stages to design the course.

The partnership was built on mutual respect and a shared vision for creating a first-rate golf course, with O'Connor's design philosophy focused on creating a course that was challenging yet accessible, with wide fairways and strategically placed hazards.

"Roganstown has all the charm of a country estate, with mature trees and water," said O'Connor Jnr at the time of opening. "The site, on gentle rolling terrain with natural running water, has allowed me to be truly creative and I've exploited water to the full."

O'Connor Jnr. created a 6,588-yard par-71 layout off the whites with the Broadmore River flowing beside the course, and with water guarding all but six holes.

Since opening, Roganstown Golf Club has hosted numerous prestigious tournaments, including the Irish PGA Southern Championship and the Irish PGA Championship.

The club has also been a venue for the EuroPro Tour, further cementing its reputation as a top-tier golfing destination, but in recent years, Roganstown's commitment to the environment – and enhancing sustainability – is perhaps, its most acknowledgeable achievement.

Back in August 2021, Roganstown became the first golfing venue in Ireland to appoint environmental specialists GreenClub as consultants to help fulfil its long-term goal of becoming carbon neutral and provide a sustainable roadmap across all elements of its business to ensure a greener future.

After carrying out a detailed top-to-toe review of all existing infrastructure and energy provision, GreenClub helped Roganstown

develop environmental strategies and create an opportunity for the venue to generate their own renewable energy on-site using the most appropriate power sources – helping to reduce overheads.

Commenting on the collaboration, McGuinness said: "Sustainable energy provision and a greener approach to all elements of Roganstown infrastructure is very important to me and the whole team here.

"We were one of the first golf resorts here in Ireland to install a wood chip burner, rather than rely on LPG gas, and alongside the 60,000 trees we've planted in the past few years, we're at a great starting point.

"In order to secure success for the business in the future, it's imperative that we have a coherent environmental strategy moving forwards, and GreenClub can help us to deliver this in an efficient, responsible way so that we can reap the rewards in the future."

GreenClub chief executive, Liam Greasley, said: "All the team at Roganstown is committed to building a brighter and more environmentally friendly future and we're delighted to be working with our first club in Ireland.

"They have some very ambitious long-term plans, and it will be our job to provide them with a strategy and regular recommendations so that they can achieve their aims in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible, from the initial comprehensive audit and setting out the long-term goals to reducing carbon emissions and the creation of their own renewable energy sources."

And as part of this commitment to reducing carbon emissions, recently Roganstown became the first two-course operator in Ireland to go fully autonomous for all course maintenance, using five hi-tech GPS-RTK robots to cut the fairways.

Perhaps then, McGuinness's commitment to the environment played a small part in his recent business accolade saying: "I'm humbled to have been named Fingal Business Person of the Year 2024.

"I loved my 15 minutes of fame but it was only made possible through the support of my family and the wonderful team at Roganstown." **END**

PGA AROEIRA

PGAAROEIRA.COM

Words Nathan Allen
Location Lisbon, Portugal

More than 50 years have passed since the first tee shot was hit at Aroeira, then a promising new venue just ten miles as the crow flies from Portugal's capital. The original course, designed by Frank Pennink, was an instant hit. Visiting UK journalists didn't take long to christen it the 'Wentworth of Lisbon'; with towering pine trees lining the fairways and a design that rewards accuracy off the tee, it's easy to see why.

But by 2023 the club – now a 36-hole venue thanks to a similarly acclaimed Donald Steel design – had become something of a sleeping giant. The DP World Tour hadn't visited since the late 1990's and, more importantly, Portugal had been transformed into a hotbed of too many great golf courses to choose from.

It's safe to say that the giant has now been awoken thanks to the biggest change







"MANY, MANY PEOPLE LIKED AROEIRA FOR MANY YEARS BUT THEN IT WAS JUST FORGOTTEN, AND IT'S OUR AIM TO BRING IT BACK"

to Aroeira's status quo since Steel's course opened in 2000. In October 2024, the venue officially rebranded to PGA Aroeira Lisboa. At the same time, Pennink and Steel's layouts were elegantly renamed PGA Aroeira No. 1 and PGA Aroeira No. 2 respectively.

Yet there is so much more to this metamorphosis than a new moniker and a few PGA logos slapped on the signage. If anything, the cosmetic tweaks are more a reflection of change on a deeper level than the other way around.

As Nuno Sepulveda puts it: "Many, many people liked Aroeira for many years but then it was just forgotten, and it's our aim to bring it back." Sepulveda is co-CEO at Details – Sports, Hospitality, Leisure, the management company owned by Arrow Global with big plans to reinvigorate PGA Aroeira Lisboa.

"There's a lot of ambition and a lot to be done rebranding it, but it's something that we're so excited about and we believe we will do special things."

As a company, Details certainly have the experience and resources to put Aroeira back on the map. Among the other Portuguese golf venues helmed by Details are the Robert Trent Jones-designed Palmares and the 72-hole Vilamoura Golf collection including the iconic Old Course, but the company also manages 18 hotels across the country.

Those who have visited PGA Aroeira Lisboa in recent years will know that heavy investment at the club began long before the rebrand was publicly announced.

Aroeira No. 1 – formerly known as Pines Classic – reopened this year following a comprehensive project that addressed everything from tee boxes and greens to bunkering and irrigation. No stone was left unturned (literally, thanks to extensive landscaping) in the venue's quest to keep the magic flowing through this 51-year-old track.

As well as the venue's parallels with the famous Wentworth Club, Sepulveda added: "It's just a magical place and we have huge plans. We have just finished revamping PGA Aroeira No. 1, and in 2025, we also hope to start building a new clubhouse and new hotel – a plan that's been in place for a number of years, but we've actually now got started."

It will soon be Aroeira No. 2's (previously called Aroeira Challenge) turn to undergo a similar transformation.

Reputed as a stern test for even veteran players, the course was designed specifically to host top-level tournaments – and it wasn't long before the Ladies European Tour made that goal a reality.

When renovations are complete, you would not bet against the world's best players competing on this Steel modern classic once again.

It is those on-course enhancements, not the rebrand alone, that PGA Aroeira Lisboa is counting on to elevate the resort even further up the rankings – not that it is struggling in that regard! *Golf World* recently named the venue no. 36 among the 100 best resorts in all of continental Europe.

The fact that nearly a quarter of that list is Portuguese should give you an idea of the phenomenal quality that PGA Aroeira Lisboa is surrounded by. With both courses taking huge forward strides in the mid-2020's, plus serious investment away from the fairways, there is no reason why it could not climb even higher next time around.

A quartet of hotel partners means that you'll never be short of options at Aroeira, including the chic and modern Aroeira Lisbon Hotel and Crowne Plaza Caparica Lisbon.

If you like to mix a bit of culture and cuisine into your golf getaways, the virtues of Lisbon as a destination are hard to understate. You even have the option of staying directly in the capital itself. "You can be in any hotel in the city centre, and the golf courses are just a short drive away", says Sepulveda – but you'll also find no shortage of towns, beaches and walking trails less than an hour's journey away. or less.

The resort's clubhouse – with décor inspired by your quintessential British country club – is one of several excellent eateries in the area and is the ideal place to relax and unwind after a day on the fairways.

In fact, this well-roundedness is perhaps PGA Aroeira Lisboa's greatest strength. It is at once serenely secluded and extremely accessible, simultaneously a beach holiday and a city break. The action on the fairways is easily matched what can be discovered off of them.

And with the plans that Details has now set in motion, it seems inevitable that the resort's seat at the top table of European golf will soon be occupied again. **END**





Words Andy Hiseman
Online tewkesburypark.co.uk

PATRICK JONES

GENERAL MANAGER, TEWKESBURY PARK



Tewkesbury Park

Recognised as one of the nation's top hotels, in recent years the 93-bedroom Tewkesbury Park hotel, golf & wellness resort has become one of the UK's most celebrated independent golfing destinations, known as 'England's mini Gleneagles'.

However, just a decade ago, the hotel's prospects weren't anything like as bright. After multiple previous ownership changes and failed management plans, Tewkesbury Park had faded badly.

Avid golfer Chris McIntosh sensed its potential and, after buying Tewkesbury Park in 2014, the family got to work on implementing a ten-year refurbishment programme which, to date, has represented an investment of £13m.

While the initial work was going on closure would have been the easier option, but the McIntosh family kept Tewkesbury Park open during the transition to save jobs, and to retain golf and wellness membership numbers.

Their eventual reward was a complete business turn-around for this charming, hilltop golf hotel with expansive views of the rural Cotswolds and Malvern Hills. A series of accolades have now propelled Tewkesbury Park to international recognition – and secured its status as one of the European golf industry's latest success stories.

Professional hotelier Patrick Jones joined the business as general manager in November 2015 after writing a visionary business plan based on building a fresh, high-quality independent presence in the market.

One thing which attracted Jones to the property was its excellent location, within striking distance of both Bristol and Oxford.

"I'd heard that Tewkesbury Park had new owners" said Jones, "so I went there for a look around. I saw immediately that it could become an outstanding facility, that the geography was superb, and that there weren't many direct competitors in the area.

"However, it was obvious that significant investment would be needed. So I looked deeper into the UK golf market and found that there were plenty of 'good golf, average hotel' and 'average golf, good hotel' experiences out there.

"Putting it simply, my proposal to the family was to have a 'good golf, good hotel' strategy!"

Jones had previously been immersed in the hospitality industry at Swallow Hotels (now Marriott) and at Virgin Hotels (now Handpicked Hotels), before joining The Old Swan and Minster Mill in Oxfordshire, a de Savary family property, as general manager. The Old Swan was a former Hotel Of The Year, and quite similar to Tewkesbury Park with an emphasis on lifestyle and ambience.

"After meeting the McIntosh family, I realised that we had a significant meeting of minds," said Jones. "In Claire White the commercial director – one of the McIntosh family members – I recognised a strong personality match and a shared vision.

"The family had shown great integrity in taking over and keeping Tewkesbury Park open, doing the harder thing and showing loyalty to the existing team rather than putting jobs at risk. I liked that.

"Many hotels have lots of front-end gloss, but are let down by a weak back-of-house setup, and I knew how to avoid that so in



"WE BELIEVE THAT TEWKESBURY PARK NOW OCCUPIES A UNIQUE POSITION IN THE BRITISH GOLF MARKET"

November 2015 I was lucky enough to join the business while it was still in an early evolutionary stage."

Sharing the belief that mid-market hotels get uncomfortably squeezed from both sides, Jones and the McIntosh family started to implement changes which would not only reposition and rescue this historic property – built on the site of the 1471 Battle Of Tewkesbury – but which would also establish a new high bar in the UK to prove that a small, independent golf hotel can compete successfully with the giant corporate venues.

"Although things like COVID subsequently placed huge challenges in our path, we have more or less achieved that very same original plan and vision which Claire and I worked towards, when we started," said Jones.

Early on, they invested in upgrading their largest asset – the golf course.

Paul Hathaway was appointed as course manager, with a collection of new Toro machinery to use. "Paul is an amazing individual," said Jones. "He and his team have transformed the golf course here at Tewkesbury Park, and continue to present it in amazing condition to this day."

Working closely with two advisors – John Clarkin from Turfgrass and Peter McEvoy OBE – Chris McIntosh, Paul Hathaway and the Tewkesbury Park greenkeeping team began an extensive refurbishment plan on the golf course's playing surfaces.

"We stayed true to the vision of our original golf architect, Frank Pennink, whose Vilamoura Old Course in Portugal is among the most revered in the Algarve. Our Par 72, 18-hole golf course, The Deerpark, is now acknowledged as being one of the best-conditioned golf courses in the West of England," said Jones.

But away from the greens Tewkesbury Park faced an even greater challenge. Its hotel, health and conferencing facilities also needed to be transformed, or the whole project would be in danger of failure.

"Right from the start we decided to push the whole product well up-market, while still staying true to certain key business segments – golf, short breaks, weddings & events, and the conference market," said Jones.

"Over a six-year period we refurbished all guest bedrooms, and all 93 are now beautifully-presented.

"Each has a stunning view; every guest is guaranteed a memorable stay."

In a spectacular statement of intent, in spring 2019 the McIntosh family invested around £1 million in just nine rooms, creating Tewkesbury Park's remarkable historic rooms collection, available in two levels – Opulence and Indulgence – with all rooms named after historic figures from the Battle of Tewkesbury.

These rooms, refurbished to an exceptionally high quality standard, helped to position Tewkesbury Park nationally at a whole new level, creating a reputation for a new level of luxury among English golf hotels.

"We also made major improvements to our Mint restaurant, to our health, swim and wellness facilities, and we also invested in an all-new sustainable combined heat & power unit, which now heats our resort.

"However, the summer 2017 opening of our Cotswold Suite meetings and conference centre was probably our biggest game-changer," added Jones.

When Condé Nast Johansens named Tewkesbury Park as the UK and Ireland's #1 Meetings & Conference venue in 2023, the team had its biggest reward yet.

"The awards had already been coming our way thick and fast," said Jones. "When *The Sunday Times* listed us among their Top 100 British Hotels in 2019, Tewkesbury Park was one of only four golf hotels to make the list. The fact that the other three were Gleneagles, Roxburghe and Rockliffe Hall says volumes about how far we had come in just five amazing years."

He continued: "From the moment that a golfer sinks into the Hypnos bed in their hotel room at Tewkesbury Park, they know they have made a good choice. Our independence works in our favour, and we can be quirky in our style, and individual in our levels of service – we are quite different."

Delivering the vision has also delivered the required numbers. "Having broken our all-time record as regards golf bookings in 2023, we are on course to repeat it in 2024," said Jones.

"We believe that Tewkesbury Park now occupies a unique position in the British golf market as the best small golf hotel in the nation, and we are hoping that many new friends will come to visit us – and to play The Deerpark – for the first time in 2025!" **END**

PLEDGE2CHECK

REFLECTING ON A GAME-CHANGING INITIATIVE FOR GOLF



When did you last check your skin? It's a question many golfers might not have considered, but it's one worth asking. Much like checking for lumps or bumps elsewhere on your body, a regular skin check is a vital step in spotting early signs of skin cancer.

The Melanoma Fund, as part of its Slip! Slap! Swing! campaign, recently launched Pledge2Check – an initiative encouraging golfers and greenkeepers to commit to monthly skin checks.

The campaign ran throughout November, with participants now in a six-month commitment to support their skin health.

With over 600 individuals from across the golfing community registered to take part, this marks a significant step in raising awareness of skin health, and one that provides an excellent platform for growth, with a community aware of the risks associated with UV exposure, which is needed in the sport.

If you did not sign up, there is no reason why you cannot take this message on-board and add regular skin checks to your own routines. Golfers and greenkeepers are among those most at risk of skin cancer due to prolonged outdoor exposure.

Greenkeepers work up to 1,400 hours outdoors annually and golfers spend an average of 600 hours on the course each year. This increases the likelihood of developing skin cancer by 2.4 times compared to the general population.

Despite this, many in the golfing world rarely think to check their skin regularly – or take sun protection seriously – but that could soon be about to change.

Michelle Baker, CEO of the Melanoma Fund, explains: "Melanoma lurks in every golf club, often going unnoticed until it's too late. Skin cancer can remain silent in its early stages, which is why regular checks are so important.

"If this initiative saves even one life, the impact will be immense – not just for the individual but for their entire circle of family and friends."

Skin cancer is the UK's most common cancer, divided into two main types: melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer (NMSC).

Melanoma – the UK's fifth most common cancer, and the more serious type – develops in melanocytes (pigment-producing cells) and is known for its ability to grow down and spread around the body if not caught early.

It often appears as a mole or lesion that changes in size, shape, or colour, or as a new, unusual growth.

NMSC is more common but typically less severe. It includes basal cell carcinoma (BCC), presenting as slow-growing pearly bumps, and squamous cell carcinoma (SCC), which often appears as scaly or crusty patches. While these cancers rarely spread, they can cause localised damage if untreated.

Both types are linked to UV exposure, making regular skin checks vital, especially for those spending significant time outdoors, like golfers and greenkeepers. Early detection can save lives and make treatment simpler, and the Melanoma Fund is determined to raise awareness of the issue.





"WITH GOLFERS AND GREENKEEPERS AT A SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER RISK OF SKIN CANCER DUE TO PROLONGED SUN EXPOSURE, THIS COLLABORATION CAN MAKE A TANGIBLE DIFFERENCE TO THOSE IN YOUR CLUB"

"Because everyone will benefit from a skin check, the Melanoma Fund has provided some top-line information to ensure you don't miss out," said Baker.

"Performing a skin check is simple and doesn't take much time, but it does require consistency to create a habit, and a thorough examination, so don't rush it.

"Examine all areas of your body starting with your face, scalp, neck, and ears. Work your way down, checking your arms, hands, chest, back, abdomen, legs, feet, and soles. Don't forget less obvious areas like under your nails, between your fingers and toes, and behind your ears.

"Ask for help: If you can, enlist a partner or friend to check places you can't easily see, such as your back and scalp."

When checking your skin, keep an eye out for the following warning signs, using the ABCDE rule for moles as a guide...

A – Asymmetry: One half of the mole doesn't match the other;

B – Border: Edges are irregular, blurred, or notched;

C – Colour: Uneven colours, including shades of brown, black, red, white, or blue;

D – Diameter: Larger than 6mm (about the size of a pencil eraser), although melanomas can be smaller;

E – Evolving: Any changes in size, shape, colour, or symptoms like itching or bleeding.

"Additionally, look out for new growths or spots that appear suddenly; sores that don't heal and any lumps or lesions that itch, crust, or bleed," added Baker.

"If you spot anything unusual, don't panic, but do act. Early detection is key, so book an appointment with your GP for further examination."

While Pledge2Check focused on November, the broader Slip! Slap! Swing! campaign will relaunch in spring 2025, providing year-round resources for golf clubs to promote sun safety and skin cancer prevention.

This highly successful initiative is supported by nearly every golf organisation, and has already gained significant traction across the UK, with hundreds of clubs accredited, backing its mission to make sun protection awareness in golf a priority.

Golf clubs can sign up to the campaign for free and benefit from exclusive resources including posters, guides, and sunscreen stations tailored for the golfing community, plus ongoing educational content and awareness campaigns delivered directly to clubs.

Earlier this year 100 free sunscreen dispensers were installed at clubs, with each sunboard containing a sunscreen dispenser, loaded with a one litre cartridge of SPF50 Stokoderm sunscreen, and a UV dial to support educational information on how, when, and why to apply.

Accreditation demonstrates a club's commitment to member welfare, and earlier this year, 59club added sun protection to its evaluation criteria ensuring clubs stayed ahead of the curve.

"This isn't just about improving awareness — it's about saving lives," said Baker. "Together, let's make regular skin checks as essential to golf as cleaning your clubs or perfecting your swing and for next year, let's ensure that more clubs take sun protection awareness seriously, because if not, why not?"

Whilst Baker's focus has been on the Pledge2Check and Slip! Slap! Swing! campaigns, she is also asking GMs at golf clubs to consider supporting the Melanoma Fund in 2025 as the club's chosen charity.

"By partnering with us, you're not only supporting a critical cause but also addressing an issue directly relevant to the golfing community," she asserts.

"With golfers and greenkeepers at a significantly higher risk of skin cancer due to prolonged sun exposure, this collaboration can make a tangible difference to those in your club."

The partnership comes with dedicated and personal support from Baker, including assistance with fundraising initiatives, events, access to skin experts and engaging awareness talks tailored to your members and staff.

"Choosing the Melanoma Fund as your club's dedicated charity provides a unique opportunity to raise awareness, enhance member welfare, and give back to your club in a meaningful way, potentially saving lives within your own community," said Baker. **END**



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"COMPROMISE IS NOT A WEAKNESS; RATHER, IT IS AN ESSENTIAL
TOOL FOR NAVIGATING COMPLEX SITUATIONS"



Words

William Swan
Principal
Swan Golf Designs



Sadly, and often tragically, compromise seems to be out of favour these days. In areas such as war, politics, energy, the economy, and the environment, one person's right is frequently another person's wrong. However, compromise is not a weakness; rather, it is an essential tool for navigating complex situations.

The world consistently calls on us to find balance, acknowledging that very few circumstances can be reduced to simple either/or, good/bad, or win/lose outcomes.

Golf courses are no exception, and those responsible for their design, management, and maintenance face important decisions every day. Should the course remain open in all conditions, or should it be closed when wet or frozen to protect it from long-term damage?

Should golfers tee off at first light, or should the greenstaff be given time to prepare ahead of play? Do we prioritise contoured putting surfaces that require slower green speeds, or opt for faster, flatter greens? Should trees be preserved for their beauty and ecological value, or removed to create better playing conditions?

There is no single answer that applies to every golf course. Each situation offers an opportunity to strike a thoughtful balance that benefits everyone. In both golf and life, the best decisions come from considering all aspects and embracing compromise as a means of creating positive outcomes for all involved. **END**

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