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# BIGGA Special Projects Award 2020

Construction of new tees on the 14<sup>th</sup> hole  
at Surbiton Golf Club

Andrew Kerr, Head Greenkeeper, SGC

# Background to the project

- The project was initially driven by a desire on the part of the club to restore the course to a length of over 6,000 yards. The course was about to lose some length as part of new course measurements required by England Golf and the need to allow slightly more room behind the competition tees. The 14<sup>th</sup> hole had opportunities for extension as the area behind the existing tee was woodland and relatively flat for the first 30 yards or so. However, Andrew and our professional, Paul Milton, saw the potential to create an iconic hole by going even further back and building two new tees within the woodland area.
- The problem was that the area involved was forested, with dense undergrowth, and rose steeply towards the rear.
- The first new tee, roughly on the same level as the existing tee, extended the length of the hole by some 35 yards. The new back tee extends the hole by some 70 yards (from 501 to 575 yards) and has been constructed at a higher level which provides a tremendous view of the whole hole including the flag on the distant green which could never be seen from the old tee (see photographs in the text below).
- Andrew also saw an opportunity to integrate this project into the club's wider programme of work relating to forestry and woodland management, to the overall ecology of the course, and to become part of the activity the club is initiating with local schools to provide actual examples of ecology projects.
- Work began in the autumn of 2018 and the tees themselves were in place by April 2019. The back tee was officially opened when Paul Milton hit the first drive later in April. Work is continuing in relation to pathways, woodland management, and an eco-toilet to be installed nearby the tees.
- The work was handled entirely by Andrew and his team with a saving to the club in the region of £55,000 when compared to the use of outside contractors.

# The work involved: initial steps

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- Initially, the project involved extensive forestry clearing and the removal of areas of weed and rhododendrons. The photographs below show the area prior to work commencing with Andrew and Paul standing to indicate the position of the back tee.
- The upper photograph shows the view from the rear of the back tee position looking towards the fairway
- The lower photograph shows a side view of the proposed back tee looking from the point of access and pathway route





# The work involved: further steps

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- Work to remove trees, bushes and undergrowth was conducted entirely in-house
- This was followed by the extensive import of earth from other course projects (mainly drainage projects, new bunkers and fairway aeration) to construct the base of the two new tees
- The photographs show the area after initial forestry work and basic tee construction
- Note the logs being retained for future use in the construction of pathways, an eco-toilet, for wildlife habitats, and for a shelter to be built behind the back tee

# Woodland management and ecology

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- From the beginning of the project attention was given to woodland management and ecology of the new tees and their surrounding areas
- This work involved many interrelated aspects including:
  - Bird boxes and bat boxes
  - Wildlife habitats in the surrounding ground
  - Natural woodland flowers (e.g. the English bluebells which can be seen in the accompanying photograph)
  - Enhancing the general woodland ecology of the course




# Greens team development

- From the beginning, this project was seen as an opportunity to develop the skills, expertise and experience of the greens staff team
- As noted previously, all the work was conducted in-house
- Greens staff members were involved from the beginning to gain experience of project planning and budgeting, irrigation management etc
- They were then directly involved in the tree felling work, the forestry clearance and subsequent woodland management (what to cut down and what to preserve), and the construction of the tee beds
- Finally, they were involved in the preparation and seeding of the tees themselves together with their subsequent management and preparation
- These activities greatly contributed to the external study undertaken as an ongoing process by almost all the members of the greens staff team

# Further development

- As noted earlier, this project was seen as a component of the club's integrated development plan
- Reference to development of the greens staff team has been made previously, but further related activities include:
  - Cross community involvement: the club is seeking to involve local schools and related groups (Scouts etc) in the ecology aspects of a golf course and the general management of woodland areas
  - Involvement of club members: we have made presentations to members throughout the project with the aim of involving them in not just the project, but the related subjects of ecology, woodland management, wildlife preservation etc



# Conclusions

- Andrew and his team have taken a problem area (loss of length on the course due to new measurement requirements) and transformed it into an opportunity
- The outcome is a truly iconic hole which will benefit the club in terms of enjoyment for its members and the recruitment of new members
- However, they have gone further than that, by respecting and developing the ecological elements of the project and by seeking to involve local schools in those aspects
- Finally, by involving members throughout the project, they have helped to change the way in which members think about their course
- All this has been done in-house at huge savings to the club when compared to the use of outside contractors