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**SHAPING SUCCESS**  
Main picture, part of the investment in new JCB machinery by John Greasley, and above, the 16th hole at Touquet La Mer Hole, post construction

## Family Milestone for John Greasley

This year marks the 30th anniversary of John Greasley’s association with golf. Aidan Patrick talks with father and son, John and Charlie, to talk about the past and the future.

The golf course construction industry has seen its fair share of casualties over the years, as the golf industry has endured the ‘boom and bust’ periods over the past few decades.

Perhaps then, it is even more of a milestone for a company that specialises only in golf, to be marking its 30th anniversary this year.

Founded in 1985 by John Greasley, the company, which today still bears his name, completed its first nine-hole course with architect Martin Hawtree on a reclaimed chemical tip in Widnes, Cheshire, for Halton Borough Council in 1985 – in 1976 Greasley had built the original nine-hole course with Hawtree at the same location, working in partnership with another contractor.

The company has seen many highs and lows during the past 30 years, and has witnessed the boom times of the 90s together with the difficult trading years after the global crash of 2008.

Having never expanded beyond its capabilities, and having always remained in total control of the company, Greasley has been able to react and successfully navigate through the good and difficult times as he explains.

“The market has improved greatly over the past two years and we have invested heavily in a replacement programme for our machinery,” he says.

“With our commitment to working safely as a CHAS accredited company, we also recently achieved ISO 9001 Quality Management and ISO 14001 Environmental Management Certification to demonstrate our capabilities to clients.”

New build golf projects are few and far between at the moment, especially in the UK, so Greasley is proud of the fact that his company has started work on a new nine-hole course at Ferrybridge in West Yorkshire. Construction works started in April and it is due to be seeded down in early August.

“SSE – owner and operator of Ferrybridge ‘C’ Power Station – made a commitment to secure replacement playing facilities for the members of Ferrybridge Golf Club after part of their previous course was required to provide space for a new Multifuel power station,” explained John Greasley.

The project, which has been designed by Simon Gidman, has unearthed some interesting archaeological finds, includ-



**FATHER AND SON**  
Charlie (left) with father, John Greasley



**ENGLISHMEN ABROAD**  
The reconstructed, 9th green at Furesø Golf Club, Denmark, designed by Tom Mackenzie

ing a Roman chariot which was found nearby during the A1 M construction, adding to the history of this particular site.

"We first became involved in the project with SSE back in 2012, when we were commissioned to replace the power company's existing nine-hole golf course," explained Gidman.

"SSE were in the process of enlarging their premises to incorporate a new Waste to Energy plant, and the old course had been given up so that excavation materials, some 50,000 m<sup>3</sup> of subsoil and 8,000 m<sup>3</sup> of topsoil, could be stored on the site; the planning gain being that this material was to be taken across to the site to form the new course, and not hauled up and down the main roads.

"The detailed design of the course was heavily influenced by both planning conditions – we weren't allowed to move any topsoil for fear of archaeological damage – and of course the fact that we needed to incorporate a vast amount of subsoil onto the site.

"The site in many ways demands a cut and fill approach rather than one based purely on fill, and much of the design has centred on trying to merge the proposed with the existing so that the existing site contours are not unduly disturbed.

"Much of the groundworks are finished now and the course is shaping up very well. A lot of care and attention has been paid by the machine shapers to developing the detail on the plans – in particular the greens and surrounds – and these

will be a major feature of the new course when it opens in 2017."

Another project where John Greasley Limited has been working on, is Verulam Golf Club, Hertfordshire. Designed by James Braid, the course was formally opened on April 27, 1912 by captain, Samuel Ryder – who's idea of a match between British and American golfers is now known as the Ryder Cup.

"The origin and background to the project stemmed from the club's ambition to revert the course bunkering back to the James Braid style and design, in conjunction with solving the issues faced by many clubs with regards to bunkers," said Charlie Greasley.

"Being on a hoggin/gravel subsoil the club suffered with large quantities of stone contaminating the bunker sand along with having a mixed array of large, steep, high sand faced bunkers that were both a maintenance headache, unfair to play out of and inconsistent – the project brief was therefore threefold.

"Firstly to re-position/reconstruct all bunkers to the original Braid layout and design, with slight amendments to suit the modern game, including the filling of those no longer applicable.

"Secondly, to create bunkers free from stones with uncontaminated sand that plays consistently, and thirdly to reduce the overall sand area and maintenance/reinstatement requirements, particularly after periods of heavy rain.

"We were selected as the preferred contractor based on a combination of price, previous project portfolio and abil-

ity to offer the installation of our proprietary 'HyLine' bunker liner as part of the package.

"During the autumn of 2013, a total of 32 bunkers have been reshaped and lined on the back nine holes, with the work on the front nine completed at the end of 2014 – 58 bunkers in total have been refurbished or constructed since the project was completed."

The work has proved a great success with Verulam Golf Club with general manager, Robin Farrer saying: "The bunker project started with an early consultation between an architect and members of the golf club, and following the award of the contract, daily consultation on site with the John Greasley team.

"The interpretation of the plans were first class, and the advice and construction techniques used resulted in a consistent and outstanding visual bunker presentation throughout the course, which has received praise from members, visiting societies and guests," added Farrer.

However, it's not just in the UK that John Greasley has earned a reputation as one of the industry's leading golf course construction companies... Europe is also starting to sit-up and take notice.

Last year, the company completed a 27-hole rebuild of greens, surrounds, bunkering and tees at Furesø Golf Club, Birkerød, near Copenhagen, Denmark, with the substantial alterations designed by Tom Mackenzie of Mackenzie and Ebert, resulting in a dramatic improvement.



**BEACHED BALL**  
The HyLine Bunker Liner, complete with drainage channel, before sand is installed

“I have been very impressed with the long term performance of the liner in terms of having consistent, stone free bunkers that do not suffer with any significant wash out”

The intensive programme was achieved by three teams, each working in parallel with each other, and carrying out the stripping, earthworks, shaping, drainage, rootzoning and re-soiling operations.

A further team of finishers followed behind, carrying out the cultivation, final preparation and seeding, with the course fully open for play this month.

The La Mer Course, at Le Touquet in France, is another course which has benefited from the attention to detail on offer from John Greasley Limited.

“This fabulous links course was built in 1931 by Harry Colt, and is ranked as one of the best 100 courses in Europe,” said John Greasley.

“Many aspects of the course had either changed, deteriorated, been reconstructed or damaged over the last 70 years, so the long term strategy is to restore this course to its original Colt design full glory, and help restore its rightful position as one of the leading courses in Europe.

“Holes 11 to 16 have been totally rebuilt over the last two years with new greens constructed, new tees integrated within the dunes along with re-bunkering and reshaping to the fairways.

“The majority of features are being re-turfed to ensure they are open for play next Spring,” continued Greasley.

The works are being supervised by Patrice Boissannas with Frank Pont, the golf course architect, responsible for the design changes.

Four years ago, John Greasley Limited undertook its first HyLine Bunker Liner installation at Farleigh Golf Club, Surrey, so GMé asked course manager, Michael Mann, if HyLine had stood the test of time.

“We installed HyLine to over 100 bunkers on 18 holes of our 27-hole parkland course during the summer of 2011,” said Mann, “and I have been very impressed with the long term performance of the liner in terms of having consistent, stone free bunkers that do not suffer with any significant wash out.

“After the four year period I have not seen any depletion or change in the colour, playability or drainage performance since the bunkers were originally reconstructed.”

Mann’s main maintenance cost is the labour required in daily raking and the occasional topping up and re-distribution of sand within the bunkers, and over the 18 holes installed with HyLine, Mann’s maximum annual sand requirement is between 20 and 30 tonnes.

“The first nine holes of our 27-hole course were lined with inverted turf,” added Mann. “The sand in these bunkers has been heavily contaminated with the lining turf naturally breaking down and mixing with the bunker sand, where as our HyLine bunkers appear and play very differently.”

As golf contractors go, father and son, John and Charlie Greasley are set fair for another number of years working on courses all over Europe. **GMé**