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ARCHERFIELD LINKS - THE CREATION OF A SUCCESSFUL PRIVATE MEMBERS' GOLF CLUB

Executive Summary (263 words)

This is the story of a new build golf club that changed the Scottish golfing status quo. In under 10 years, through a clearly defined and distinctive positioning in the marketplace and a very clear and consistent brand story, Archerfield became one of Scotland's most sought after golfing destinations.

After an initial slow start to recruit members, with year one membership reaching just 35, Tayburn were brought in to create a clearly defined positioning and visual identity for the club. From the unpromising beginnings the club now has over 800 members with each new member paying a debenture joining fee of £30,000 and an annual subscription of £1,950, which together with spend in the clubhouse and pro shop delivers revenue of £400,000 per annum. Additionally, a new concept of Residential Membership has been introduced generating an extra £250,000 in annual revenue.

The Archerfield branding had to use the existing logo, which the owner had already commissioned, but other than that there were no restrictions.

Working with the Club's newly appointed General Manager Tayburn developed a clear brand positioning, did a very distinctive and, for a golf club, quite different look and feel. We carried this communication style through direct mail, print items and the website.

Today, as well as having a very healthy membership together with new revenue streams as new accommodation options and a brand new spa have been created, Archerfield is host to high profile tournaments such as the Ladies Scottish Open and celebrity sporting members including Sir Ian Botham and Alan Shearer.

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AND AN ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION OF £1,950**

Project overview

Outline of project brief

Archerfield Links Golf Club had been created from a derelict country house estate and opened in 2005. For the first twelve months the development attracted a lot of attention but very few members, with membership at the end of the first year sitting at 35, well short of the long-term target of 1,000. To join, members were required to buy a £15,000 debenture plus pay a £1,250 per annum subscription.

Many Scottish golfers felt that Archerfield Links had no real right to charge such a substantial sum for entry to the club, let alone such a high annual subscription. In the view of many golf connoisseurs Archerfield Links lacked any real golfing heritage or pedigree and the two courses, whilst considered pretty good by those that had played them, had been designed by DJ Russell, a well known player on the European Tour, but not well known as a course designer. Also, other than a desire to become an exclusive private members' golf club and the resource to build exceptional facilities, there was no real vision or plan as to how this was going to be achieved. And as if this wasn't enough there was the scepticism of Edinburgh's golfing community about the newcomer's parentage – "What do they know about running a golf club?"

Then at the end of the first year Archerfield appointed a new General Manager, someone with whom Tayburn had worked with previously when he had been Director of Golf at the world famous Gleneagles Hotel.

Working together, the objectives were set as:

- **Create a clearly defined brand positioning**
- **Develop a distinctive look and feel for the club**
- **Carry the visual equity across all external communication**
- **Recruit new members to achieve 700 by 2010 (in five years) and 1,000 by 2015 (after 10 years).**

Description

Archerfield Links is a private members' golf club located on an East Lothian country estate about 40 minutes drive from the centre of Edinburgh.

The club has a long-term ambition for 1,000 members and additionally, to create a portfolio of luxury accommodation and resort facilities on the estate that would be open to visitors who could also use the golf courses when not being used by members.

Overview of the market

To add to the challenges facing Archerfield, golf club membership in Scotland is in long-term decline following a boom in golf course construction in the 1990s. In the decade 1990-1999 there was a 20% increase in the number of golf courses in Scotland and yet only a 5% increase in golf club membership which meant that many waiting lists evaporated and a lot of clubs have struggled financially. This wasn't confined to any one sector of the market, a fact demonstrated by Loch Lomond, Scotland's most exclusive private members' golf club, which went into administration in 2008.

In the last three years, 2008/9, 2009/10 and 2010/11 golf club membership in Scotland has declined by 2.6%, 1.9% and 1.4% respectively.¹

It was clear that with a backdrop of an oversupply of golf courses in Scotland and doubts about the credibility of Archerfield as a serious player in the exclusive golf market, reaching the mid-term objective of 700+ members was going to be a stretching target.

The decision to go the debenture route had been a logical one as it effectively ties the member in over a long term as well as creating a financial barrier to entry that meant the club could claim an exclusive cachet from day one. Loch Lomond had set a precedent for debenture membership however it is not the conventional route to golf club membership in Scotland, with most clubs having a one-off joining fee roughly equivalent to a year's subscription.

Given the doubts being raised about Archerfield Links' parentage and pedigree, it was little wonder sales of debentures were proving hard to come by

¹ Source: Scottish Golf Union

Project launch date

We started work on the project at the end of the first season in late 2005, with a view to having material ready in early 2006 to recruit members for the summer of 2006.

Size of design budget

The initial budget to create the look and feel, the written tone of voice and the first batch of print material was just £25,000.

Outline of design solution (376 words)

A key requirement was to create a distinctive positioning for Archerfield Links that would allow it to carve a niche in a competitive and crowded market place. Tayburn worked with Archerfield to map out a positioning that allowed Archerfield to claim a place as one of Scotland's elite private members' golf clubs.

We knew that we were not able to challenge Scotland's traditional, establishment golf clubs on their own fairway, as Archerfield Links didn't have the golfing heritage or pedigree. However, whilst few would argue that Archerfield's two courses Fidra and Dirleton have the same appeal as an Open Championship course like Muirfield, Turnberry or the Old Course, they were both considered pretty good courses and they had the endorsement of two golfing Majors winners, Ian Woosnam and Gary Player, both of whom had played Archerfield shortly after it opened.

We felt that the look and feel of Archerfield should be contemporary to distance it from the more traditional 'establishment' competitors.

The typeface chosen was Din and the 'house colour' a distinctive grey PMS447 was used as a duotone on the front cover of all print items. The positioning copy line was:


"We play a different game"

All print material had a distinctive typographical layout on the front cover and strong photography was used to maximum advantage throughout every item.

To differentiate the non-golfing parts of Archerfield, the same typography was utilised but a different colour was used to flood the cover of the relevant print item – in the case of the restored Archerfield House a deep red and for corporate membership, a deep green.

This design solution put Archerfield in a different place to traditional golf clubs where good design came some way down the list of priorities. This was because while working with Archerfield we identified our target as a new breed of golfer – keen to play on good courses and in quality surroundings, but not hide bound by many of the petty rules and dress codes of the more traditional establishment. Our new breed of golfer was more likely to be wearing Armani and Hugo Boss casual wear than cavalry twill slacks and a club tie. It was important that our visual identity for Archerfield reflected this more style-conscious and affluent golfer.

The initial invitation



WOOSNAM SAYS IT'S GOOD. PLAYER SAYS IT'S GOOD. NOW FOR THE OPINION THAT REALLY COUNTS...

YOURS.

AN EXCLUSIVE INVITATION TO PLAY ON THE FIDRA LINKS. WHY NOT COME AND PASS YOUR OWN VERDICT?

A unique mixture of pine forest and superb links golf on the historic Archerfield Estate, we think you'll find there's plenty to challenge you, whatever your level. Come and enjoy a preview of membership and a round on the Fiddlers' Links at Archerfield Links, at the special member's guest rate of just £45. You're welcome to bring up to three guests with you, each of whom will enjoy the same special rate.

DISCOVER THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP
The Archerfield Links Club has been created to play a different game. Great golf of course, but more welcoming. More relaxing. Made in keeping with the 19th Century. Take time with your round to discover more about membership at The Archerfield Links Club.

There are a limited number of introductory rounds available, so to ensure you are able to get a discounted first time, we suggest you make your reservation as soon as possible.

To book a first time please call a member of the golf membership team on 01620 856542 or email us at membership@archerfieldgolfclub.com. We look forward to hearing from you soon.



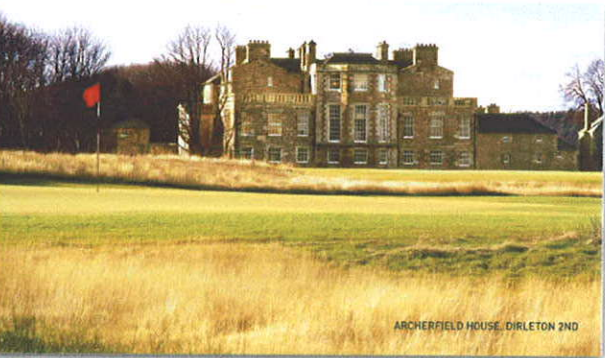
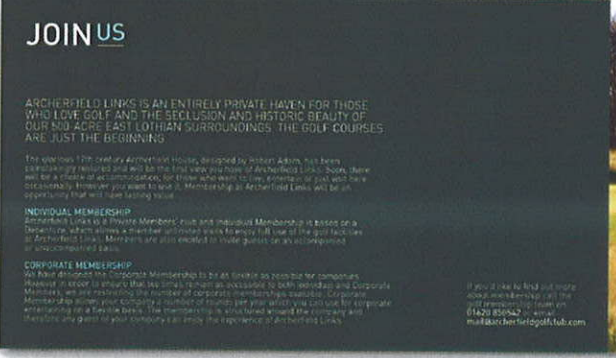
FIDRA 7TH




WE PLAY A DIFFERENT GAME

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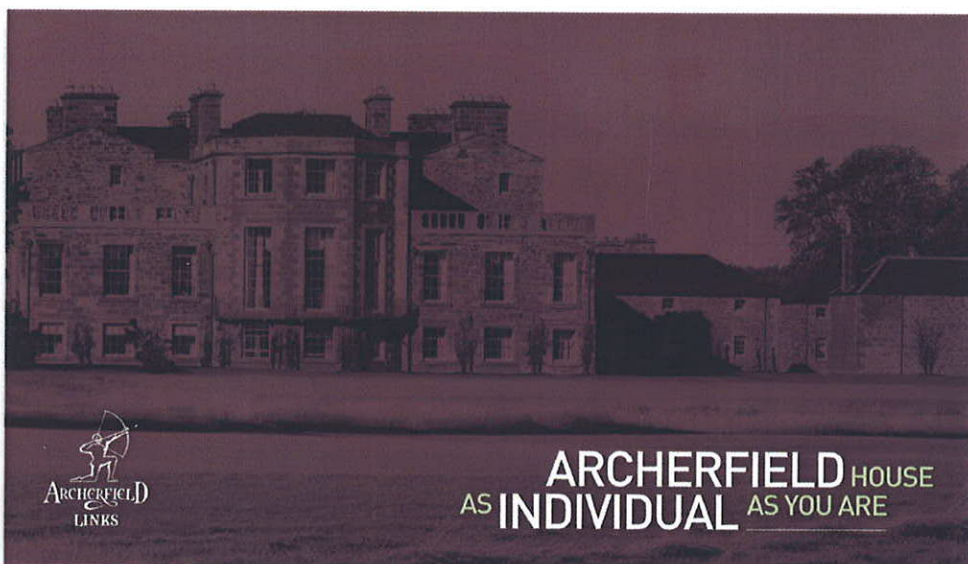
The follow up brochure



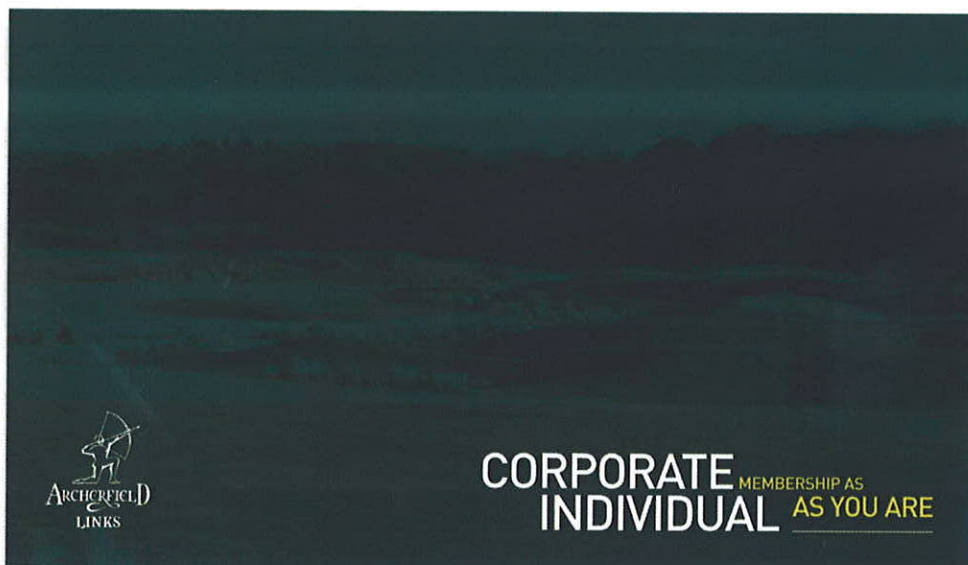
The print family using colour to differentiate specific products



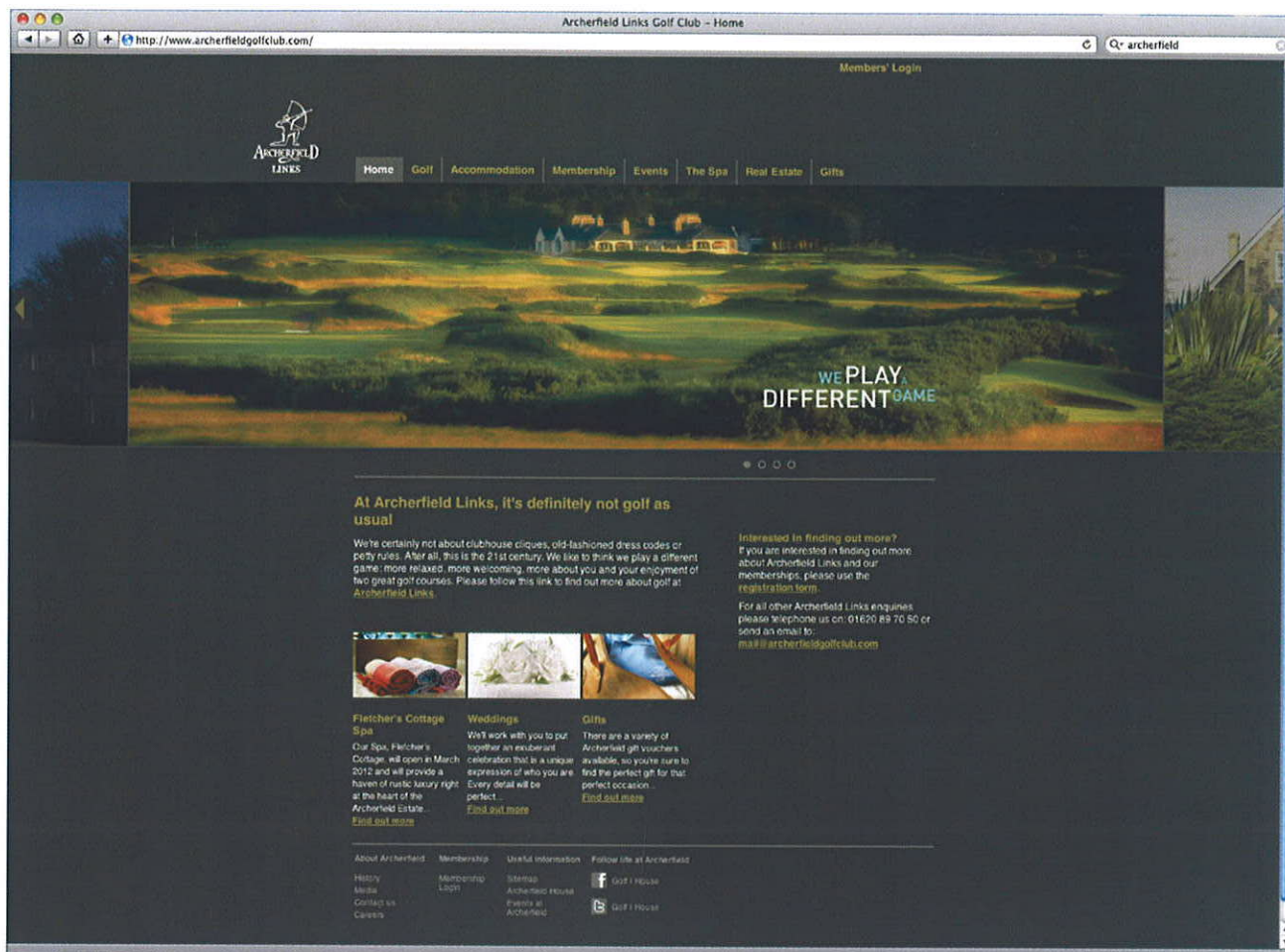
Members brochure



Archerfield House brochure



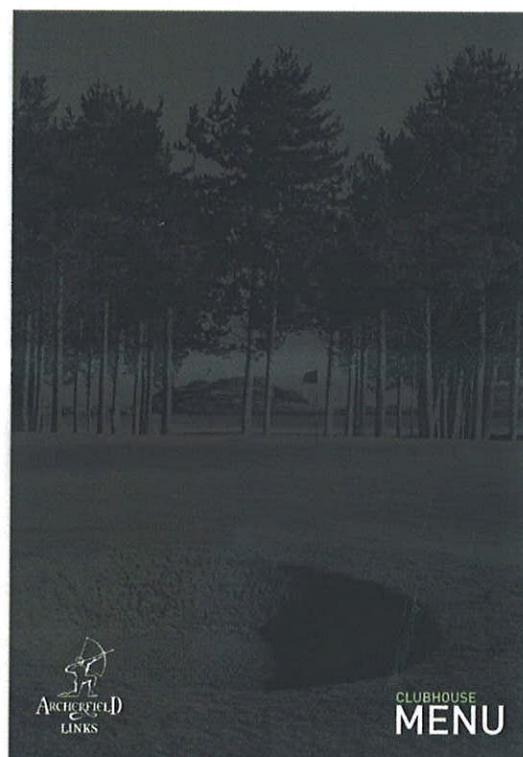
Corporate membership brochure



Website



Advert



Clubhouse menu

Summary of results

Since the launch of the new Archerfield Links proposition in 2006:

- Membership has climbed from 35 members to its current level of just under 800
- The annual subscription has risen from £1,100 to £1,950
- The joining debenture fee has risen in price from £15,000 to £30,000
- In the 12 months to July 2011, 40 new members joined reflecting continuing demand for the Archerfield product
- The Residential Membership programme, which was launched in 2010, now has 90 members.

Financially this represents a debenture deposit total of £1.2m and a total revenue income from subscriptions of £1.5m. In addition, each member generates an average annual revenue spend through food and beverage outlets, pro shop purchases and accommodation hire of £500, generating almost £400,000 in income. Residential membership has generated in excess of £250,000 income.

In the face of a volatile economic climate with an uncertain outlook and a fall-off in the demand for golf club membership in Scotland, Archerfield Links has been able to demonstrate that a well thought through positioning and strategy, allied to an excellent product, can pay rich dividends.

Rather than try and take on the golfing establishment on their terms Archerfield has clearly differentiated itself as appealing to a younger, affluent, cash rich and style conscious 'new money' audience.

Other influencing factors

The fact that Archerfield was launched in the mid 1980s at the height of the credit fuelled consumer boom undoubtedly helped the project to take off, but the key differentiator that good design and marketing brought was to take an initially failing product and make it successful and, as the results show, continue to generate demand for the product well after the credit bubble had burst.

Research sources

The Scottish Golf Union has been very helpful in providing membership data for the golf market in Scotland.