

AIG Women's Open

Royal Lytham and St Annes | July 30-August 2 2026

Head Greenkeeper

Paul Smith

- Years as Superintendent: 27
- Previous Courses: St Annes Old Links. Furness Golf Club
- Education: HND Turf Science and Golf Course Management
- Professional Tournaments Hosted: This is Smith's 5th Women's Open Championship. He's also hosted The Open in 2001 and 2012, The Senior Open in 2019, The Walker Cup in 2015, The Amateur Championship in 2007 and 2022, The English Amateur in 2000, and The Annual Lytham Trophy from 2000.

Other Key Agronomy Personnel

- Deputy Head Greenkeeper: Craig Harrison
- First Assistant: Richard Whittaker
- Mechanic: Glenn Mullin
- Greenkeeper: Mark Davies, Chris Morris, Callum Davies, Matthew Hodgkinson, Kinlay Barrett, Oliver Ashton, Dean Glover, Kit Gregory, Jamie Cook
- Gardener: James Hutchinson
- Apprentice Greenkeeper: Jacob Baron

Agronomy Employees: 15

Tournament Volunteers: 20

Course Architect

George Lowe (1886)

Renovations: Herbert Fowler (1902), HS Colt (1909-1925), CK Cotton (1958), Martin Ebert (2009-2024)

Tournament Set-Up

- Par: 70
- Yardage: 6,601

Turfgrass

- Greens: 4.5mm bench - Browntop Bent 44%, Fescue 21%, Poa Annua 33%, Yorkshire Fog 2%, Perennial Ryegrass 1%, Others <1%
- Collars: 12mm bench - Browntop Bent 28%, Fescue 44%, Poa Annua 18%, Yorkshire Fog 2%, Perennial Ryegrass 6%, Others 2%
- Approaches: 12mm bench - Browntop Bent 28%, Fescue 44%, Poa Annua 18%, Yorkshire Fog 2%, Perennial Ryegrass 6%, Others 2%
- Tees: 9mm bench - Browntop Bent 45%, Fescue 24%, Poa Annua 17%, Smooth Stalked Meadow Grass 9%, Yorkshire Fog 1%, Perennial Ryegrass 3%, Others 1%
- Fairways: 12mm bench - Browntop Bent 28%, Fescue 44%, Poa Annua 18%, Yorkshire Fog 2%, Perennial Ryegrass 6%, Others 2%
- Rough: 40mm actual HOC - Browntop Bent 28%, Fescue 61%, Poa Annua 5%, Yorkshire Fog 2%, Perennial Ryegrass 3%, Others 1%

Course Statistics

- Average Green Size: 575m
- Total Property Size: 60ha
- Acres of Fairway: 10ha
- Area of Semi Rough: 4ha
- Number of Sand Bunkers: 166
- Soil Conditions: Sandy
- Water Sources: Subsurface Aquifer

Notable

- In its original form, Royal Lytham and St Annes had 385 bunkers making it a greater penal element.
- Royal Lytham and St Annes is regarded as a thinking golfer's course. The bunkering is difficult and getting shots from fairway bunkers to greens can be a challenge, which can quite easily result in a dropped shot. Some of the bunkers are hidden and placed around upturned subtle but tricky greens, the slopes of which tend to run into bunkers making approach shots difficult.
- The course nestles ½ a mile from the sea within the coastal town of Lytham and St Annes. The typical iconic picturesque sea views afforded by most Open Championship courses have long since disappeared at Royal Lytham and St Anne's, to be replaced over the decades largely by Victorian red brick, mortar and a railway. It is not what some would consider as a classical links course with vast defining sand dunes rolling fairways and typical sea views, but it is still visually attractive with character. Its setting is somewhat unusual, quirky with a real charm all of its own.
- Mr. Bernard Darwin 1910 once wrote "St Annes has beautiful turf, but not much else of beauty; no one can fall in love with it at first sight and no one could fail to be impressed by its difficulties. It sets the golfer just about as ruthless an examination as any course of my acquaintance. 'It is a beast, but a just beast' The examination paper is not merely fair, it is skilfully set; hit the ball to the right place and the way to the green will be open to you, but hit your ball to the wrong place and every kind of punishment, whether immediate or ultimate, will ensue. There are one or two holes where the ground seems to be sown with bunkers like a minefield. No doubt familiarity with the course would breed not contempt – that would be impossible – but a rational appreciation of its points. No course – not even Pine Valley – is as hard as it can appear at first sight, but St Annes is unquestionably a fine, fierce, searching test of golf." Darwin's description that the course presented itself as "a beast, but a just beast" still remains the case today. The bunkers are key. It is regarded as one of the strongest tests of golf.