

## THE NAME GAME

Tory Brettell is a health and fitness consultant who will be speaking at the AGCS Conference in April 2005 on what non-golfers want from their leisure clubs.

Stuart Phipps caught up with this successful businesswoman to find out more

*THE SUBJECT OF this month's profile has nothing to do with golf, yet it is this very ignorance of the game that is so important to secretaries and clubs – and why she is to present a paper at the AGCS Conference in April 2005.*

*If golf is to attract newcomers into the game, we need to understand what appeals to non-golfers, and the reasons behind their decision on where to spend their leisure time (and money).*

*Tory Brettell has years of experience in the leisure industry, and understands how to draw people into leisure centres. Golf clubs can learn a lot from her...*



**W**hat's in a name? "Tory Brettell sounds like a character-forming name," I said. She paused, looking at me, cool and appraising.

"It just suited me better than Victoria – so now I'm just Tory."

It was my turn to pause; then it clicked: 'Tory' is a suffix of 'victory' – and that is wholly appropriate, as this particular Tory HATES losing.

The third in a family of four girls, Tory was always the wild one and into every imaginable sport – a real Tom Boy. She was brought up in Droitwich and left school at 16 to go to Worcester Technical College to study electronics. In the 1970s this was not a common subject for girls to study but it was her guiding star; and she was the first female to complete the course and obtain

a distinction in the City & Guilds Radio and TV Electronics Mechanics exam. It was also her ticket to joining the Royal Navy.

"Becoming a WREN had always been my aim," she said. "The highlight of each year for me was Remembrance Day; I was mesmerised by the scene – particularly the naval uniform."

In 1979, at the age of 18, Tory joined up. Sailing through basic drill and technical training, she was specially selected to undertake and complete an aircraft electronics course, becoming the first Wren to do so. In recognition, she was invited to choose her posting, and off she went to 706 Squadron at Culdrose in Cornwall. There, she became crew/maintenance captain for Prince Andrew's helicopter flight. The RN Recruiting Office was delighted; her picture appeared

in Recruiting Office windows up and down the country, under the title of "Opportunities in the modern Navy".

Tory's life has been in constant flux: no sooner does she succeed in one job than it is time for a change. Satisfying though it was, the helicopter maintenance job failed to appease her deep-rooted passion for sport and exercise: she wanted to become a Physical Training Instructor.

More training and more distinction in every physical test led her to a Joint Services establishment where she was given responsibility for the fitness of a detachment of hard-bitten Marines – with little respect for female instructors. But Tory is fearless and self-confident: she eye-balled them, out-ran them, out-swam them – and would probably have out-boxed them,

given half a chance! They hated it – but they loved her.

You would have thought that such an achievement in the Royal Navy would have led her to a long-term RN career – but she began to doubt her future. Would a commercial environment provide a better challenge?

Just as she had abandoned the world of technology, so she turned her back on service life – with great optimism and no regrets. What stayed with her was the service training and ethos, and an ability to get machines and bodies in perfect trim – an unusual combination.

Her first civilian job was running a fitness club at the Holiday Inn in Portsmouth and she ran it the only way she knew – like a naval establishment. "If they did something wrong, I'd get them swimming – fully clothed!" she said. "Good training for life-saving, I told them."

Normally, civilians rebel when ordered about; only when they respect 'the boss' will they accept military discipline. It became a 'tight ship', and commercial results flowed; customers loved it, subscriptions multiplied – and the management was delighted. After attending a management course, she was then promoted to run the group's biggest leisure club, at Slough.

But when it's all working well, Tory looks for a bigger challenge. This time she tackled the Holiday Inns' management direct – why



not put her in charge of a group of leisure clubs and get them to follow the model she developed for her club? They agreed, and she became responsible for all 12 UK Holiday Inn leisure clubs.

However, international companies chop and change, the employees dancing around like coloured chips in a kaleidoscope. Holiday Inns was taken over by Whitbread and absorbed into the Marriott brand – and Tory found herself group leisure operations manager for 24 leisure clubs. Money was invested liberally – eight brand-new clubs were created and the existing ones re-furnished, all to Tory's master plan.

Then the kaleidoscope was shaken again: Marriott management was re-structured so that responsibility for the leisure clubs was passed to the local hotel managers. Tory became "the trouble-shooter from head office", and in due course she returned to line management when she was given the responsibility of delivering and then operating "The Club" at County Hall, a five-star hotel/club on the banks of the River Thames, overlooking Parliament.

This ended when an attractive offer from ELIXIA came her way, since it involved operating 49 leisure clubs scattered throughout Scandinavia and Europe. Then, in another convulsion of business, the company relocated the management team to Germany – a setback that led Tory to conclude it was time she assumed responsibility for her own success and future.

In 2001, she founded her own consultancy company, offering her commercial knowledge and management ability to companies, authorities, hotels – anyone who might be worrying about the performance of their investment in leisure. "I can't

claim it was an instant success; it took a while for my company to become well-known – but it was time well-spent, since I set about strengthening my contacts with suppliers – architects, builders, contractors, fitness equipment suppliers, and so on," she said. "Now I can give my clients access to the best deals."

There can be few who offer such a background in the fast-growing fitness business, so I asked her how she saw it progressing from today. "There is still a period of consolidation for the large operators, but exciting times for the small and private clubs, where funding is available and creative thought is being brought to each concept. No doubt a few of the larger well-known brands will continue to expand their portfolio abroad but with caution, as too many have over-invested. Franchising is another exciting option, and several companies are now offering this service – but at a price."

The Government has opened up the obesity battle, and is considering making substantial grants to selected sports (including golf). How, I wondered, was the fitness industry – the 'front-line' in the battle, you might think – reacting? "More focus is being made on a healthy lifestyle – exercising at home or joining a club is constantly in the headlines, and there are many opportunities to attract the non-user. The smaller enterprises can jump on this free campaign."

Today, Tory's career is her consultancy business, and she is content with her life. As she puts it: "The day I stop working for myself is when I feel I do not have to work." And the name of her company? Traffic Health & Fitness Ltd, which neatly brings us back where we started: "What's in a name?"

Memorable? I'd say so. **GCM**



## Fairway focus

### Seasons greetings to all golf club secretaries

**F**AIRWAY CREDIT would like to take the opportunity to wish all the readers of *Golf Club Management* a very Merry Christmas and prosperous New Year. Again another 12 months has flown by and we look forward to enjoying the season's festivities.

Here the team will be taking a brief break over the festive period, and our opening hours are listed below:

Friday December 24, 2004:	Office closing at 1pm
Monday December 27, 2004:	Office closed – Bank Holiday
Tuesday December 28, 2004:	Office closed – Bank Holiday
Wednesday Dec 29, 2004:	Normal working day
Thursday December 30, 2004:	Normal working day
Friday December 31, 2004:	Office closing at 5pm
Monday January 3, 2005:	Office closed – Bank Holiday
Tuesday January 4, 2005:	Normal Working Day

The New Year starts with the BTME & Clubhouse Exhibition in Harrogate. Hilda Simpson, Gina Topping and I will be on hand to discuss the Fairway Credit facility or answer any questions that you may have.

This is a great event for Fairway Credit and we look forward to seeing old and new friends, so please feel welcome to come along and visit us on stand Q108.

Finally, just a reminder to those of you who use Fairway Credit and renew your subscriptions in January – please remember to allow for the Christmas post when sending us your renewals list.

Have a great festive period.

**Mary Simpson**  
**Managing Director**  
**Fairway Credit**

This month Fairway Credit are celebrating with Wrag Barn Golf Club and Penrhos Golf Club who have been using Fairway Credit for 10 years.



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