



GIFFORD GOLF CLUB

October 2016 Newsletter

As always this is a good time to recap the golfing year, all competitions have now been completed and again the course has provided an outstanding venue for members and visitors alike to enjoy their time at Gifford.

Competitions and matches

During the winter months our winter league team had another successful year narrowly missing out on promotion. This year's matches have already started with two wins out of two.

The open competitions attracted a reasonable turnout of people although in some cases numbers were down on previous years. We are not alone in experiencing this and in 2017 subtle changes have been made to some of the competitions in an effort to ensure these events are well attended. Of course the best marketing we can do is through word of mouth by the membership.

The club championships were held in June again this year and despite some challenging weather conditions throughout the week worthy champions prevailed. Congratulations go to all those who qualified for the final rounds as well as the eventual winners namely the Gents Champion Blair Shearer, the B Champion Callum Mcguire, the Ladies Champion June McEwan with the Molly Glover Trophy won by Hannah Bullen.

The summer club matches have been completed and I am happy to report that we were again successful in defending the Winterfield Trophy in our annual two legged match with Winterfield Golf Club while we managed to retain the John Gordon Niblic competed for with our friends at Dirleton Castle over two matches.

The ladies hosted the Sime Salver competition in early October with 24 club teams of 4 participating with Gullane Ladies Golf Club winning the event.

The senior (EGGS) group continue to flourish with over 50 golfers participating in the various club competitions with 6x9 hole and 3x18 hole medals throughout the year. Start times are 9.00am in the summer and 9.30 in the winter. Regular matches home and away are now played with Haddington, Lauder, St Boswells, Ravelston and Musselburgh Old Course.

The juniors started off the year with the lessons provided by Derek Small. They have now completed all of their competitions although the attendance has been less than hoped for. The junior championship was won by Toby Dawson and a special mention goes to Shona Paton for her work as junior convenor over the past few years, this has been made more challenging given the poor

attendance at the events and again I would call on the parents of our junior golfers to do what they can to encourage participation in the many events throughout the year. We have an extremely healthy junior membership with approximately 60 members however we really need to see more out on the course taking advantage of the time devoted by Shona.

Recently you will have been aware of the survey of members undertaken to determine the desire to change the dates for the annual club championships from June to August. The main driver behind this was to ensure the course is presented in optimum condition for our most important internal competitions as well as encouraging members to continue to participate in monthly medals throughout the year. The result of the survey was a healthy response of over 120 members of which 85% voted in favour of the change and as a result the 2017 fixture card will include the new dates including revised qualifying medal dates.

Finally a new addition to the golfing calendar has been the inclusion of nine-hole mixed medals, and next year we have included 6x9 hole medals in the fixture list. Scottish Golf as an organising body recognise the growing demand for this short form version of the game and these competitions are now run as "handicap counters" and Gifford is ideally set up for this format.

The Clubhouse



Some important changes have occurred in the clubhouse this year with Drew Johnston taking over from Robert Stewart as Club Secretary in March. I think it is fair to say that Drew has already been a great addition to the club and has made the transition as seamless as possible through his attention to detail and the many hours spent understanding the role and getting to know the membership. Although Robert has been gone for 6 months now it is important to recognise the 9 years of service he gave us and it is especially pleasing to see Robert out playing golf at Gifford.

Other staffing changes have occurred in the bar and kitchen which has again been busy throughout the year with a growing demand for food and it is thanks to all of the kitchen staff for providing an expanded offering which appears to be very popular with members and guests alike.

Another project the committee is considering is the possibility of improving and expanding the clubhouse to cope with the increased demands on the kitchen and to renovate other areas to maintain the clubhouse at a level we can all be comfortable with. Initial discussions have been held with architects and planners to determine the feasibility of such a change and we are presently working on cost estimates in order to determine the options available to raise the funds necessary to carry out the works. When we have all of the information available this will be presented to the membership for their views and feedback.

Committee

In addition to staffing changes in the clubhouse, 2016 has seen some important changes in the membership of the committee with Mike Lodge taking over the role of Finance Convenor and Gordon Paton as Handicap Secretary. The importance of both positions cannot be overstated and it is appropriate to thank the long-term contributions to the club in these roles of Sandra Banks and Jim Anderson in ensuring both these areas were managed in the professional manner required.

The Course



As I mentioned earlier the course condition this year has again attracted many positive comments and our head green keeper Jamie Martin has found ways to continue to improve what is considered by many to be one of the best 9 hole layouts in the country. This has been much commented on by visitors and members alike and it really is appropriate that the green-keeping staff receive these well-deserved accolades.

Last year the winter programme included renovation of the 5th teeing area, bunker improvements, drainage work behind the 5th green and improved pathways around the 1st tee. In addition new hedges and trees were planted on the 6th fairway to compensate for the loss of the forestry area and our own large trees which were destroyed during high winds the previous year. In addition windfall and rotten trees were removed from the area behind the 5th tee to ensure safety issues did not arise.

We have now completed another of the bridge projects with Jack's Brig on the 8th making a very attractive addition to the course. This has been named in honour of the late Jack Peat who very generously left the club a significant contribution in his estate. This leaves one more bridge to be completed to service the 2nd and 9th burn crossings and this will be carried out in the coming year.

This year's winter projects include additional drainage on the 6th fairway, improvements to the 10th tee and some work to bunkers on the 6th and 7th holes.

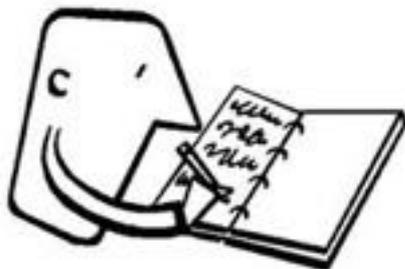
Finally I want to ensure everyone is aware of the investment the club has made in the replacement of existing equipment and the purchase of new equipment to ensure the green keeping staff are able to maintain the course to the high standard as we are now seeing. This year a replacement rough mower was purchased to avoid spending significant funds on repairs to aging equipment. In order to continue to improve the quality of the greens additional equipment was acquired including a top dresser, variable speed brush and most recently a turf iron. It should be highlighted that this equipment was purchased on a second hand basis through the excellent connections Jamie has with other golf clubs and equipment suppliers.

Visitors and membership

Visitor numbers have held firm this year and we continue to have had a healthy number of groups visiting the club this year.

I am happy to say that the overall membership has increased from last year with a good number of new members joining throughout the year more than compensating for those not renewing their subscriptions. This is very positive given the challenges facing many clubs in retaining golfers and in my view shows the increasing popularity of nine-hole golf.

Key dates



The ladies AGM will be held in the clubhouse at 12.30pm on Sunday 6 November. The annual prize giving is scheduled for 12.00 noon on Saturday 12 November with, weather permitting, 9 holes of golf followed by the prize giving. The EGGS dinner will be held in the Tweeddale Arms Hotel on Friday 25 November and sign up sheets for all of these events are posted in the clubhouse. Finally the AGM is scheduled for 17 January and will be held in the village hall, more details will be announced nearer the date.

In closing I wanted to say how much I have enjoyed my two years of captaincy at Gifford, it has given me the opportunity to meet and get to know a large cross section of the membership while developing a much better understanding how the golf club is run. As my time as captain comes to an end in January I want to thank everyone especially the members of the committee for their support and encouragement, the clubhouse staff, the green keeping staff and wish Kenny Gray and the team all the best in 2017 and beyond.

Best wishes to everyone.

John.