



Dumbarton Golf Club Newsletter

MARCH 2016

YOUR GOLF SEASON STARTS HERE

What's inside ?

The AGM took place on the 19th February. Only a limited number of members attend the AGM, and we thought it would be useful to members to know what was discussed. The following contains copies of the Conveners' Reports, and is not a copy of the minutes. In some cases it may contain information which the Conveners intended to include, but may have forgotten.

Once again the golfing season is nearly upon us. Of course, for many of us golf is played over 12 months of the year. How lucky we are that our course now lends itself to being playable throughout the Winter. The work done on the drainage over the last few years is reaping rewards for us now. I say “us” of course, I don’t mean me. I stick to my principles and rarely play if the outside temperature is less than 10 degrees. Ideally, for me, golf should be played in shorts and a polo shirt, though these days are relatively rare.

At the start of the season it’s good to know what’s been going on around the Club, and what the plans are for the coming Season. Since the AGM takes place in February, I thought I’d share with you what we learned this year from the Captain and the Conveners.

Frank Docherty – Captain.

He’ll always be Frannie Doc to me, just the same as I’ll always be Mo Buchanan... Anyway, I’ll try to call him Frank. FRANK thanked his conveners, and other club members, for the support they’d given him over his first year of Captaincy. He was disappointed that he had been unable to increase the Junior Membership, although pointed out that most other clubs were in a similar situation. Once again under 12’s are able to join free of charge if they join with an Ordinary Member. The Member does not even have to be related to the Junior. If you know of any children who might be interested in playing golf, please bring them along. In general, attracting new members in any category is a challenge, again not just to our Club. We will continue to offer various deals throughout the year to attract new members. Our total membership over all categories stands at around 693. Whilst we see some positive growth in Veteran, Intermediate and the “New to Golf” categories, here has been some decline in the Ladies and Junior Sections.

Frank went on to say that he was pleased with the changes for the better around the clubhouse and course. The members’ day in March is growing in momentum, and he was most grateful for the ongoing support of the members on this day, to get the course and clubhouse into tip-top condition for

the start of the season. The date for this year will be the 20th March. If you’re free that day, your help would be appreciated.



Some of the Members helping out on Members day 2015

There have been more social events in the last year than ever before, and Frank thanked Social Convener Jim Kenney for his efforts in this regard. Many of the projects going on around the club are funded by the Club, in particular with funds from the 500 Club, but it’s important to remember that so much work is being done by volunteers, which is saving us a fortune. Many thanks to those involved. The Committee has taken a tough decision to withdraw the PRO-SHOP services. To run the shop was costing the club around £8k to operate. In total, the membership spent around £16k in the shop, of which the club received £800 commission. (In contrast VOL spend was £28k, and Cardross £200k+. The Vale has also decided to cease the service.) Frank went on to elaborate that he hoped that the space now available in the old Juniors Room, and the Pro Shop could be put to better use to the benefit of the Club. The Committee had discussed the possibility of putting a golf simulator into the available space. No decision has yet been made. Watch this space!

Frank reported that he was pleased that there was better communication between the various departments within the club, and with the members. We use all kinds of ways to communicate, including emails, Facebook, website, Twitter, notices and of course the Newsletter. Communication is key to

any Business and he would endeavour to make sure the membership was kept abreast of the goings on within and around the Club.

In closing his report, Frank said one of his aims had been to continue to improve Respect and engagement among the members, and members' Respect for the Course and the Clubhouse. He was pleased to see improvements in this area, and although it was a big ask to please everybody, it was important that members continue to show respect in all areas, and that we continue to progress with it.

Frank McCartney was up next with the Finance Convener's Report

Frank opened his report by apologising for the fact he had been unaware that Veteran's were not privy to the Accounts. In these days of openness and transparency, the Committee would make sure that the Accounts were available to all members, provided there was nothing to prevent it in the Constitution .

Frank paid tribute to Alex McLean, who as Captain also reported on the club's finances, and said after his first year as Convener he had a better understanding of the huge commitment involved. He had learned that as a Club we pay more than £7200 for insurance, and that our energy costs exceed £15k. He realised that as Finance Convener he may have to make some unpopular decisions, but wanted to reassure us that all decisions he made were for the good of the Club. He had spent his first year familiarising himself with all the accounts, and very basically, trying to stop spending more than we take in. During the winter months this is particularly challenging, and he thanked Charlie Mills for organising the Poker nights which at least kept the tills busy. The Cash Flow has always been an issue during the Winter, when we have to pay for the upkeep of the club, and the wages of the staff, but are taking in hardly any funds. He was also pleased to report that he had established better communication channels with the office staff, and kept in touch with them on a weekly basis to keep

them in the loop. Frank has spent a lot of time understanding the Finances, and reconciling our incomings and outgoings. Our auditor has intimated that he feels we are running our business well, which is encouraging. Gary Clark audits several clubs in the West of Scotland, and if he says we're doing ok, then that's praise indeed.

Frank then went on to discuss the Accounts in some details. An overall loss of £4522 for the financial year means that in total we have incurred losses of c. £13k over two years, which is far from disastrous. Our total income was down by just over £6k, most of which came from subscriptions, which actually saw a year-on-year reduction of £9635. This is a major cause for concern, especially given that our overall numbers of golfers has increased. Unfortunately, many members are moving between categories, and many of these categories pay less, which results in a loss of overall income. For example, an Ordinary Member pays £595, +£70 bar card, while a Veteran pays £355 plus £70, and a Life Member pays £145 + £70. Whilst the decision was made NOT to increase fees this year, this will clearly be a source of consideration in the near future. We are all living longer, and enjoying the benefits of cheaper golf. Unfortunately, someone's got to pay! Our fees have remained the same since 2009. Just for some examples, Vale of Leven Ordinary Members currently pay £650. Helensburgh pay £790, Cardross, £850, Hardgate £695. Luckily for us, a good part of the deficit in fees was made up by the bar account, which is a great result, especially in view of the change to Drink/Driving laws which we all feared would have a devastating effect. Clearly a job well done by Jim Kenney and the house team, and of course Mhairi and the bar staff. Not forgetting the membership! Frank said he couldn't stress strongly enough how important it was for members to make use of our lovely lounge. Remember as a member you can hire the function hall free of charge. Also our catering has been taken 'in-house' and Frank hoped that the members would make full use of the facilities. Jim Kenney would give further information. Going back to the accounts, it was encouraging to note that our overall expenditure had fallen by £11k (3.6%). This

was due to a significant tightening of our belts, and a significant reduction in the heating and lighting due to more efficient lighting. Again thanks to Tam McLean and Jim Crossan for their support in installing these.

The Tennents Loan was renewed a year ago to the tune of £45k, and this has allowed improvements to be made to the Charlie Green Lounge, the Ladies toilets (long overdue!) and general much-needed repairs to our leaking roof, gents locker room and new radiators fitted. One of the other benefits of renewing the Tennents Loan was that part of the underwriting criteria demanded by TCB (Tennents Caledonian Breweries) was the need to have our buildings, out-buildings and flat revalued. The flat which brings in £3.5k of net rental income was valued at £77k, (previously £44k) this in turn increased the Golf Club's overall net value to £378k. The flat therefore, continues to be the Club's "safety-net" for the future, since it remains a major asset to us through difficult financial times. Staff wages show a fairly substantial increase, mainly due to the fact that the catering is now an "in-house" operation. We employed Alan MacFarlane from the Pro Shop in some admin duties and around the bar. Frank predicted that these figures would reduce in the coming year by having ended the contract of the Head Greenkeeper (Stephen Harriet) and letting Alan go. He was hopeful that the changes implemented would allow us to achieve our 2016/2017 budgets. Once again he emphasised that he genuinely felt we were heading along the "right lines" but it would certainly help improve our situation if we could fill the function hall every weekend of the year.

During the Marketing section of Frank's report it was mentioned that as a Club we had raised over £7k for charity events during the year. The flyover video was now on the website, twitter and Facebook, and worth a look. It certainly raises the profile of the Club, and has had many complimentary remarks made about it. Frank thanked the Sponsors for their ongoing support, and said that he urgently needed help in the marketing side of the Club, which he felt had been neglected whilst he got to grips with the Finances. It was

hoped to make the website more current, with changes reflected more frequently. It was also his plan to do a leaflet drop to the new houses, and to local undertakers, advertising our facilities.

Up next was Ian Simpson, Greens Convener

Ian began his report by thanking the Greens Committee and team, and everyone who has helped over the last year, and in particular on Members' day. The difficulty last season was how wet the Season was, and now there was not much growth expected until the end of April, and cold nights. He explained that we had a new contract for machinery. We have changed from John Deere to Jacobsens, and although the contract itself was more expensive, there were no repair costs, which had been crippling as the machinery had got older. The new machinery is noticeably better in that it gives a better cut, and members should notice a difference. When it comes to coring, ideally he would prefer to do this in the middle of the season, but at this time we don't have the equipment to do it, so once again the coring will take place in September, as soon after Finals Day as possible. Ian went on to explain that they had been forced to postpone some of the plans they had made due to the wet summer, and had instead concentrated on the drainage. Ian then showed two examples of the pipes used for the drainage. The first was the old drainage pipe, which is now no longer fit for purpose. The new plastic pipes have made the difference we can all appreciate. Unfortunately, the cost of these pipes is a downside. So far, over the last four years, we have replaced about 3000 metres of piping. We're lucky in that it is costing us around £25 per metre to replace, though had we had brought a firm in to do this the cost would rise sharply to about £40/£45 a metre. You can see where a huge chunk of our finances has gone in the last four years, though most would agree money well spent. One of the upsides of the vast amount of drainage works done, is that the spoil created has allowed us to construct a short game practice area, which will be in play later in the season.

Jim Kenney then gave his Clubhouse Report

Jim started by explaining that one of the biggest changes in the last year has been the catering. A decision had been made to bring the catering ‘in-house’ after many attempts at franchising. At first we employed Stephanie, but she found it too challenging and left. Our old friend Margaret Smith then took over, and things were going well until Margaret had to leave on health grounds. We wish Margaret a speedy recovery. In the meantime, this left us no choice but to bring in outside caterers for some of the end of season functions we had. On a more positive note, we are happy to welcome Gary and Tracy to the Club, who will now take over the catering role. So far everything is going well, and we would ask that members please make the most of the catering available, in the knowledge that all proceeds go to the Club.

Jim went on to say that the biggest project had been the refurbishment of the Ladies toilets. This was now complete, with many positive comments about it.

We’d had to replace gutters and downpipes, and maintenance to the roof was also carried out. The heating system in the Gents’ locker room had been repaired. The clubhouse had been painted both internally and externally, and once again Jim thanked the members who had helped complete these tasks. The next project would be to utilise the Junior room and Pro shop for the benefit of the Club. As explained earlier, no decision has yet been made regarding this, though the possibility of a simulator appears to be a popular option.

Jim pointed out that the 500 Club now paid out 5 prizes every month, compared to 4 last year, totalling £450 a month. Forms to set up a standing order for the 500 club are available at the bar, and in the office (Note to Jim, please rummage up the numbers...)

Jim was pleased to report that the Cabarets had been well attended. Several Cabarets were already booked for the coming Season, with the highlight being the ever-popular “Dumbarton’s Got Talent” night being scheduled for early May. Once again,

Jim emphasised that members are welcome to use the function hall (the Charlie Green Lounge) free of charge. Our in-house catering is able to offer competitive prices for buffets etc.

In closing his report, Jim went on to thank those members of staff who have made the organisation of the events go so smoothly, as well as club members who give tirelessly of their free time to help keep the costs down for the rest of us.

John Stirling gave his Match and Handicap Report

John began his report by saying how delighted he was to be back in the role of M & H convener, and thanked Bobby Smith and Brian Campbell for their help throughout the year. John went on to say how successful 2015 had been for the Competitions. He was pleased to report that over 200 players had taken part in the Gordon Shield, and that one of our own was the winner, the ever-popular Tam Nicholson.



Gordon Shield Winner 2015, Tam Nicholson

John said he was delighted by the money the club managed to raise for various charities. The Macmillan Cancer Charity, Kidney Research UK, and CHAS were the three main beneficiaries of our charity events, and raised in excess of £7k. John made a special mention of the fact that the Lions Club had been hosting their Texas Scramble at the Club for 25 years. He went on to congratulate Andrew Campbell for winning the Championship for the 5th time, and Craig Bissett for winning the Order of Merit. He was delighted to report that the McIntyre 5-8 Team beat Clober in the final, and he mentioned that a new format in 2016 means that the 5-8 will increase in numbers to 14 teams, from 10, with the introduction of the Carrick, Kilsyth, Dullatur and Dougalston. The Thomson McCrone did well to get to the quarter finals, only to be beaten by the eventual winners Douglas Park.

The Belhaven Best Handicap Competition Regional Final was played at Erskine Golf Club, and two favourites from Dumbarton won the qualifier. Andrew Money and Alan Jones had the opportunity to represent Dumbarton Golf Club in the National Finals in Turkey.

John went on to talk about changes to the 2016 fixtures. The entry fee for the Wednesday medal would increase from £2 to £3, allowing a decent sweep money to be paid to winners. He also confirmed that all Wednesday medals would be played in one class. The top 12 with 2 best nett scores would compete for the Final of the The Charles Begg Trophy played on 28th September. No other changes were proposed to entry fees. In order to allow the Order of Merit to be presented at the Presentation Dance, it will be completed on Saturday 22nd October after the December medal. There will be no extensions. A new competition will take place on Sunday 7th August, the 125 Shotgun. A two man Texas Scramble, with a 12 o'clock start.

John went on to say that with the absence of the Pro Shop, all Magic 2's money would now be paid on to members' bar cards. Sweep money can be collected in cash from the bar.

After the success of the Greens Blues and Purples Charity event last year for Kidney Research UK

(thank you, thank you, thank you!) we'll be doing a similar event in May this year, to coincide with the Charity Medal on 14th May, making it a Charity event weekend. We would like to raise funds for a defibrillator to have in the Club. There may be other "Sunday Specials" throughout the year. Once again "Watch this space!"

The arranging of ties will change this year, for the 4 Ball, 2 Ball and Shanghai and all other Match Play Competitions. The player(s) drawn first will be responsible for arranging the tie. They will offer their opponent(s) several dates (including both weekdays and weekends) in order to provide the best opportunity of finding a mutually acceptable date. No match extensions will be allowed. If a match is not played by the specified date The M & H committee will decide on the basis of availability which team will go through to the next round. Plenty of time has been allocated to play ties, so please do not leave contact with your opponent until the last week of the closing date. Also, members are reminded to ensure they are available to play on Finals Day (Sunday 4th September) BEFORE entering the competitions.

John went on to discuss the CONGU Handicap Allowance changes. In 4Ball better ball, the allowance is increased from 75% to 90%. (In strokeplay each partner will receive 90% of their full handicap, and in matchplay the back marker now concedes strokes to the other 3 players based on 90% of the difference between the full handicaps) Single Matchplay will remain the same with full difference, though with a maximum of 18 strokes. 2ball and Greensome will remain the same at ½ combined.

A new process is to be introduced that will flag players who notch up seven consecutive 0.1 handicap increases allowing the handicap Committee to review and apply an immediate handicap increase if required.

John went on to report about some changes to the R & A Rules. Most noticeably all golfers are now prohibited from "anchoring" the club, either "directly" or by use of an "anchor point" in making a stroke. The penalty is loss of hole in Matchplay, or a two stroke penalty in strokeplay. An interesting

new rule has been introduced regarding a wrong score for hole. *A player is not disqualified for returning a lower score for a hole than actually taken, when the incorrect score is a result of failing to include penalty strokes that the player did not know were incurred before returning the score card. Instead, the player incurs the penalty under the rule that was breached and must add an additional penalty of two strokes for the score card error. In other cases in which a player returns a score for any hole lower than actually taken, the penalty will continue to be disqualification.*

Finally John proposed that for all future Prize money being paid to Dumbarton Members, vouchers for Dumbarton Golf Club would be issued instead of SGU vouchers. This would give members the opportunity to use the vouchers within the club, either by adding it to their bar card, or for payment towards their fees. Visitors would continue to receive SGU vouchers. After some discussion, John agreed that if members were unhappy with receiving Dumbarton Golf Club vouchers, they could ask for these to be swapped for SGU vouchers.

And finally...

Tony Ferrie gave the Junior convener's report.

Tony said it had been a disappointing season for the Juniors Section. Despite having over 50 registered Junior members, they appear not to be playing golf on the course. This year only 9 players entered the Charlie Green Trophy, and only five entries were received for the Junior Championship. Although there was a weekly Sunday medal, the largest field was five players, and on many Sundays there was no entry at all.

Tony was pleased to report that Active Schools had once again planned to use Dumbarton Golf Club. Our "Roaming Pro" David Fotheringham took a further 4 onto the next level. Unfortunately we have lost our Clubgolf co-ordinator, Alan McFarlane, who did a fantastic job of communicating with parents and coaches throughout the season. Tony went on to congratulate Lorna McClymont for being the first female to ever win the Junior

Championship, and he also congratulated Brian Gillies, who won the Charlie Green trophy.

The rest of the AGM passed without incident. The four members of the committee who were due to retire offered themselves for re-election, and thus the Committee remains the same :

Frank Docherty	Captain
Kenny Lyons	Vice Captain
Frank McCartney	Finance Convener
John Stirling	Match and Handicap Convener
Ian Simpson	Greens Convener
Jim Kenney	House Convener
Tony Ferrie	Junior Convener

Bobby Smith
Richie Bridges
David Thomson
Charlie McKenzie
Iain Swan.

And finally,

Don't forget that we show all the big sporting events in the Club. The Masters will start on April 7th. We'll also be showing all the action from the US Open, The Scottish Open, The Open, The PGA, and don't forget, we'll be defending the Ryder Cup this year too. Bring it on!!

