

AGM 2015 - CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT ¹

INTRODUCTION

This has been a demanding and eventful year with the Club moving forward in a positive and determined way. We are indebted to Jeff Winslade for the strong lead he gave to the Club on a number of fronts during these past two sessions. Thanks to him, and the host of volunteers his example inspired, the Clubhouse is a more pleasant and agreeable place to enjoy. His attention to matters of health and safety and the need for effective insurance cover has made our golfing activities all the safer. His contribution in leading the Club onto a more solid financial foundation is also a cause for gratitude. It was a matter of regret that Jeff felt the need to resign for personal reasons but we express our genuine thanks to him for all his dedicated work.

Mark Graham helped to steady the ship in the wake of Jeff's resignation but felt obliged to step down for family and work commitment reasons. We thank Mark for making such an energetic effort to carry things forward. Despite what appears as a rollercoaster period of change, the Club has continued to carry on and even prosper. Significantly, our current account has moved, for the first time in several years, into the BLACK! THIS IS A CAUSE FOR REAL SATISFACTION BUT EQUALLY NOT ONE FOR COMPLACENCY.

The Rock Foundation Account has seen a total of £39,520 raised, which by any standards, is a magnificent sum. The loan now stands at £31,000. I would like to see it at zero! So we are not out of the woods yet. Nevertheless, daylight is appearing among the trees. We just need to keep building on the advances made to date. And when I say 'we' I mean all of us who are members of what is a first rate Golf Club.

FINANCE

Our Treasurer Bobby McClymont, will report separately on our detailed financial situation, but I thank him for the work he has put into helping to control our finances in a balanced and fair way. Thanks also to Graeme Johnston our Bank Relationship Manager for his supportive encouragement and advice in all our deliberations. Grateful thanks to Jim Cattanach for his years of service in book keeping for the Club and to TRAC Oil and Gas for continuing to act as Club auditors. A number of behind the scenes donations for various items has been a welcome addition to our income. Thank you all.

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CLUB MANAGEMENT

Perhaps the most significant thing to have taken place this year is the time and effort the Committee has put into considering our Club Management structure. How many times have I heard the comment our present Constitution is hopelessly out of date? Or, the Club structure is wrong – we expect too much of the Club Captain and need [a Club Manager](#) to cope with the all too necessary, day-to-day decision-making process. The answer is quite a few times!

Well, we began the process of creating a Club Manager post using the resources presently available to us. The first step found Shona Reid willing to assume extra responsibility as Interim Club Manager. As reported in the November Newsletter Shona excelled in that role. Things then moved on and your Committee decided the next step would be to employ a full-time Club Manager. This would entail the issue of a new contract of employment, job description and conditions of work and, where necessary, the provision of further training. It would also entail securing further administrative support for the new Club Manager. Your Committee decided the most appropriate course of action was to offer such a post to Shona and we are delighted to report she has accepted. Shona is now our Club Manager.

Moreover, Heather Harper has been appointed as our new Club Bookkeeper/Administrator and will take on the role of book keeping and assisting Shona in carrying out her Managerial duties. These initiatives make for a more stable and effective form of governance. We congratulate and welcome both to their new positions.

BUSINESS PLAN – MEMBERSHIP SURVEY – CLUB CONSTITUTION

Another aspect of Club Governance is the action your Committee has taken in setting up a process that will lead to the creation of [a Club Business Plan](#). This is no quick fix-it task. Earlier in the year Russell Crofts, John Gray and myself were dispatched to attend an SGU Workshop on Club Governance. As a result we have now presented the Committee with a progress report on developing a Club Business Plan. We continue to work on its fuller development and application.

The Membership Survey that John Gray sent out to members was part of this process. All the comments have been arranged under separate categories such as course work, catering, clubhouse facilities, competitions, and other

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areas. Any issues arising are being taken up with each of the Club's sections. This could prove very beneficial in the long run and provide the Club not only with stable governance but effective continuity.

Running parallel with this process has been the need to update and revise our present [Club Constitution](#). While there are certain aspects of our present Constitution that are clearly out of date there are also valuable sections that need to be retained. It is a slow, painstaking process. But we aim to get the right balance. This task will continue over the coming months. Once a new fit-for-purpose Constitution has been created we will call a Special Meeting to seek members approval of its adoption.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Several years ago the Club produced a Health and Safety document covering a wide range of issues. In the light of H&S Legislative Compliance Audit, it requires updating and we are very grateful to one of our Corporate Members groups, Quensh, for their offer to do this for us free of charge. This represents a savings of approximately £1,000. Thank you Quensh.

MARKETING

We are ever mindful of the need for making our Club known and encouraging both new members and visitors. The use of the Website and social Media is one way to sell our wares. The production of Newsletters also helps to keep our members informed and to publicise particular events. This is an area our Club Manager will continue to exploit.

COMPETITION EVENTS

Competition events have run smoothly despite the fact that we are without a Match Secretary at present. Thanks to those who have carried out these duties on an ad hoc basis and for the volunteers who have closed the competitions. The staffing and stocking of the Club Pro Shop is an integral part of running competitions and we are indebted to a team of regular workers, both staff and volunteers, for all that they do. The purchase of new computers and the setting up of the most up-to-date software is a welcome development.

A successful Prize Giving Evening took place earlier this month. We were treated to two lovely speeches by our current champions, Linda Carnie and

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Andy Padden. In future, we should make more of this happy evening and encourage an even larger turn out. It should be the highlight of the golfing year. Our thanks to Shelley Johnstone and Irene Waddell, Donald Webster and Roger Addison for organising and presenting the prizes this year.

JUNIOR SECTION

In many ways, a Golf Club's future depends on its Junior Section. We are greatly indebted to Brian Cumming who has been fulfilling the role of Junior Convener and *Clubgolf* Coordinator for these past years. Although Brian will be standing down as Convener this year he will continue to offer his help. However, we would welcome a willing volunteer to take on the role of Junior Convener. Brian tells us how Golf coaching for 9-12 year olds under the national *Clubgolf* Coaching scheme continued throughout the season. These were held at the Practice Area on Sunday afternoons and were generally well attended.

There is a nucleus of 15-20 children who have regularly attended the sessions over the past few years who show promise for the future. Brian thanks Jill Jakeman, Fiona Barron and Bruce Catto who gave up their time on Sundays to plan and deliver these sessions. He also thanks Robbie Stewart who has hugely contributed to the coaching process, not only by direct instruction but also by developing the coaches and introducing new initiatives. Robbie placed an emphasis on games and enjoyment as opposed to technical instruction which proved very popular with the students.

As Chairperson, I would add, we are all indebted to Robbie for the humane and professional contribution he made to our Club during the past year and we wish him well in his new post at Newmachar Golf Club. Thank you Robbie, and best wishes to you. Drop in any time at Newburgh. Recruiting older, more established junior golfers remains a challenge. The aim would be to establish a functioning, competitive junior section. If you think you can help to bring this about we want to hear from you.

CLUB COURSE MANAGEMENT

There is nothing new in reporting we have experienced a number of problems with ageing machinery and we are grateful to our Greens Staff for the way in which they have coped with these frequent and frustrating occurrences. On the positive side we have managed to arrange a five year lease purchase of a new Greens Mower with interchangeable heads and that should make life a lot easier.

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We are also hopeful we will be able to hire the Air 2G2 machine featured in a recent Newsletter. The Air 2G2 tines the greens with minimal disruption. The course has been maintained to a good standard this year and there has been plenty of positive feedback acknowledging this fact. So, well done to Jim and Forbes! Volunteers have helped to maintain the Practice Area. In fact, the Committee is grateful for the sterling work carried out by a number of regular volunteers who do sclaffing, rabbit hole filling, bunker raking, and pin positioning. The Winter Programme includes important bunker renovation and pathway improvements. Help on this will also be appreciated.

CLUBHOUSE MANAGEMENT

Our Clubhouse has hosted a number of highly successful events and we are grateful to Sandy Penny & staff and Martin & catering staff for the regular work that goes in to making our Club a good place to be. A Clubhouse sub-committee chaired by Shelley Johnstone takes a positive interest in monitoring the various aspects that contribute to making a well-run Golf Club.

There is a variety of social functions and our thanks are due to all those who work behind the scenes to make them a success. Additionally, we have to thank a range of willing volunteers who help to keep our fabric in good order. The Old Rakes and Ladies Section have both done sterling work in ensuring that the surrounds outside of the Clubhouse are kept in good order.

CLUB-HUB COOPERATION

Informal meetings between Golf Club (Club) representatives and Gallows Hill Sports Centre Committee (Hub) representatives have been taking place during the year. The Golf Club has adopted an open and welcoming attitude in exploring a number of issues of mutual interest. For example, a concern for adequate lighting of pathways up to the all-weather court is the sort of thing a united front in presenting our case to the Aberdeenshire Council would be advantageous.

The possible opening up of the Club's social facilities to the different Hub groups is also under discussion. Interestingly, the Hub is still working on their Constitution and this could tie in with our own substantial review of the Golf Club's Constitution. It is hoped to continue Club Hub discussions in the coming months.

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THE WAY FORWARD

My thanks go to our Committee for all the work carried out in your name this year. A special thanks goes to Donald Webster for his constant and ubiquitous support. Donald has talked of easing up a bit. But his easing up beats most of our increasing efforts! His mentoring of Oliver Philip in shop duties has been a particular and very effective help. Thank you Donald.

This coming year presents us with an exciting prospect of establishing the Club on an even more secure foundation. To do this we will continue to rely upon a high degree of voluntary support. Compared to other Clubs I believe we do well on this. So please keep up the good work by looking for ways you can support the Club whether financially or by concrete actions.

We look to our new Club structure with the appointment of a Club Manager and administrative support as a source of more effective governance. But this will not happen unless all members pitch in. Your support and help matters! Recent performance suggests we are more than up for such a challenge. Without prejudice to our evening's election process, I am sure your new Committee will do all in its powers to effectively represent the needs and interests of all our members.

Best wishes for the coming year.

Don Hawthorn
Chairperson
23rd November 2015