



Whitley Golf Club
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Dear Members,

It seems they are right when say time goes quicker as you get older. The Nicholas clan continues to grow with the arrival of Bertie in July, we thank you for all your well wishes. As ever we continue to move forward as a club, we have made the leap into the digital age by sending this out via email.

It's been great to have so many new members join us over the last year in particular many ladies. We also seem to see a lots of new pay and play faces. In this letter you will find some information of what's been going on recently and what we have planned.

The club committee is now into its second year, this involves the 3 club captains, Rob the pro, Tracey the bar manager, John the committee chair and Keith and David as executive members and the owners Jack and Tom. We have been pleased how this has gone, hopefully through the publication of the minutes from the meeting members have been able to see what the club is discussing and plans for the future. If any members have any queries or suggestions feel free to bring them to the attention of a member of the committee and they will then be discussed. For those of you who are not aware, we meet monthly and we welcome any suggestions to take to the meeting. A big thank you has to go to the members of the committee for their hard work and effort that they put into improving the club.

On the Course

Looking back over the past season, we feel that the course has performed well on the whole. Generally we had rainfall at the right times, which helps the course after a dry spell (notably early July & mid-Sept). Though the weather has been reasonable and fair for golfers and greenkeepers alike.

We have been able to undertake a few smaller tasks and tweaks on the course that we wanted to but the Spring and Summer is mainly about maintenance and mowing.

Greens

It is not always easy to review the performance of the greens over the year with relation to our programme of works, as the right temperatures & rainfall at the right time make such a difference.

The greens have held up well over the season and look strong going into the Autumn and Winter. What is interesting is that there has yet to be fusarium disease that is typical at this time of the year (the last 3 years we have had the disease at the end of Aug or early Sept). Hopefully this is a sign of a stronger grass plant.

A problem of soil compaction does still remain in the greens. The extent does vary from green to green, but the 3rd, 6th & 8th suffer a little more. To help break through the compact soil (that is not absorbing water or allowing

root development) we will aerate every month, while the weather allows us to, at varying depths. With well-timed rainfall or irrigation this will hopefully reduce the issues below the surface.

This past week we also aerated the approaches of the greens, which will hopefully help their condition too.

Over the last few years we have reduced the chemical feed inputs, in favour of organic fertiliser products. With no clear evidence of the greens suffering for this, we will push this even further for the next years' programme, which will virtually be totally organic. Chemical treatments used only in the event of disease outbreak. Hopefully we can produce a strong enough grass plant to withstand such outbreaks, thus eliminating the use of artificial chemicals all together.

Tees

The new tees that were brought into play this year (14th & 15th front tee) have performed well. Rabbits remain a bit of a pest but the grass has taken well and there has been less sinking than we expected. We will be working on a plan this Autumn to undertake more tee construction for next year's playing season.

We have a goal of increasing all the teeing area (front & back tees) so that we have good teeing areas all year round. To help with the maintenance of these tee areas please can you use divot boxes where they are provided - this includes the driving range tee too!

The rest of the Course

Once again we will have extensive hedge & tree maintenance to undertake once the leaves & fruit have dropped. We don't like to removed trees, but there are a few that were planted 20+ years ago and are simply making too much of an impact on the golfer. We plan to plant some trees in the out of play area to the left of the 2nd hole that will more than make up for any trees removed.

Bunkers will be edged where the original lines have been reduced and sand will be topped up as appropriate. Further down the line we will look at more significant renovations & development of bunkers, but we hope to get some more tees constructed as a priority.

For the Spring we will assess our mowing lines of the fairway and rough, to ensure they offer the golfer a fair shot but at the same time does not give us too much cut grass to maintain. The shorter the grass, the increased resources necessary to maintain it!

A huge thank you goes to Sam & Vic for their work efforts again this year. We are a small team but year on year we learn more and continue to develop. The course condition is a credit to them. Thank you to Jamie on bunkers & Steve, Bryan and Boyd for collecting range balls in all weathers.

As always, we welcome any questions with regards to the course & practices that we perform, and please direct these to Tom on tomnicholas@whitleygolfclub.com . Further information can also be found in the 'Course Policy' document on the club website *Course* page – this will be updated at the end of the year.

In the Clubhouse

Life in the clubhouse continues to busy and acting as a social hub for golfer and non-golfer's alike.

A couple of reminders from a member's administration point of view

- We have mentioned before but we feel the need to address it again. The members discount is for members and should not be used to pass around to friends or guests. So the person buying the drink should only get a discount if they themselves are members. Non-Members should not be giving member's money to buy drinks. We remind you that we have introduced this so as to be a benefit for those who are members of the club. We cannot afford to sell drinks at the lower prices to everyone. So any member seen trying to bypass this will be given a warning and have their discount removed if there is a second offence.
- Secondly all members **need to sign in** before going out to play.
- Members will be keeping their same membership number indefinitely. Any members who have not rejoined by 1st of November will have their cards become invalid. This will also therefore mean that anyone who has not rejoined by 1st of November will not be able to play as a member. We will ask our members of staff to enforce this, so please don't be offended if you unable to play if you have not rejoined by 1st of November.

The 'last Friday of the month social' be that golf and BBQ over the summer or quizzes over the Winter have proved very popular, with record numbers for both, and often selling out so please put your name down promptly for any future events if you don't want to miss out! A big thank you to all that helped with these events, we are very lucky with the number of volunteers who put time into this.

We would like to thank all the staff who have worked behind the bar in the last year as without their help we would not be able to run the club. If anyone is interested in joining our staff and working one shift a week in return for free golf let us know as we may have places available.

Competitions

Competition entries have been increasing over the year, in particular the ladies section, however it would be nice to see a few more members playing. So we would encourage members to try and play the competitions regularly or at least play your 3 competitions to keep your handicap.

All members are eligible to play in the monthly competitions once they have a handicap. To get a handicap all you need to do is put in cards for 3 rounds of 18 holes or 6 rounds of 9 holes and you'll be away. It would be great to see a few new players playing in the competitions, if you need to know any more about getting into competitions just ask behind the bar. We would like to see more people regularly playing the monthly competitions in general, but one area we would like to see more participation in is the Men's and Senior's Opens and the other big one off competitions.

One change that will take place for new calendar year is the aligning of the ladies competitions with the men, so all monthly competitions will run from Friday-Monday from January. This will give the chance for work to take place on the course from Tuesday-Thursday without interrupting any competitions. All ladies are encouraged to come along for the roll up on a Wednesday morning at 9am.

The annual presentation evening will take place on 29th November, if you have won a competition this year please make every effort to attend to celebrate your achievement as it's great to see the many faces of our winners!

The Pro

The group lessons are going wonderfully and are more popular than any club Rob has been at in the past. The Monday and Friday groups have continued to be well supported and are now a firm fixture in the fabric of the golf club. Full details of Rob's time table can be found on the website and there are now also boards in the clubhouse next to the bar with all the details. Rob will continue to offer members a special price for individual lessons of £17 for ½ hour and £27 for 1 hour. The advertised rate on posters etc will still be £25 and £35, however all members will pay this lower price; just let Rob know you are a member when booking. This offers fantastic value and you will not get a better value lesson with someone of Rob's experience anywhere in Wiltshire.

A word from the Captains

Stuart Bryant, Men's Captain

I have had a very good year as the captain of the men's section, I would like to thank Adam as vice-captain for all his hard work and also John McGeever for all his advice along the way and making me his vice-captain. Thank you to all the players of the Buthlay cup team, we were only one point away from the qualifiers and to Tracy, Sylvia and Linda for their hard work preparing and serving the food for the home matches it was much appreciated.

I would also like to say a big thank you to the other captains and all the volunteers that helped to make the captains charity day such a big success again. To Tom, Sam and the team thank you, the course is in the best condition that I have seen since I became a member. Due to having to have an operation for a new hip I have had to give my captaincy up early after 1 year but I have left it in safe hands with Adam Law who has already taken on the role.

Martin Doughty, Senior's Captain

We had another very successful year my thanks to Brian Carpenter who has proved a very supportive Vice Captain. .

We played 12 matches against other local clubs (6 home/6 away), resulting in 8 wins 1 draw and only 3 defeats. Our Home form was again outstanding winning all six home games. We are now undefeated at home since 2013!

32 Seniors represented the club in 2019. Special mention is due to newcomers Roger Richards (played 4 won 4) and Dave Cole (played 3 won 3), and to former captains Keith Brooks and David Sibun who both played in 7 matches winning 6. My thanks to all who participated and accepted my team pairings.

I'm very grateful also to Vic Hackett who prepared the greens early every morning before the home matches and to Sam Lovell for his help. Tracey Mallen produces the best post-match buffet for every game and our visitors have passed many compliments.

Next year's fixtures are already booked and a list will be on the notice-board in the New Year.

Our Over 70's competition attracted 23 entries which is perfectly acceptable but why did the Seniors Open, won by David Sibun, only receive 23 entries also?

Please support your club in 2020 with an entry in the Seniors Open or an alternative format or cancellation of this event will have to be considered. If any member can suggest ways to increase entries to the 50 plus we enjoyed regularly around a decade ago please advise myself or any member of the Committee.

Angela Pomfret, Ladies Captain

Membership of the ladies section continues to be strong with several new ladies joining us this year, both beginners, and experienced players from other clubs.

Some of our activities this year included taking a group of 'Rob's ladies' out onto the course, supporting the junior girls by playing the monthly competitions with them, playing a match against some of the county junior girls to give them match practise and a day out to Tracey Park.

The Ladies Open was a great success despite bad weather on the day. We had 27 entrants, including several visitors. Congratulations to Caroline Goodwin from Chippenham who was the winner, and to Carol Woodman who was the first Whitley lady.

The monthly competitions have been extremely well supported throughout the year, with lots of different winners, including new members and junior girls. I know it is more difficult in the winter, but I feel confident that the support will continue.

This year's Handicap League has been great fun. We've played at North Wilts, Manor House and Rushmore and 11 different ladies have played for Whitley. Competition has been close and thanks to a 10-0 win against North Wilts we finished 3rd in the league, a mere 5 points behind 2nd place Manor house.

As my tenure as captain comes to an end, I'd like to thank everyone for all the support that I've received over the last two years, especially Karen, my vice-captain who'll be taking over the reins in November.

Finally, thanks to Tom and his team for giving us a great course to play on. As usual we've received great feedback from visitors over the year.

Membership Fees

As ever we are committed to trying to offer affordable golf, looking at our prices compared to other in the local area we believe we are achieving that. Since last year England Golf Affiliation fee has crept up again. In keeping the club's increase to a minimum the new membership fee will be £352.08

If you would like the pay by 3 installments then these will cost £130 each and will continue to be by 3 postdated cheques given at the time of joining/renewing.

Where as in the past we have offered reductions for those who join part the way through the membership year, this is no longer something we will offer, so anyone looking to join part the way through the year will also need to commit to the following year.

Since this is our first digital letter and we know not all members would have printers at home, there will be membership forms behind the bar for renewals. Those who have been successful in competitions over the last year will receive a discount off their fee.

Final Word

It has become apparent over the last couple of years that slow play is increasingly becoming an issue, we will actively be trying to get the pay and play to speed up and let people through. However we hope we won't have to mention anything to members, so I will remind you now; if there are people waiting behind you and there is nobody in front of you then you should let the group through and endeavor to speed up your play. Two balls should be getting around 18 holes in 3 hours and four balls should be getting round in roughly 3 ½ hours so please make an effort to keep play moving. When letting someone through the quickest way is to play your tee shots then let them through. Being the friendly club we are we would encourage groups to ask individuals to join them where possible.

We also would like to remind people that they may play off the 4th tee if the 1st is busy, however you may do so only if **nobody** is playing or teeing off on the 3rd.

We would like to remind members that the club has always revolved around an ethos of being *relaxed, friendly & fun*. These principles are the foundations of which the club is built upon and we expect all our members and visitors to behave in a manner that facilitates these principles for others.

- RELAXED:

We focus less on 'old club traditions', and take a more casual approach to the club – this includes dress-code (casual but appropriate).

- FRIENDLY:

We pride ourselves on the community that our members have created at the golf club. We encourage participation from all players and abilities; family friendly, friends and anyone who wants a game or to socialise at the club.

Please note, appropriate language should be used both in the clubhouse and on the course to support this principle.

- FUN:

Enjoy your golf and time spent at the club! Have an awareness of others around you and do not behave in a manner that will infringe on their enjoyment.

As a member you take on an active role in contributing to the atmosphere in the clubhouse and on the course, we would like to rely on our members to reflect our collective principles in making the golf club a place that everyone can enjoy.

Remember it's the members that make a club so thank you for supporting us.

Happy golfing,

Jack & Tom