



Club Newsletter

Issue 13

www.goringgolf.co.uk

February 2012

New GMC Special

This is a special edition of the club newsletter focusing on the new General Management Committee (GMC).

At the first meeting of the new GMC on 10th January we confirmed that our aim was to maintain Goring & Streatley Golf Club as it is now. We should continue to provide good golf to a wide range of members.

We committed ourselves to a number of priorities. The main ones are:

- ♦ The National Grid claim
- ♦ Subscription rates for 2012/13
- ♦ A 3-year plan covering all aspects of the club
- ♦ Improving the men's changing rooms
- ♦ Improving communications with members with more obvious openness
- ♦ Clearer budget ownership and review
- ♦ Cost cutting where possible with minimal impact on members

It was agreed that this newsletter would be produced to introduce the GMC members.



Gladys Hills took over as Ladies' Captain on 1st January. Gladys joined the Golf Club in 1992. Gladys is on the GMC, Club Committee and chair of the Ladies Committee.



David Athey took over as Club Captain on 1st January. Dave is a recently retired Mechanical Engineer having spent over 40 years in manufacturing industry covering heavy fabrication, food processing machinery and latterly plastic injection moulding. He has spent the last 25 years operating at senior management level running operations, technical and MIS.



Bill Harrison became our Club President on 1st January. The President's role is not only to be an ambassador for the club but to also be the members' friend, ensuring members' interests take priority at the GMC and Club Committee. Bill was Club Captain in 1998.



Richard Beasley has just taken over as Treasurer. Richard has been working hard to get a full understanding of the finances at the club and now has a firm hand on the budgets and a clear understanding of our day to day costs and income.



Eamon Bradley continues on the GMC from last year and retains his role looking after Food & Beverage. Eamon and the team have already turned the F&B budget around so that it is not making a loss and is starting to make a contribution towards overheads.



Geoff Ward was elected Chairman of the GMC at it's first meeting of the year. He will however also retain his responsibility for Marketing and IT



Roger Colebrook has taken responsibility for Greens and will work closely with Brian Valentine our head greenkeeper. He is also a member of the Club Committee and the Handicap Sub-committee. Roger joined the club in 2006. He plays mostly with the EGGS and in some VETS matches.



Colin Arnold joins the GMC again, this time to assist Roger on Greens and Gordon on House. He will also consider areas of potential cost cutting as a special project for the GMC. Colin continues as a Trustee of the club.



Gordon Brown has taken responsibility for House on the GMC. House involves all aspects of the clubhouse.

Why Call an EGM on Subscriptions?

At that first GMC meeting we recognised that we needed to make an early decision on what to do about subscription rates in the club year 2012/13. Our new Treasurer, Richard Beasley, had already done a lot of work on the budgets. We agreed that more information was required prior to calling for an EGM and this was produced at a further Committee meeting on 24th January.

The more detailed work showed that we had made a loss over the last three years if we exclude National Grid money. Two budgets were considered based on a 5% and a 10% increase.

The club is financially secure and we can sustain a loss for a few years but we need to get back to a balanced budget as soon as possible. The GMC felt that members would not be happy with an increase over 10% and we wanted the club to maintain its current position offering excellent golf at or below the cost of other clubs in the area.

It was clear that the 10% increase option was better for the club going forward. It allows us to catch up to the subscription level we would have had if the National Grid activity had not forced us to forego our subscription increase last year.

There was real concern that going to members again after the December EGM would upset some members. After lengthy discussions we decided that the members should be asked their opinion at an EGM. This is a members' club and members should have the opportunity to decide on the major issues. The GMC will recommend that subscriptions are increased by 10% but it will be members who decide whether we increase subscriptions by 5% or 10%.

We unanimously agreed to present information as clearly and as openly as we could manage.

Geoff Ward, Chairman, GMC

Why increase fees more than inflation

I guess most of us will be aware there are a number of golf clubs across the Country that are struggling to balance their books. The growth in the number of clubs and perhaps falling numbers of club members is bound to be having an impact. This isn't however the main reason why we need to increase fees above the rate of inflation next year. Our "issue" goes back a couple of years when we decided, for very good reasons, not to increase our fees. In effect, we are now having to play "catch-up". A quick calculation (based on a 7 day membership) shows this quite clearly I think....

	2009	2010	2011	2012
<u>Where we are today</u>		0%	5%	10%
7 Day Membership	880	880	926	1,020
<u>Where we would have been</u>		5%	5%	5%
7 Day Membership	880	924	970	1,019

Continued next column

From previous column

Clearly this assumes we would have increased fees by 5% in 2010 in normal circumstances.

Our Club is balancing the books. Our strengths, as I see them, suggest to me that we will continue to do so. These include, our excellent course, our people and equally important, our membership. Between us I believe we create a hugely enjoyable environment in which to play golf.

By the end of this current Financial Year our cash position will be there or thereabouts in terms of our aim to be a non-profit organisation. This includes spending £80k strengthening our course equipment and completing phase 1 of upgrading the men's changing rooms.

This leads me to the second main reason why we need to increase fees by a rate higher than inflation. We need to build up a fund that allows us to continue to invest in the club and maintain the course and surrounding facilities at the standards of excellence we currently enjoy. We are currently reaping the benefits created by past members and we have the responsibility of ensuring future members can do the same.

I'm not proposing a 3 year strategy for fees at this stage in the way the previous GMC did at the EGM held in November. I make no apology for this as I think it is unreasonable for a new GMC, with the level of turnover in membership we have seen this year, to construct a 3 year plan in the space of effectively 5 weeks (we will get back to longer term planning fairly soon). What we are doing however is ensuring we are working to manage future increases in fees by undertaking a number of tactical actions.

We will be looking at opportunities we have for generating increases in income from external bookings and identifying and acting upon every opportunity we have for cost containment

We will do these things in the context of ensuring our membership continue to enjoy the same standard of benefits – a clear message to emerge from the Consultation Evening held last year e.g. we are not going to suddenly flood the course with Societies. This is an area we will cover in more detail on 23rd Feb when I want to communicate more than just an increase in fees. What we will be looking to communicate is more like a business plan and we are going to do this in a spirit of openness and honesty. These are qualities the new GMC are 100% in agreement on and I believe you will notice a difference over the coming months as a result.

One of the first key steps is asking for your agreement to my proposal to increase fees for next year by 10% and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on 23rd Feb.

Richard Beasley, Treasurer

More detailed information will be provided on the club web site. Richard will also be posting monthly finance reports on the web site during the coming year.

Ed

Highlights of The Club Golf Committee (CGC) Meeting:

12th December 2011, G&SGC Clubhouse

The ladies had discovered that Pinehurst, North Carolina was a golf club formed in 1895 and enquiries would be made to see if there was any interest in joining the 1895 club.

A ball dispenser at the practice ground had been investigated - the complete equipment (dispenser, cleaner, balls and collector attachment) would cost around £7.5K. There were practical difficulties arising from the sloping ground and lack of electrical supply. It was considered too expensive in light of our financial position

To obtain a Wedding Licence would cost £1.6K for 3 years. As G&SGC only has 3 or 4 weddings a year this looks a high figure.

The field across the road would cost £15K per year to use as a practice ground, its rather short, sloping and would need to be fenced. This idea is too expensive.

A gourmet meal and wine event with Ian Hewson has been suggested. This was a welcome idea - perhaps for April. It could have many courses with appropriate wine. It would be smart casual dress and members could bring guests.

The premises alcohol licence has been obtained.

A social committee report was given. The Murder Mystery had understandably made a small loss but other events had worked well. There was no overall budget problem. A draft 2012 calendar was tabled.

Both Ladies and Men's Honours Boards need attention. The club is planning to improve the decoration of the back stairs.

The annual handicap review will take place in Jan 2012.

A request had been made to allow 4 balls in the Saturday Stableford. As Saturday play is already slow due to many 4 balls it was agreed that a 6 month trial should go ahead. There are no qualifying rounds in December to February so the trial would start in March (clocks change 25th Mar). The effect would be monitored.

Open Forum Book. There is a need to make a repair to the course pathway close to the B4009 on the opposite side to the hut. There has been subsidence creating a trip hazard.

Those leaving the committee warmly thanked.

Roger Colebrook

Highlights of The Club Golf Committee (CGC) Meeting:

7th January 2012, G&SGC Clubhouse

1/ Competition winnings. – From the 1st of April members will have the option to choose where their competition winnings will be allocated.

The default position will be to their account in the Professional's shop.

Should a member wish to allocate their monies to their swipe card or their subscriptions account they may now do this.

Members must notify the office within seven days of the closure of the competition if they wish their winnings to be allocated to an account other than the Professional's shop.

2/ Ladies may reserve starting times at weekends during men's board competitions. By doing so they will not be entering the competition but should adopt the same match format e.g. three ball play

3/ A ball dispenser at the practice ground will cost in the region of £7,500. This does not include the cost of getting electricity to the practice ground to power it.

4/ The Club may apply for a wedding licence. The cost will be £1,600 per year. As the Club only has 7 available Saturdays for the rest of the year to host a wedding this will not be pursued.

5/ A quote to rent the practice ground opposite the Club has been obtained. The cost would be £15,000 per year and it would be conditional to the whole of the area being fenced off. This is clearly too expensive.

6/ The Club's application for a Premises Licence has been approved. This allows us to sell alcohol to non-members. This was contested by the local Parish Council, but their grounds were unsubstantiated.

7/ From March to August the Club will allow fourballs to play in the Saturday Stableford competitions as a trial. The effects of this will be monitored by the Club Professional.

8/ Pinehurst Golf Club, North Carolina (est 1895), has been invited to become part of the 1895 Club which allows free reciprocal golf with other Clubs established in 1895. Pinehurst have declined the offer and therefore their members will not be allowed to play Goring and Streatley Golf Club free of charge – their loss.

Mike Evans & Roger Colebrook

The Foursome League

The new season starts in April for the foursomes league and we start our season playing Mill Ride at Calcot on Saturday 14th April. All this season's fixtures are on the club web site and if any one would like to be considered for the squad could they update their availability on the site.

The foursomes league dinner takes place on Friday 24th February at Calcot where we will collect our prize for coming second last year and also the draw will take place for the inaugural RDICL knockout cup which will be a team of 6 with 2 x foursomes and 2x singles.

We also have two pre-season matches coming up in March against the Captain's team on the 11th and against the A/B team on the 25th (we need revenge for last year).

Unfortunately we were beaten in the first round of the Mail on Sunday knockout when we were beaten by Donnington Grove 3-2 so better luck next year.

Nick Jacobs

Club Survey

Many thanks to all members who completed the club survey in December. We had 308 members responding, nearly 40%, a record for the company conducting the survey from us. Initial results are very encouraging. We hope to publish a full analysis in the next newsletter.

Geoff Ward

Captain's Column

Once again the weather has played a major part in the start to the new year. 2012 began with unseasonably mild temperatures but associated with some very strong breezes through most of January. February came along and the whole scene became much more normal – so the past few weeks of very cold and snowy conditions have seen the course closed over an extended period. Very little golf for most of us.

No doubt we are all paying close attention to the weather forecasts in the hope that a return to regular golf is imminent.

The early weeks of the new year see the various committees getting up to speed, and new committee members settling into their roles for the coming 12 months.

Keep an eye on the notice boards for the 2012 Captain / Pro Challenge Matches dates.

Please make sure that your availability for the various club teams is correctly set up on the club website. The first match of the season is fast approaching, which is the Captain's Team v The Foursomes League Team to be played on Sunday 11th March.

I wish you all well in achieving your golfing ambitions over the coming year, and good fortune to our various team captains and their teams for an enjoyable and successful 2012.

David Athey, Club Captain

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The New Greens Committee

I was flattered to be voted onto the GMC in January this year – many thanks for your confidence. At the first meeting of the Committee 10th Jan I was asked to take on the Greens Sub Committee which has now just had its first meeting. The other two members are Mike Evans and Brian Valentine. I am absolutely confident that you will all be keen to tell the three of us what needs to be fixed around the course - since you have already started! I have no great knowledge of agronomy, arboriculture or sadly even gardening so I've got a bit to learn. However, as we know, Brian is first class at all of this, so is a good pair of hands.

The work done on the course is carefully set out in the course policy document and this is quite deliberate so that the whims of individuals don't get in the way. Getting the course right is a methodical, long term business so chopping and changing is not the right approach! There are many years of experience behind what goes on.

The winter programme is now in hand and the greens staff is working on different activities. When the ground temperature is above 8 degrees however, grass will grow so there will still be some mowing to undertake from time to time. We have had some frost and inevitably temporary greens but no closures thus far. We have lost a tree alongside the 13th fairway and so we have had the tops of the larger ones lopped. Verti-Draining work on the fairways is planned for mid Feb. I am pleased to say that the machinery replacement programme has been put back on a proper timetable but as with other things, the available cash will depend on the members decision regarding subs at the February EGM; so that really is important.

Finally let me mention a few old favourites regarding taking care of our beautiful course;

- Repair your pitch marks
- Replace your divots firmly back into place
- Tee off only on the mats where they are in use. Mats come a distant second to a grass tee, but they are necessary.
- Try not to rake bunker sand away from the middle of the bunkers. Shallow sand makes life difficult

Believe me we are still making these mistakes so they are worth a mention.

Roger Colebrook



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Patience is the key...

Golf courses have evolved over the last 20 years. Turf quality in the close season has improved immeasurably, as has the clothing which allows us to play in the most inclement weather. We are therefore playing a lot more golf, throughout the winter months, than we have ever done before. Expectations have also increased and whilst most people will tolerate a slight drop in turf quality and green speed, they still expect the courses they play to be in excellent condition.

For this reason we must be tolerant when the snow begins to melt and/or the frozen grounds begins to thaw. This is when serious and long term damage can be done. More often than not, when the thaw is underway, the days can be mild and the sun can be shining. The snow has disappeared from the golfers gardens and this is where the problems often start. The Course Manager comes under pressure from members to open the course and it can be difficult to turn away important revenue, especially when the course looks not just playable but tempting from the clubhouse. However patience is vital and we must all respect the judgment of the Course Manager and here is why....

The thaw starts from the top. The frost can often penetrate the ground many inches down. When the snow starts to melt, apart from natural run off, the water has nowhere to run. It cannot permeate through the ground as it would normally as it is sat on a number of inches of frost. Even if there has not been any snow, the ground only freezes because of its moisture content. Therefore when the ground starts to thaw, the water just sits on the top, saturating the surfaces. Walking on such surfaces alone can be very damaging and the damage done can take months to repair.

However, the real damage at this time is root break, especially on the fine turf areas such as the greens and tees. When the surface is soft and below is frozen, walking on the turf will break the roots and likely kill the plant. Multiply this with hundreds of footprints over a relatively small area and you can devastate your greens. Once again speaking from experience, this can take until well into June to fully repair.

So even if the weather is mild, your garden is clear and the course is looking very inviting, please try to respect the decision made by your Course Manager. Even if you think he is being over cautious, a few lost days of golf now can help prevent poor greens for months to come

Michael Evans, Club Manager



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Mike Evans, Club Manager, Goring & Streatley Golf Club

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Can you help?

I am looking for some help in marketing our club. We have been pretty active over this last year or two getting the web site working for us, changing the advertising to more local press, and tidying up the corporate image. We now need to progress further over the next year and I need some help. I would like to get more people involved in marketing the club, bring in more ideas and more manpower.

You don't need to be a marketing person to help although experience in a selling or marketing role would be a bonus.

Over the coming year I want to undertake a few new activities

- ♦ publish a new brochure for the club
- ♦ Consider a sponsorship programme
- ♦ Improve our links with local businesses
- ♦ Increase advertisements in the newsletter
- ♦ Increase business meetings revenue
- ♦ Improve press relations

I still need help with the newsletter and our local advertising. Ideally I would like to get a team of three or four of us, each running with specific projects and working together. This is a purely voluntary role to help out the club, so we will tailor your role to your skills and the time you have available. If you would like to get involved, please get in touch on 01491 873342 or geoff.ward@greycells.co.uk.

Geoff Ward



Next Issue

All contributions are welcome. Please e-mail to editor@goringgolf.co.uk, post in the Marketing pigeon hole outside the club office, or telephone Geoff on 01491 873342

Please always include a telephone number, and an e-mail address if possible. Photos are welcome and encouraged. Please get your articles in as early as possible but **deadline for the March issue is Thursday 1st March.**

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