

Oundle Golf Club

Annual General Meeting Minutes

2nd September 2021 - 7.30pm

The chairperson welcomed everyone present to the AGM.

The President's Welcome Address

Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to this General Meeting of Oundle Golf Club. I apologise for not being with you at this time, but I'm on a staycation in Scotland with Liz.

It has always been a tradition of Oundle Golf Club that at these meetings we pay our respects to those former or current members of the club who have died in the period since our previous meeting. On this occasion I would ask that we stand to remember George Nicholson, Richard Newman, Mark Kirk and most recently Paul Silburn.

Thank you.

I am aware that at this meeting there is a considerable amount of information to be imparted to the members present, therefore I will not delay this process.

My regards to you all and I hope you continue to stay safe.

Chris Swan
President of Oundle Golf Club

Apologies for Absence

There were apologies from, Paul and Christine Wright, Carol and Mike Wakeman, John and Sheila Homer, Liz and Chris Swan, Karen Taylor, Graham Drage, Peter McNally, Debbie Verdino, Sarah and Roger Parsell, Gerry and Barbarah Jenkinson, Terry Tibbs, Phil Churchward, Keith Johnson, Peter Gunning and Martin Camp.

Election of Scrutineers

John Bishton and Mark James were elected as scrutineers

Minutes of the Last General Meeting in December 2020

The minutes from this meeting were signed off

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the previous General Meeting on 4th December 2020.

Finance Report

The year ended 31st March 2021 generated a surplus of £62k, compared with a deficit the previous year of £36k. However, extraordinary income resulting from grants and a Bounce Back loan rather flattered the income performance. Removing these one off events would see the club generating a deficit of c£35k, similar to the previous year. Subscription income remained consistent in the year, visitor and society income was up and bar and catering were down. Expenditure on the course and in the bar were down in the year as a result of the course closure, admin expenses remained consistent.

In summary;

- A great year for visitor and society income which went some way to make up for a poor year for bar and catering revenues
- Underlying trading generated a deficit in the year
- Financial stability achieved through maximising various grant opportunities and a Bounce Back loan
- Opportunities to apply for further grants are few, and the club will need to focus on retaining and growing membership, generating income from visitors/societies and non golf income from catering and bar activities
- At the same time, a robust programme of carefully considered and costed fixed asset replacement is necessary to ensure the course and facilities remain in the best possible condition and all activities and equipment adhere to the latest industry and health and safety standards

With reference to the last point, the club has procured a new rough cut mower as the current one is at the end of it's useful life. The new machine will be delivered early in 2022.

A question was raised from the floor on the Bounce Back loan, specifically what it was going to be used for, as it had been agreed in previous meetings that it would be directed towards cost saving or revenue generating opportunities. Veronica said that a decision on what to use the loan for was yet to be taken.

A further question was raised in reference to the recent break in and asbestos. Peter Reed said the site had been inspected and was considered safe at present, although there is a need to sample and test all potential asbestos materials on site, which is underway.

Chairperson's Report for 2021 and to date

Well, it has been another strange year so far! If we had known back in March 2020 that we were going to have to suffer 3 lockdowns with the last one effectively lasting from January this year until just recently and that things were still not really back to full normality even now we would not have believed it! I still think we will wake up and find it has all been a bad dream. But we **have** come

through and although there have many tragedies across the world, I do hope that not too many members have been personally affected too much by the virus - except perhaps for their mental well-being of course.

We started the year going into lockdown 3 and although this was not quite so severe as lockdown 1 it still closed the golf course for the 3rd time which was devastating news – particularly since we considered golf to a sport which could be played outside in the fresh air and in a socially distanced way.

We were then able to gradually open up various aspects of the Club's functions as the government's road map opened up the whole country. We are now fully open as a business, but the threat of Covid-19 still looms and it has affected the way we behave and think. We are still hoping to get back all the events that we were having Pre Covid in March 2020. Let us keep our fingers crossed that this will happen and help to keep this fabulous little Club marching on.

It has continued to be a strange year with visitor numbers not quite reaching the heights of those of last year, but with memberships increasing in every category and an increase in Societies who bring in much needed funds and usually support the bar and catering side of the business.

We have, at the moment, the largest number of members for many years totalling 444! Breakdown of current membership: Albatross 5 and 7-day – 185, Intermediate –32, Junior – 98, Eagle – 35, Birdie – 70, Oundle School – 24.

We have 84 new members this year since re-opening on 29th March – in all categories.

Peter and I have been taking part in England Golf webinars which are focussed on retaining members. We realise from these that the women look after their new members admirably, but the other sections are not doing quite enough to welcome new members and nurture them through the first few months in particular. EG have always quoted that the main reason people leave a club is because they could not find friends to play with and did not feel they fitted in. I have been appealing for 2/3 years for someone to come forward and help with this aspect but have drawn a blank. Remember – the cold hard fact is that the more members we have and hold onto, the more we can do to improve the course and the more we can keep the membership subscriptions down for all of you!

I must again mention our financial position. Funnily enough we would possibly have been in a worse position if it were not for the Covid-19 situation - the mortgage payment holidays, business rate holidays, furloughing of staff, the acquisition of grants have all contributed along with the general revival of golf seen across the country. I must pay tribute to Barry Robson and Lesley White who were instrumental in securing these funds and the clever furloughing of staff.

As you know this Club is a members' club – owned and run by us – the members. But in order to run efficiently and keep our heads above water financially we need members to come forward and offer their services in any way they can. Without these volunteers in so many areas we simply could not keep going. Unfortunately, we still are not in a position to afford a full time Club Manager. A couple of years ago we reached the amazing situation that every single one of the official volunteer

positions were filled. At this moment in time we are not so lucky – we do not have a Finance Officer – this is a huge gap in our Management team! We do not have a Junior organiser and with all those new junior members this is a huge shame. We do not have a Social organiser. We will be short of a premises maintenance person from December when Richard Hankins retires. Also at this present time we are short of a Club Vice Captain which leaves us with the unthinkable possibility of no Club Captain next year.

So I make an appeal to you all – this is a members' Club which means it should be run by members. Please step forward and help if you can. Among our membership there is a huge variety of skills and expertise and we need to make use of some of that to help keep the club going. If you do not come forward to help I think the next step will be to pay someone to run the Club and put all our subscriptions up to pay for that privilege.

We do have amazing staff in place but nearly all of them are new this year so are still learning as they go through their first year. Peter and Jasmine in the office only started in May, the guys in the Pro shop only started in April (and some even more recently), Jemma is going through her first full year as Bar and Catering Manager and she has many new young staff. We have a new Marketing company Elda just starting this month and we have a new greenkeeper in Matthew Tabram. They all do a fantastic job but we must remember to look after them all, be polite and patient with them and constantly thank them for all they do.

This is perhaps the right time to mention the course and say how great it has looked this year through what have been some very challenging weather conditions. Well done Dan and his team.

Can I finish by thanking everyone who has offered support and who has helped to run this Club in any way – thank you all

When I took this job on in December 2016, I knew it would not be easy, but I had just retired from teaching and needed a fresh challenge! Little did I know what was to come ahead!

It has been an incredibly difficult 5 years, starting with the crucial task of making sure we were going to be financially stable after a catastrophic 2016. We then had to drag the Club into the 21st century and start to modernise procedures and management.

We have had 3 main setbacks along the way – the flood, the tree felling around the lake and obviously this Covid-19 pandemic. All of these have actually resulted in some positives – a newly refurbished clubhouse (thanks to clever management of the insurance claim led by Barry Robson), a lovely 12th green, and a nationwide revival of golf.

These external events have not fazed me particularly – yes - they were setbacks and ones that no-one could have predicted, but they have all resulted in better outcomes. I have received incredible support from the majority of members who have taken time to thank me and back me personally and by email on many occasions, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank every one of them for that support – it does lift me every time it happens!

But unfortunately the story is not always great. I have been threatened verbally and received rude emails. I have been criticised and I have witnessed temper tantrums and resignations. Members have approached me on the course in the middle of a game and directly before a match with

criticism of something. Members have been regularly critical of visitors and societies on the course when they have been told countless times that we need to have these in order for the Club to survive. Members have demanded refunds at times when the Club simply cannot afford it. My task has always been to keep this Club going in a financially stable position and some members do not see that as important. Some members do not see that if they do not help to support the Club they will not have a Club to play at! This is what has caused me the most stress and led me to announce that I will be resigning from this December as Chairman after 5 years in office.

I am also having to be mindful of my own health – I have low kidney function due to an event last year and my kidneys are not recovering fast enough. I must remove myself from stressful situations to allow myself to heal.

I am telling you all this – not because I am a moaning sort of person – but because I do not want the next Chairman to have the same treatment. I want that person to be treated with respect. I want all officials who work on a volunteer basis and all the paid staff to be treated with respect and manners. We are all here to do our best for the Club. I am informing you of this decision now to give you 3 months to find a new Chairman and I really hope from the bottom of my heart that you do. I would hate to see the amazing progress of the last 5 years thrown away. It is in your hands now. I have loved many aspects of this job and it has been rewarding to see the recovery of the Club. This is a great club with a great team of staff and great members and I will be sorry to step down. Thank you all.

Club Captain's Report for 2021 and to date

Good evening Madam Chair, Ladies & Gentlemen

Whilst I was not expecting to be standing here this year I am honoured to be doing so as the Club Captain.

Our AGM last year took place virtually on GoogleMeet or Microsoft Teams, I can't remember which, but it is great to see so many of you here this evening. Talking of Microsoft Teams – Teams forms the background of my speech this evening.

From a golfing perspective Monday March 29th was the day to remember – when we could get back to playing golf. Albeit with restrictions still in place but we could get back to doing what we are here for. As restrictions slowly lifted we have been able to get back to playing not just social golf but competitive golf with our own competitions, NGL competitions and matches and of course friendly games with other clubs.

The Women's Section led by Womens Captain – Sue Brown, ably assisted by Debbie Verdino have been as active as ever. The Women's Section, although small in number, continues to be a competitive and effective group. However, as with the club in general, there are key positions on the committee to be filled next year if the Women's Section is to continue successfully. On the golfing front Pat Silburn retained her title in the Club Championship 2021.

In the Cecil Leitch the team came up against strong Rushden and Whittlebury teams and failed to exit the group stage, sadly relinquishing the trophy they held for two years.

The Seniors Section led by Phil Churchward with Rob Darby as his Vice Captain have had a busy year thus far. Their Open competitions have remained ever popular and our own Steve Holmes and his playing partner Kim Davis from Kettering won the Seniors Pairs Open with 49 pts. The NGL Senior's knockout saw us up against a strong Peterborough Milton team to whom we lost 3&2. Up and coming is the Seniors Charity Open next Monday – I am advised by Peter Rice that Raffle prize donations are still most welcome.

In the Men's Section we have entered a team into the Scratch League for the first time in many years to go alongside our Hollingsworth and Handicap league teams. In the Hollingsworth we struggled to hold our own in a very tough league – My thanks to Chris Hankins for running the team again this year. In the Handicap League we suffered two big defeats by the eventual group winners Overstone Park but then helped them secure the group with a win & draw against Peterboro Milton. My sincere thanks to Guy Fowler for running the team again. In the Scratch League we have performed beyond expectations. Currently we sit one point behind the leaders and with a big match against Daventry this Saturday Michael Davidson's team are in a great position. My thanks for Michael taking up the team Captains role.

In the Men's Club Championship Charlie Fowler was once again Club Champion with Chris Treweeks winning the Cummings Cup and Chris Hankins securing the Potters Bowl.

From a Captains perspective it was fantastic to be able to host this year's Captains Day and I thank Garry Asbery who hosted his Captains Charity Day both of which we had a very good.

My thanks to all golfers who have supported the various teams in representing the club this year and all the competitions.

As I said at the head of this speech, my theme this year is about teams and our golfing teams have done well.

But the other teams are those that support the club. Of course the Golf Club relies on its course. Daniel and his team, continued to work through the lockdown maintaining the course in the wonderful condition we have enjoyed on our return. I have spoken to many members, visitors and opponents who have commented on the standard of the course preparation and playing conditions, my heartfelt thanks to Dan, Gary, Matt, Andy, Denis, Charlie & Mick for their efforts. Our Tuesday volunteering team continue to support the Greens teams and they should be thanked and congratulated for the support they unselfishly give freely each week. To the whole greens team, supported by John Homer OUR thanks.

Once we finish our game there is the infamous 19th hole, our Bar and Catering team led by Jemma have been outstanding throughout the lockdown period and since restrictions have been lifted. The idea of opening the 'Meeting room' to provide refreshments and the HWH was inspired. The efforts upstairs since reopening have been brilliant – I still expect to get table service, but it is no longer forthcoming – I need to have a word. The team working with Jemma – Rhiann, Georgia, Charmaine, Paula have done a great job given the nationally published issues with the hospitality sector and staffing issues. We still need staff.... Any ideas?

Worryingly a recent study carried out by the club found that less than 30% of golfers booked to play on BRS actually use the bar and catering facilities. Never has the term 'Use it or Lose it' been more appropriate.

We have seen several changes in the 'other' team at the club - The Administration and ProShop team. Jasmin and Peter have joined the club to manage our daily administration operation, supported by Carol our book keeper. Their calming manner and attention to detail have already demonstrated an improved operation in the office and ensuring that our members, visitors and guests are well looked after in dealings with the club. It would be remiss of me not to mention the voluntary support the club received during the change of administration teams from Christine Kime who worked tirelessly in the office during that period.

In the ProShop we have been very fortunate to have the John Pengelly led operation working with us, where we have had Michael Farr join us as Club Pro. Working alongside Michael we have Jordan, Malcolm, Archie and Morgan who provide a warm welcome to the club, a wealth of product knowledge and great tuition lessons.

Finally to Mr Oundle – the aforementioned Mick Ives who has worked with the Greens team as well as keeping the club and HWH Clean

A great effort - My thanks to the whole team for your support to the club.

My final comments are to the team of volunteers who help to keep the club running – without them we would not be here. My fellow Captains and their respective representatives, the team on the Management council, the Golf & Social team, and the Health and Safety team. These volunteers keep the club going we are grateful, but we need more.

Thank you for your time this evening.

Enjoy your golf, play well and of course stay safe.

Propositions

1) Revised Management Structure

Proposed by Paul Kime, seconded by Tony Shilcock.

Paul presented the proposal to reorganise the Management Council which was circulated in advance of the meeting. An Agreement in Principle was sought from members to allow a more detailed proposal to be put together. The benefits of the change were explained to the meeting.

A question was posed as to whether any members of the proposed management team would be paid. The answer was no, all would be volunteers. It was suggested that whilst position terms would be longer than a year, they should have a fixed duration which was generally agreed. A question over the role of Trustees was raised and answered by Peter Izod, who explained that Trustees do not have a role in managing the club, but are there to manage the assets of the club. A question was asked as to whether the Club Captain would have a vote on the Management Council

as proposed, the answer was no. A vote as taken and it was unanimously agreed that the Management Council should proceed to build this proposal with full detail for approval in December or before by EGM.

2) Dogs on the course

Proposed by Veronica Lyon, seconded by Paul Kime.

There was a lively debate on whether to allow dogs on the course following the recent extended trial. The detail of the proposal was explained and many comments were made on past experience with dogs on the course. It was suggested that our lease prevented dogs from being allowed onto the leased land.

A vote was taken, there were 2 in favour of allowing dogs and the rest were against. Subsequent to the meeting the lease has been checked and indeed the club is not permitted to allow dogs on the leased land.

Any Other Business

- Did the club have any profit or cash flow forecasts for the current year?

Veronica explained that we did and that performance was on track with expectations.

Veronica was thanked by all for her tremendous contribution to the club during her time as the Chairperson

No other business was raised, Veronica thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 8.45pm