



7th Hole – Sunday 3 Nov

BUMPER EDITION – OUR BIGGEST YET – 26 PAGES!

THE SLEAFORD FLAGSTICK

**SLEAFORD GOLF CLUB MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER**

News and Developments concerning **YOUR** Golf Club

**COMPILED AND EDITED BY GERRY WALSH
04/11/2019**



CHAIRMAN'S FOUR WOOD

In this, our 7th edition of our Newsletter *The Sleaford Flagstick* I am going to again highlight the fact that we are well into a 'golf **membership** recession' that might last a decade. Locally we have witnessed the closure of Canwick Park and Immingham and heard of similar difficulties at Burghley Park and Toft Hotel and now we know that both Boston West and Louth are being reduced to 9 holes. (Editor's Note: Having been contacted by Louth GC, I can confirm that it is definitely not reducing to 9 Holes. It is very much staying as an 18-hole course, and I would like to apologise unreservedly to Louth and all its members, for any upset this may have caused.) Nationally we have 2 million 'golfers' but only 650,000 are registered with Clubs (*survey England Golf*). There are a lot of homeless 'nomads' out there and we want some of them! Younger people often don't see the need to join a Club. Why would they if they can exist on a diet of two for ones and 18 holes and a bacon bap for £20 instead of stumping up about £800 or more every year. There are approximately 14000 registered golfers in Lincolnshire belonging to 46 Clubs (*England Golf*). My maths tells me this is an average of just over 300 per Club so when we look at our figure of 573, excluding our 23 juniors, what are we worried about? Well, of course at the moment we are not. At one of the Chair/Network meetings I have attended this year we were asked the following question by a presenter (which none of us got correct by the way!). What is the main reason why members that join a Club leave after less than 2 years? Answer: **Because they cannot find people to play with.** Those among you that started their golf at Sleaford and have only belonged to this Club may find this unfamiliar and rather strange, even unbelievable. If you had, like me and some other members I know, been a past member at several Clubs in your golfing life, it would not be so surprising. I remember many Sunday mornings in the 70s (so it isn't a new phenomenon) on the putting green at Woodhall Spa, waiting for a group to be a player short so I could join in. Thank goodness they had a start sheet for competitions. It was the same at Market Rasen. I only knew one person at that Club when we joined but their starting sheets for comps, which were drawn, were a godsend as I quickly made many new friends and associates by playing with **different** players each week.

We recently had discussion about starting times on both Golf Committee and Management Committee but no change to our existing set up was sought or desired. We are apparently happy the way we are. So without just **some** starting times, like the other 90% of Clubs, how else can we improve our interaction with new members? In an effort to secure better integration for our 'newer members' in a different manner, I am now proposing a strategy of voluntary 'mentoring.' A new member, who wishes to avail themselves of this programme, will be provided with a mentor who ideally will be someone with the golfing experience and knowledge of our Club to assist new members to integrate successfully, thereby increasing their enjoyment and subsequent motivation to remain with us. These 'mentors,' as well as introducing new members to our social and golf culture, can also assist them in getting cards in for handicap. Alan Pearson, our Golf Chair, is also planning some new, more 'fun type' competitions next year which will also help. Remember, only 25-30%

of members actually play 'competitive' golf. We all have different reasons for wanting to play golf and join a Club. If you think you would like to help by becoming a mentor please give your name to Nigel.

For those of you who don't read your Management Committee Minutes, which are now published and available at the Clubhouse within a week of our meetings, I would like to update you on our latest news, not all good, but mostly, we think:

- Our new circular 'banqueting' tables and chairs were purchased with funds made available from our Festival Week and the Sportsmen's Dinner.
- Another reciprocal to announce with Spalding GC and negotiations with Norwood Park and Ripon City underway. Kenwick Park already agreed.
- A new cellar air cooler (£3396) to replace our obsolete (EU again) and malfunctioning one, lowering our carbon footprint and saving energy costs.
- Unfortunately, RAF Cranwell has moved both their leagues to Belton Park for their matches as we refused to go below our member/guest rate (£18 for next year) for their fees thus ending over 60 years of association.
- Recent marketing initiative at Birdies Golf Range to attract new members.
- Repairs to kitchen flooring (£4345) to be done 15-23 November as a necessary part of recovering Food Safety level 5.
- 16/12 package to be run again from Dec 1st and Mid-Country membership of 20 miles to be floated for your approval at our next AGM in January.
- At a meeting on 4th Nov we have now begun plans for a future upgrading of our website, subject to Committee approval. This will address the issues and shortcoming within our existing site enabling such features as a 'member's portal,' payments online for Opens and Green Fees and interaction with social media.

Some members are asking me what happened to our survey results. Nigel and I recently met with our Club Support Officers from England Golf. We are now fully briefed about our results and we will be presenting these to you at another Open Forum to be held sometime before Christmas. We intend to follow up this Survey, where questions were standardised throughout the UK for benchmarking to be enabled, with more specific questions relating to our Club.

Finally I would like to extend a big 'thank you' to our 'VOLUNTEERS.' Any Club, no matter how big or small, poor or wealthy, needs them. From dry-stone walling to running competitions; from flower arranging to raising money for charity; from committee work to pulling up ragwort; from caring for the environment to looking out for the juniors; from arranging entertainment to leading a Club team. You know who you are and we all thank you. If **you** would like to volunteer and give some time to your Club, please let us know.

Gerry Walsh
Chairman

CAPTAINS ROUND 3

Dear Members and Friends,

Since the last Captains round 2, it has been a very busy 3 months, so I will start by congratulating the gents who, on the 14th of July at Boston Cowbridge, took part in the Henry Lunn Shield and came home victorious. Well done Mick Baines, Dylan Ormesher and Dan Withers. It was great to see the shield proudly displayed in our clubhouse.

The Club Championship was held on the 27th and 28th of July which was won by Mick Baines for the third year running, what a brilliant achievement. Well done Mick and I am pleased you didn't listen to all of my advice when we were B team partners! I also offer my congratulations to Kenny Kerr for winning the Peake Medal.

Also in July we had a mixed exchange with Worksop golf course in which 40 members of both clubs participated in and enjoyed. Well done Terry Marshall for organising this event.

I would also like to thank Terry and his Festival Committee for the organisation of the Festival of Golf week, which was a great success. All of the competitions were well attended. Many thanks also to my employers **Bush Tyres** for their sponsoring of the event.

I had a great time with the 'A' team this year, who eventually finished 3rd in the league. The highlight of the season had to be beating the favourites, Belton Park, in the last match of the season and the look on Richard Burnett's face when shaking hands with an ex-Sleaford A team player was priceless! Well done Matt Lawson and the team.

At club level I believe we are heading in the right direction. The quality of our course continues to improve, thanks to Brian and his staff, and for the new developments in the bar and catering thanks are due to Peter and his staff. Well done gents, keep up the good work.

Until the next one, happy golfing,

Mick Walton.
Club Captain.

From our Ladies' Section

Welcome to another update of the ladies' section. All league and friendly matches have now taken place, the mixed handicap friendly teams lost more than they won but on an up note, on 2 occasions, Sleaford ladies managed to field 2 teams on the same day!

Ladies Scratch League

Our ladies were entered in the Lincolnshire Ladies County Scratch



League and once again came runners up behind Greetham Valley.

Ann Lyon, Helen Bradshaw, Di Grocock and Gina Pickworth represented the Club both home and away against Belton Park and Greetham Valley with mixed results. Their best success was against Belton Park, taking a resounding victory of 3-0 at home and a very good half away. Greetham Valley proved a little too tough though and 2 defeats allowed them to reach the final for the second year in a row and they went on to beat Woodhall Spa in the final match.

2020 will see another match added to our fixture list with Kirton Holme GC joining the scratch league so 2 more singles matches to play. Well done to the ladies who represented the Club in these singles matches and hopefully they may be able to go one better and finish in top spot next year.

The County League

The 2019 County League saw the ladies' section up against Spalding, South Kyme and Woodhall Spa (C Team). We got off to a strong start with all three home matches resulting in good wins for the team.

A good win away against Spalding put the team in an excellent position in the league table, with Woodhall Spa close on their heels! We managed a half against South Kyme away, but alas lost to Woodhall Spa on their turf. It was a nail-biting wait to see how Woodhall got on at Spalding in the last match of the season. But Spalding managed to keep them at bay for us, meaning that **Sleaford ladies won the Division 5 section, and achieved promotion into Division 4 in 2020.** 2020 will see us playing Blankney, Boston and Lincoln B team.



Thank you to all the ladies that played in the 2019 matches.

Any ladies up to 24 handicap can put their name down for the league team and it would be great to see a mixture of handicaps in the team so we can get some of those valuable shots on the day.

Our Ladies' President, Celia Collinge, chose the 'Mad Hatters Tea Party' for her President's Day theme. Everyone entered into the spirit of the event with some creative hats all made especially for the day. The weather was very windy, causing difficulty with some of the hats and several opted to leave theirs behind. The halfway house provided us with a wonderful selection of fare and Celia and Sadie made sure we were all fully refreshed



before continuing. The winning team comprised Tracey Harrison, Ann Lyon and Sue Simpson. The best hat was produced by Jane Coleman.

We all wish Celia well on her continuing recovery and hope to see more of her next year.



The ladies travelled to Waltham Windmill for their away day. The weather stayed dry most of the day but the last two groups did get a little wet, what a lovely course and the fish and chips afterwards made it all the more enjoyable. The competition was won by Liz Drayton followed closely by Sue Brown. If you have never played there it is well worth a day out.

So what's to come? Our annual Winter Wonderland in November - an Open Texas Scramble - to date 16 teams have entered; then we are onto Christmas with our Presentation Dinner, some fun 10 hole competitions, Christmas Fair, Toy donations to Homestart and finally the Presentation of the cheque to my chosen Charity - **The African Wildlife Foundation.**

Kind regards,

**Carol Brinkworth
Ladies' Captain**

From our Seniors' Section

As the summer has drawn to a close so have the Seniors' inter-club matches and unfortunately we were not able to complete all of our fixtures as South Kyme were unable to rearrange the match that was cancelled due to their waterlogged course. Our overall performance against our opponents was a little indifferent this year, so let's just say if I had been the Captain of a football team I would not be writing for this edition of Flagstick.

The Seniors Section had another successful Exchange Day at Tydd St Giles Golf Club and everyone who attended had a thoroughly enjoyable day. The overall winner with 36 points was Gerry Walsh (despite getting lost between holes 6&7!) beating Mike Howitt on countback. The team prize was won by Mike Howitt, Peter Elliott, Dave Collett and Tony Masters with a team score of 131 points. I would like to thank Tony Gordon, a past Seniors Captain, for organising a very successful day.

In August we held the Seniors' Captain's Charity Stableford and with the support of the seniors and the Ladies Section we raised a fantastic £678 on the day. All players were treated to a slice of 'Cloutie Dumpling,' a traditional Scottish pudding, at the HWH and made by myself. My wife still talks about the mess I made in the kitchen but the end result was worth it.



Gerry, Margaret, Martin and Jane

The Sleaford Festival of Golf Week kicked off with the Over 55s Am-Am competition. Seen here are the first four-ball competitors Gerry and Margaret Walsh, Martin and Jane Coleman. At the finish they were the best placed team for the home Club in 5th position.



Senior's Terry O'Toole winners Chris Styles and Sue Simpson

The seniors Terry O'Toole Trophy competition was held in September; the trophy was donated by Gaye O'Toole in memory of her late husband. The format is a four-ball better-ball mixed pairs Stableford and this year's trophy was won by Chris Styles and Sue Simpson on countback with 45 points.

The generosity of the Seniors has always been second to none and the Seniors Ron Body Air Ambulance Charity Event was held in September and our Seniors raised £458 in conjunction with Barclays Bank, who gave us a pound for pound supplement resulting in a grand total of £916 donated to the Lincs and Notts Air Ambulance. A little later on in the month our annual Goosen Ball Competition took place and this trophy was presented by Mike Sharrock with a request that we donate annually a sum of £50 to Barnardo Children's Homes.



Linc and Notts Air Ambulance achievement certificate



David Swaithe presenting a cheque to Julie Stray Managersess of the Grantham Barnardo Branch

Unfortunately, Sleaford Seniors team of six were unable to retain the South Kyme Seniors' Invitational Trophy that we won last year. Along with me the team found the conditions difficult but the next day it was good to get back to our own firm fairways and super greens. Playing away from home makes you appreciate your own course.

Our Seniors Knockout competitions have now concluded and the winner of the Singles was Chris Beckett and the Doubles Knockout winners were Trevor Brammer and Jock Gordon. The Singles Knockout Plate was won by Roy Sanders and finally the Golden Oldies Knockout (over 75s) was won by Mick Owens.

The annual Seniors' Presentation Dinner took place at the beginning of October; our guests for the evening were Chairman of the Management Committee, Gerry, and Chairman of Golf, Al, and their partners. I would personally like to thank Dave Sim and the House Manager, Pete, and his staff and all those involved in making this year's event a success it was enjoyed by all in attendance.

Competition Secretary, Kev, started the presentation of the awards, the highlight of the evening was awarding the Seniors' Championship Bowl to this year's winner Mike Howitt. At the conclusion of the presentation the Vice-Captain, Iain, was awarded the Captain versus Vice-Captain Trophy, his team won by 23 holes, well done Iain. It was not all bad news for me as I won the Simplex League Trophy this year, so all is not lost. Finally, I would like to congratulate all of this year's winners.



Seniors' Competition Secretary, Kev Cordukes

As we look ahead towards the winter months the Seniors' calendar is not so full but we still have plenty going on. Coming up is the pairs Bert Gillett Trophy, Poppy Day Charity Appeal Stableford and other non-qualifying Stableford competitions in November. In December we start looking forward to our Christmas Jolly and Buffet with the Ladies' Section, always an enjoyable event, and a little later is our own Christmas Jolly Texas Scramble followed by our Christmas Black Tie Dinner on 12 December. Table plans are already on the noticeboard.



Mike Howitt receives the Senior's Championship Bowl from Bob Ewen, Seniors' Captain

I would just like to close with saying that it is nice to see those members returning after their illnesses. My thoughts are with those who are not quite fully fit but I hope you will soon be able to return to golf. I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Bob Ewen
Seniors' Captain

From the Junior Section

The junior section has had a very busy summer and with some wonderful achievements to report. Between May and September the Golf Foundation organised a GolfSixes league for the South Lincs Region. The League is aimed at junior golfers gaining experience through the Club Professional – GolfSixes means faster 6 hole matches against other Clubs in a fun 'Texas Scramble' format-a great way to build confidence among new members.

The Sleaford Team played against teams from Greetham Valley, Toft Hotel, Belton Woods, Belton Park and Bourne Golf Centre and at the completion of all matches our team were crowned Champions.

Congratulations to Michael Baines, the Junior Club Champion and to Marcus Wildblood who won the Kings Head Trophy.



Well done Poppy Sinclair, Poppy Edgar, Logan Brown, Finlay Coote, Aaron Cepelak, Liam Knudsen, Toby Six, Finlay Campbell, Elliot Coote, Jermaine Brown, Charlie Foran, George Stapleton and Benedict Everist.

A big thank you to James Beinlich, our Club Professional for all his organising, coaching and captaincy – the Juniors really appreciate all you do for them. A big thank you to all family members and friends helping by volunteering and transporting for our league matches.

A low handicap Team comprising Mick Baines, Jake Craddock, Finn Hide, Adam Varney and Benji Rudkin represented Sleaford in the South Lincs Junior Handicap League and reached the final against Stoke Rochford and Greetham Valley. Unfortunately, with the team giving plenty of shots away to their opponents they just missed out on reaching the County Final. This was a great effort by all the team members.

The Club held a very successful Junior Open during Festival Week with two competitions held on the day – The Open Competition and a GolfSixes style competition. There was a great turnout for both competitions with Joshua Green, from Stoke Rochford, winning the main Open competition. A big thank you is due to James, Ollie and Nigel for all the organising and to all those members who volunteered and helped with scoring and supporting on the day.

Michael Baines and Jake Craddock have represented the County at Men and Junior level and Adam Varney and Finn Hide have represented the County at Junior level. Well done to the boys that have represented the County this season.

The junior section goes from strength to strength and special thanks go to our Club Professional team of James and Ollie. The two of them are a wonderful asset to Sleaford Golf Club and there has been some great feedback from family and friends on how enjoyable the coaching sessions are.

The Golf Foundation and the club have been extremely supportive to our juniors and have assisted with coaching, not just within the club but also in our local schools.

We must also thank our Seniors' Section and Bob Ewen, who has supported and raised money for the juniors in his year as Captain.

Thank you to Carol and the Ladies' Section for all your valuable support at our coaching and competitions throughout the season.

To all the families, friends and Club members for all your fabulous support and understanding- our junior golfers are so appreciative and thank every one of you.

Here's to 2020.

Nick Musson
Junior Organiser

From the Chairman of the Golf Committee

I would like to start with welcoming 2 new volunteers to the Golf Committee. Edward Money will be looking after trophies and the Presentation night while Tony Cook will be overseeing the Winter League and the Winchilsea Cup. Thank you both for being willing volunteers.

At a recent meeting of the Golf Committee we reviewed the handicap limits for all the trophies played in Club competitions. To encompass greater participation throughout the club we have made changes to the following competitions:

Ancaster Cup. The handicap allowance has been raised from 18 to 28.

J E Blow Cup. The handicap limit has been raised from 18 to 28.

Roper Cup. The handicap limit has been raised from 18 to 28.

BSMH. The handicap limit has been raised from 18 to 28.

Dickinson Greensomes. The handicap limits for men is now 28 and for ladies 36.

Barker Cup. The handicap limits for men is now 28 and for ladies 36.
(This competition has also been moved to April).

Ray Kidd Trophy. The maximum handicap allowance will now be 28 for men and 36 for ladies.

The committee also thought it a good idea to introduce more pairs competitions over the winter period. Keep a look out for these being advertised in the weekly newsletter. They will be in the format of pairs, any combination (man/lady, 2 x men or 2 x ladies) better-ball.

One further point was discussed at length during the meeting and that concerns the play by dates for competitions. Last year the golf committee decided to simplify the confusing situation of having a play by date for a competition and then having an automatic 7 day extension. They removed the extension and added 7 days to the old play by dates, thereby allowing the same time frame for each round. Your Golf Committee agreed by a majority vote to reintroduce the 7 day extension; therefore from the start of the 2020 knockouts, there will be a play by date advertised on the draw sheet and everyone will then have an extra 7 days if required.

On a closing note most of you will have seen the news that the World Handicap System is due to be introduced in November 2020 following the signing of the licensing agreement last month. I have no further details at this time but hope to be able to give you a more update picture in the spring following the next workshop in February.

Alan Pearson
Chair of Golf

FROM OUR MEMBERSHIP AND MARKETING MEMBER

Our membership numbers remain healthy. However we are now approaching a time when people will be choosing to renew their membership for a variety of reasons. One of the reasons I hear on a regular basis from people that choose not to renew their membership at Sleaford GC is that they don't have enough time to spend 6-8 hours away from home in the day at the Golf Club. They say by the time they turn up and place a ball in the chute and wait depending on the queue adds time to the day that they simply do not have available. The world is changing. Another reason I have heard from our members that have chosen not to renew is that they do not have anyone to play with and simply cannot get a game. How do we tackle both these issues? I ask you as members to think about the future of Sleaford GC and not as individuals as we cannot afford to stand still and let people walk away from our club to others. Some people will say provide a limited amount of tee times so golfers who struggle for time can simply book a time and thus save time before they play. Some people will say no to this. I would be interested to hear comments and suggestions to

both the above problems that we face with members at our club and how we might be more accommodating and welcoming.

I am pleased to report that we have more incentives for members. Our 1905 club reciprocal is fully approved of which these benefits can now be used. We have also agreed a membership benefit with Oakley Fit Gym in Sleaford and they offer a full personal training programme for all people and I was delighted to hear of a number of members who have made the most of this. I am also pleased to hear that some members have recently taken advantage of the reciprocal agreement with Kenwick Park. We are also in talks with a golf course in the York area and hopefully we will be able to publish these details soon. If you require any of the details of our membership benefits then please contact the office.

You will all see the large amount of juniors that attend James Beinlich junior coaching on Saturday mornings. We have arranged that any person joining as a social member can also have the added benefit of a free academy junior membership which gives their sibling the benefit of being able to use the short course and practice facilities. The short course improvements have started with Brian and the team chopping back the trees on the 3rd hole, however due to the staff shortages the other work has stopped as clearly the main course takes priority. It is expected that this work will continue through the winter months.

Our planned website rebuild is currently in the planning phase and will be up and running in the New Year, all being well. This website will be more modern looking, mobile/tablet friendly and generally more user friendly. We want our website to be appealing to people wishing to visit or, better still, looking to join and at this time it is simply not good enough. Our website is often the first thing people see of our Club and currently does not sell our club adequately. We are also planning that this new website will provide the function of booking and paying for Open competitions and membership renewals. Within this website we will be building a membership portal so you will be able to engage with members and be able to arrange a game or read some club documents.

Doug Coote
Membership & Marketing Member

FROM OUR COURSE DEVELOPMENT MEMBER

Wildlife & Environment

We have had a good year on the dry-stone walling with us completing walls on 11, 14 and 16. We started tidying up the walls on 12 and behind the half way hut, but time beat us in the end as, in order to protect hibernating creatures looking for a winter home, we can't go beyond 30th September. These will be completed in the spring, and the big projects for next year will be to take the walls down in the practice area and re-use the stone rebuilding the wall on the 17th fairway.



Once again, the long-eared owls have been successful at breeding and this year I was privileged to help a licenced owl expert come and ring the 3 owlets in their nest, the only ones recorded in Lincolnshire, I believe.



The wildlife continues to thrive on the course, and I continue to get some great photos.

