



2020 Captain's Report

Well, it's fair to say that the 2020 season at Melrose Golf Club has been a memorable one, if not quite for all the right reasons!

Things got off to a promising start with the 'Captain's Quiz and Curry Night' back in February. This was a well-attended event and boded well for future social activity at the Club in the season ahead.

Unfortunately, as we entered March, the true magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic began to bite, initially forcing the postponement of the Captain's Gathering and other early season events. By April we were in a formal 'lock-down' situation where Government restrictions forced complete closure of the course until the end of May. My immediate concern was that the course could simply become overgrown and unmanageable if we were not able to maintain it during the lockdown period. Thankfully, with testament to the dedication of our greenkeeper, Sandy Whillans, work on the course was able to continue during this challenging period and the course was fully fit for play as soon as golf was permissible again.

To make golf playable again there was also a considerable effort from several Committee members in terms of agreeing safe practices for play and preparing appropriate warning signs for both golfers and people walking on the course. Needless to say though, this interruption adversely affected the Club's competition schedule which meant no Club Championships this year, and it was a personal disappointment to me that our Charity Day, which this year had intended raising funds for the mental health charity, SAMH, was also unable to go ahead.

Competitions did eventually get underway and I'd like to thank our Competition Convenor, Andrew (Chucky) Bell for his great work in enabling scores to be reported and collated in compliance with all the hygiene guidelines. Both Andrew and our Secretary, Steve Ervine, have also been instrumental in rolling out to members the functionality of the new Scottish Golf app to help us all navigate the new World Handicap System and the additional changes that digital technology will have on the way we play the game in 2021 and beyond.

By later in the summer, several of the Club's traditional fixtures went ahead, albeit slightly later in the season than originally planned. I'm pleased to report that my Captain's Day took place in August with an excellent turnout and thanks to the good weather a prize giving was safely held outdoors. I was also very pleased that we were able to play the Past Captains' match for the Crawford Trophy as well in August - in years to come it will be easy to tell that the group photo of Past Captains was taken in 2020 given how far apart everyone was standing!

In September the annual Gents' Outing took on a topical 'stay at home' theme, and instead of going to Gifford as originally planned, 18 holes were played at Melrose, followed by a superb socially distanced lunch in the marquee at Burts Hotel, one of the Club's sponsors. Indeed I would like to extend thanks to all our sponsors who have continued to support the club in what has been such a difficult year for their own businesses as well.

On the course, great work has been done on the new junior practice facility beside the 6th hole and I know Doug Pollock in particular has put in a lot of effort in this regard, along with the Club's new flagpole. I'm also pleased to say that the 2nd green was successfully re-laid in

September/October and when weather permits it is also proposed to elevate and realign the 11th tee which, together with a raised and extended medal tee, should make for a much more inviting tee shot. In addition to Sandy's own great efforts this year, he has been ably supported by Doug Pollock, Gary Craig and Grant Hogg, with occasional support from other club members. May I also thank Doug Pollock for his dedicated work as Club Treasurer, from which after two decades he is stepping down from at this year's AGM.

Sadly, a few of the Club's long-standing members passed away this year. In particular I'd like to pay tribute to our former Captain, Neish Hewat, and also Charlie Falconer. Both were great characters at the Club and will be much missed.

In October we unfortunately experienced a break-in at the Club office. This highlights the need for all members to be on their guard, ensuring the locker room door is always firmly shut, in addition to taking care with their own equipment.

Looking forward to 2021, I am delighted that Janice Whiteford will succeed me as Club Captain. Janice has been a very enthusiastic member for a number of years and I know she will be a great ambassador for the Club, so please give her your full support.

All being well it is hoped we may be able to return to clubhouse activities in 2021 - this year really highlighting how much we all miss the social forum that the clubhouse offers. In this regard, I am pleased to say that Keith Gordon will be taking on the role of House Convener next season and it would be good to see as many members as possible making full use of the clubhouse facilities and a return to hosting social events.

As I said in my introduction letter at the start of the year, even at a small Club like ours, I've learned how much work goes on behind the scenes to provide a good experience for our members and visitors and I'd like to thank all my fellow Committee members for the support and advice they've given me this year. While due to circumstances I've not been as visible at the Club as I had intended this year, I'm very grateful for the patience all members have shown this season and it has been a great honour to be your Captain.

Here's to a really great season in 2021.

All the best,

Andrew Stirling

Club Captain, 2020