

Niddry Castle Golf Club

AGM November 23rd 2023

Held in the Clubhouse

Present: E Connolly, J Pritchard, M Binnie, D Baker, M McAnulty, J Finnigan, M Shipton, M Chambers, T McCabe, M Brown, C Collister, G Baker, E McGowan, M McGowan, K McKechnie, J Doherty, M Gaffney, S Glover, N Sammels, P Gentleman, J Rind, A Leslie, K Watson, B Watson, S Robertson, P Lochhead, S Bleakley.

Apologies: M Watt, M Pritchard, G Forbes, C Gaffney, M Gilligan, R Howie, J Miller, G Saunders, A Small, G Wight, A Yule, A Young.

The minutes of the 2022 AGM were accepted as a true and accurate record.

Prop T McCabe Sec J Doherty, there were no matters arising.

Captain's Report 2023

2023 has been another year of changes involving green staff and in the Clubhouse.

In August Head Greenkeeper, Iain Watson left and, we would like to thank Iain for his efforts over the two and a half years he was in charge. We advertised immediately and from a short list of 3, we opted for Jordan Rhind. Jordan, who was previously at Binny Golf Club, takes up his first role as Head Greenkeeper. Many of the members have seen an improvement in the Course and have voiced their support. Jordan will be ably supported by Ron Scott and I am sure that they will make a great team.

At the start of the year Anne Dobie, reliable as ever, took charge of catering duties until Adam Olly Shanks took over the Role in March. Olly, who is a first class cook, built up a great reputation with the members and the villagers. However, the lure of pastures new was too much and he left in September. We would like to thank Olly for his efforts during his spell. Once again, Anne took over until the appointment of Claire Pryde. Claire and husband, John have some great ideas and we look forward to forging a successful partnership with them.

Where would we be without our hard-working volunteers. Alex Roberts and Steven Bleakley have again spent many hours cutting fairways and rough. Thanks to the Ladies Section, we purchased timed valves so the greens could be watered overnight, when needed. But there are the remaining duties of strimming, tidying bunkers, and sweeping cores. So, thank you to Eugene Connolly, Alex Shanks, Bill Watson, James Ferguson, Alaister Hainey, Keith McKechnie and Chris Collister. For keeping the Clubhouse and approach looking great, I must thank Anne Leslie, Charlotte Wighton and Mhairi Chambers. There are many, many more volunteers helping and if I have missed your name then I apologise.

As well as thanking members for their continued support throughout 2023, I would also like to convey my sincere appreciation for the guidance and support from the Club Council. There have been a few changes over the year but thanks to Eugene Connolly, Lady Captain, Susan Robertson, Anne Leslie, and Treasurer, John Finnigan for their continued support. I would like to welcome Mike McAnulty as our new Vice-Captain and thank him for his expertise with our Web Pages. Steven Nicolson has taken the Role of Clubhouse convener and Malcolm Binnie as Senior Convener. Another welcome addition to the committee is Deirdra Baker whose enthusiasm and expertise will be a great asset as we venture forward with our plans for 2024.

The Junior Section grows in strength. We need a big team with over 30 weeks of coaching plus all our school and community work. Therefore, I would like to thank Wille White, Neil Mackenzie, Calum Nisbet, Paul Smith, Lauren Reid, Neil Collier, Craig Hunter, Doug Ross, John Doherty, and Anne Dobie (again).

The Club is steady; however, we strive to be better and some decisions will have to be made to achieve this. I would like to wish everyone the best for 2024 when I hope to be out a bit more often on the Course.

John Pritchard

Club Captain

Treasures Report.

The fund-raising efforts have been successful and the 100 club, social events have all helped. The use of volunteers to staff the clubhouse resulted in a significant saving. Staffing costs have risen and this was seen as essential to retain staff but do add to costs. Income was £144 000 in 2023 an increase of £10000 on the previous year.

The depreciation of machinery has added to costs as have maintenance and service charges.

Visitor numbers are up allowing further revenue and it is hoped for further increases next year. Fuel costs have risen significantly to over £1000 per month. Therefore, an increase in fees is essential. I would like to thank committee members for their support and as my 2 years have ended, I am standing down from the post of Treasurer.

JD question the drop in income from competitions and it was pointed out that one Open had been cancelled and higher numbers were needed in other opens.

M McA queried the pre money awarded and it was similar to past seasons.

J Finnigan

Greens report

As many of you already know we have had a change of Head Greenkeeper with Jordan Rhind coming in to replace the outgoing Head Greenkeeper. It was a difficult time for the Previous Head Greenkeeper with conditions proving testing from weather to finances, we wish Iain well in his new position. The Clubs new Head Greenkeeper Jordan is a young dynamic enthusiastic greenkeeper who is very keen to immerse himself into the job and implement his programme to the course which I'm sure you will all benefit from, no promises though that your golf will improve!

We are currently carrying out a review of the machinery at the club which is no mean feat! I'm keen to keep the communication going between members and the club on course matters so if you have any comments, please email the club so we have a rounded view, no idea is a bad idea but some may not be suitable or viable for the club but we want an interaction that is positive between member and staff.

Firstly, I would just like to thank everyone for welcoming me into the club, it was clear to me within the first couple weeks that it's a tight group of people which was brilliant and comforting to see. Its worrying at the best of times moving to a new place of work never mind moving into a role with so much importance behind it and with not being on the course previously building up to the head man role there was a lot to take in! However, everyone was extremely welcoming and seemed happy at my arrival.

A massive shout out to Ron my assistant, Hugh Fraser, John Finnigan, Alex Robert's and also our captain for helping me settle in as quickly as I did.

Now more to it, with the winter approaching we will be looking at getting into some bunker work which desperately needs done. This will involve re edging maybe even reshaping, removing old sand and liners and then replacing with fresh liners and also with new sand. Unsure at the moment how many we will get done as weather issues and man power play a huge factor in these jobs.

There will also be some drainage work taking place in certain areas of the course along with drainage inspections of previous work undertaken.

I look forward to seeing the course take a new shape and fresh start for next season.

J Rhind Green keeper.

Membership Report 2023

The Membership currently sits at 315 over all categories. The database was cleared out in March and this left us with 236 members. Discarding the Junior numbers which went from 44 in March and now sits at 72, the adult membership has gone from 192 to 243. Overall, we have gained 17 Full, 9 Senior and 17 Intermediate. Winter membership was 17 this time last year but currently sits at 8. A big push for winter members is in hand.

Last year we offered 17 months for 12 deals to get the start of Fee Payment from January 1st to April 1st. This winter is now the time where we may be tested by that decision. However, I still believe it was the correct one and come April it will bear fruit.

In mid-summer, some members decided to leave for other clubs, but this was more than offset by the influx of Lady members recruited from our successful coaching program.

Currently we are offering cut price deals to new members and looking once again looking at family deals.

Sadly, we lost members Tom Moffat and Janet Andrew.

John Pritchard

Acting Membership Secretary

Match Secretary Report for AGM 2023

Time was spent familiarising the BRS/Handicap Master/Dot Golf systems, which are all holding member records albeit in different states of completion and be in a position to use operationally and continue fixtures setup for the new season commencing April.

An updated fixture list covering events in 2023 in pdf form was published on the website.

Although still early in the season, members were supporting the competitions with good attendances at weekend fixtures but less so for the midweek events.

New to the position I was not always able to address members queries but the few problems which arose have been easily corrected and the fixture list should run smoothly as the season continues.

A systems review was undertaken and meetings with the captain a treasurer to develop a single consistent data base for the club

Overall Attendance was good for weekends but midweek medals were often featuring small fields and low numbers

The results for the year were as shown below but special mention must be made of Alistair Ritchie as Club Champion, Alan Trexinger in the Second Class and Brian Aitken in the third class, and my congratulations to all the winners of all the competitions.

Competition	Winner
36 Hole Scratch Comp (2 rounds, stroke play) Div 1	Craig Passmore
36 Hole Scratch Comp (2 rounds, stroke play) Div 2	Matt McElroy
Taggart Shield (1 round, stroke play)	Alistair Hamilton
Spring Porteous (1 round, stroke play)	Alistair Hamilton
Spring Outing (1 round, stable ford)	Alistair Hamilton
Mairs Trophy (1 round, stroke play)	James Ferguson
Nominated Pairs (1 round, stroke play)	Jim Hoggan / Brian Hume
Captains Prize (1 round, stroke play)	Malcolm Binnie
Summer Rose bowl (1 round, stroke play)	James Ferguson
Spring Cup (1 round, stable ford)	Neil Sammels
Club Championships Main Comp	Alistair Ritchie
Club Championships Div 2	Alan Trexinger
Club Championships Div 3	Brian Aitken
Summer Cup (1 round, stroke play)	Robert Short
Gala Day Plate (1 round, stroke play)	Steven Bleakley
McKenzie Medal (2 rounds, stroke play)	Alex Roberts
Robertson Stableford (1 round, stable ford)	Brian Hume
Silver Goblet (1 round, stroke play)	Mudenda K Simuusa
Presidents Trophy (2 rounds, stable ford)	Alistair Dunleavie
Innes Trophy (1 round, stroke play)	Kyle Stark
Miller Autumn Cup (1 round, stroke play)	Alex Shanks
Handicap Categories 1 & 2 (1 round, stroke play) Div 1	John Doherty
Handicap Categories 1 & 2 (1 round, stroke play) Div 2	Derek Lockett
Autumn Porteous (1 round, stroke play)	Brian Aitken
Brockbank Bowl (1 round, stroke play)	Harry Wilson
Murrays Bowl (1 round, stroke play)	Neil Sammels
Seniors Champion	Alex Roberts
Scott Trophy (multi-round knock-out, match play)	Chris Miller
Cannon Cup (multi-round knock-out, pairs, match play)	Chris Miller / David Jackson
Overall OOM (best scores total from 24 main comps during season)	Jim Hoggan
Winter League 22_23 (OOM best 4 scores point total)	Alistair Hamilton
Monthly Medal/Shields (OOM best scores total)	Jim Hoggan

This year the calendar was managed by a new match secretary allowing a much-needed rest for Alex Roberts, whose commitment developing the competitions over many years has been exemplary. With the season finishing the match secretary position has now become vacant and the AGM must examine how to best fulfil the role, which is critical for providing members with a comprehensive calendar of events to enhance their membership at the club.

To develop and 'future-proof' this important role suggests establishment of an events team. This team would be led by a match secretary and would be responsible for creating and implementing the fixtures calendar. This team approach is essential in being able to share workload, especially with a large programme of events over a season. Additionally, knowledge about how events are organised becomes more widespread.

JD queried the numbers in competitions especially on Wednesdays and would a change of day help. It was expressed that some could only manage Wednesdays despite larger numbers often playing on other midweek days.

SB suggested a winner's day for mid-week medal winners may increase participation and this would be considered.

JB suggested some fun competitions such as a Texas Scramble or other variants.

AL also suggested that a match committee for the Men's section was essential and it needed to develop and train members. It was also expressed that a joint committee was not the solution.

JD considered that a change to the calendar may be useful and this would be examined.

Ladies Report

The Ladies section has had a successful year and we owe thanks to John Pritchard for introducing so many ladies to golf, many of whom have taken up winter memberships, thus swelling our numbers to 40.

We hope that these new members will join us in our winter 9-hole golf.

Our competitions were reasonably supported and winners were evenly spread. Handicaps have been mixed with ups and downs.

We were delighted that Anne Leslie came third in the Scottish Medals final and Mhairi our Champion reached the semi- final of the

Champion of Champions, defeated by the final winner.

Our open Greensomes was well supported with players from many parts of Scotland. We unfortunately did not have our Tri-am this year.

We had a good day out at Balbirnie and a very successful weekend away at Ayr.

Our Champion this year is Annette McKay. The final was extremely close with Annette winning on the 18th against Lori White who I'm sure is a future champion.

The Ladies enjoyed an excellent day on the weekend of 19th Nov with many new members and thanks were expressed to J Pritchard and W Wood for their coaching.

A Leslie pointed out that the Tri Am was cancelled due to the state of the course.

S Robertson Ladies Captain

Clubhouse Report

Anne Dobbie (AD) covering only a few days a week. Other busy days were covered on an ad-hoc basis.

Various candidates considered the position of taking the kitchen on. Many did not take on due to the size of the kitchen and the quality of equipment.

At the start of April Adam Shanks (Ollie/AS) did take the position on. It soon became apparent to work out a hybrid working pattern for him. Volunteers (organised by Anne Leslie (AL) who sorted the cutting of keys and training) would cover the 8-11am periods during the weekdays. Steven Nicolson appointed Clubhouse convenor.

Adam worked with us through to the end of September with AD covering while he was on a holiday in August. The council went out advertising for a replacement and were successful in attracting Claire Pryde (CP) from Kirkliston. AD covered October.

CP and her partner commenced working with us at the start of November. They are very enthusiastic and have great plans for the kitchen and hospitality for not only the club but the whole community.

Clubhouse Improvements -

AS quality of food resulted in a real buzz in the community attracting people to the clubhouse who did not even know where the golf club was in the village. This resulted in some new members for the club.

Recycling bin signed up for to deal with our large amount of plastic bottle waste - demonstrating our commitment to sustainability.

Vending machine and coffee machine signed up for to cater for members and visitors when AS not present.

SN and AL spent 2 evenings (one in May and 1 in July) tidying the front desk, changing room areas and also the disabled toilet.

Other Updates -

All Annual Safety Checks for PAT Testing and the Alarm System were carried out and all Licences were renewed. Some small ad-hoc improvements to the kitchen areas. New stainless-steel shelves, new extractor fan and flue

Steven Nicolson, Clubhouse Convenor

Social Report

A series of social evenings were held during the season and it was good to see the clubhouse used and the events supported. A Qui was held as part of the opening day and it proved a sociable and enjoyable occasion. Thanks are due to Anne Leslie and Steven Nicholson for their help.

To allow members to meet the new caterer a Curry and Qui evening was held in June and again my thanks to the members for their support and it proved an enjoyable evening.

Later events were cancelled due to holidays and other aspects of the club taking precedence but a race Night and other events are planned for early 2024 and we hope that Claire and her team will be assisting us at this time.

E Connolly Social Convenor

Junior Report 2023

The Junior Coaching Sessions started on April and continued to November. With 5 sessions per week although the two Saturday sessions were condensed into one from September onwards. Junior membership numbers over 70 with the weekly Coaching sessions topping 40 on a few occasions.

Once again, we must thank the Membership for their support and patience in allowing us to deliver this program.

Throughout the year we hosted the Stephen Gallacher Foundation Stroke/Flag event in May, the third of the Golf Sixes League Matches of 2023 in July, and the George McLeod Pairs in September.

Golf Sixes is a gentle introduction to competitive golf for our younger players and the fixtures were at Linlithgow, West Lothian, Niddry Castle, Harburn, Bathgate, and Dundas Golf Clubs throughout the summer.

We were once again offered Professional Coaching from the Stephen Gallacher Foundation, but unfortunately our schedule was so busy that dates could not be found to accommodate the Lessons.

School sessions took as far away as Kirknewton, Westfield and Dalmeny. We also held sessions at Deans Community High School and Broxburn Primary. However, the bulk of our school coaching was in Winchburgh Primary School and Winchburgh Academy. The latter involved use of the new Sports Hub and the Schools Pitches plus visits to the Course.

Grants came through from the Community Learning & Development Youth Services to run Get into Summer 3. We also received Funds from Winchburgh Community Development Trust, Scotmid and from local Councillors Tony Boyle, Diane Calder, Janet Campbell, and Angela Doran-Simpson. The Project ran for 6 Mondays over the summer holidays. The Sessions provide an opportunity for kids and families who would not usually have access to play golf. Meals were provided to the families and some indoor activities for the non-golfers were set up.

In 2023 we welcomed back Willie White to the Coaching Team. Willie, a Level 2 Coach, started the Junior Section back in 2013 and his work rate, enthusiasm and knowledge is a great addition to the Team. Towards the end of the year, we welcomed Lauren Reid, a young golfer from Greenburn who is helping out with the coaching. Willie and Lauren join Coaching team John P, Neil M, Paul S, Calum N and Anne D, as well as Parent helpers Neil C, Doug R, John D, Craig H and Martha.

Sadly, as documented elsewhere, we learned of the untimely passing of Thursday helper Tom Moffat. Tom's family have donated the fantastic Tom Moffat Memorial Trophy which will be awarded to our Skills for Life Winner. Teaching Life Skills are an integral part of Junior coaching and this is a fitting memorial to Tom.

As there are so many Juniors now the Christmas party will only include primary school golfers only. The Bowling Club is booked for December 9th and then it's a short trip back to the Club for eats. The older kids will have a trip to Kingsfield Golf Range on Saturday, 16th

December where they can enjoy competing against each other using the track man Technology available. Roll on 2024.

SB enquired about the possible practice area to the east of the course but due to environmental problems this was not possible,

John Pritchard Junior Convener

Fees for the 2024 season

Category	15 Month Existing Members	Annual Subscription	
		New	Old
Full – Men / Ladies	£670	£585	(£549)
Seniors - Men / Ladies (65+)	£605	£510	(£479)
Weekday – Men / Ladies	£605	£510	(£479)
Country Member	£500	£415	(£389)
Intermediate - 26 - 29 years old	£500	£415	(£389)
Intermediate - 22 - 25 years old	£400	£320	(£299)
Intermediate - 18 > 22 years old	£200	£160	(£149)
Students with valid matriculation card	£320	£245	(£229)
Social	Nil	£20	(£15)

With the addition of £10 to each category the fees were accepted by the members after JP had illustrated the problems of inflation which he had averaged out at 6.7%.

Guests and visitors' fees would remain the same.

Offers would remain and until we were able to move individuals to the April start to the season. This in the long run would provide stability and fewer changes offered.

Prop JP SEC McA

JD enquired about individuals leaving and owing money and this needed assistance from SG to withhold registration.

DB emphasised the need to look at other clubs to remain competitive.

McA spoke that a new system on Handicap master had been devised and this would assist the club in monitoring payments.

P Gentleman proposed, seconded by T Mc and that the payments should be front loaded and this was passed by the meeting.

SB suggested a bonus for current members who introduced another and this was agreed but at a 10% refund rather than a fixed figure.

Election of Officers.

Captain: J Pritchard, nominated by the Club Council

V Captain: M McAnulty, Elected in 2022

Treasurer: Alaister Hainey Prop JP Sec JF

Secretary: E Connolly, Nominated by the Club Council

Ladies Captain: S Robertson, Elected in 2022

The following have served their 2 years and will be standing down from the Council.

J Finnigan, S Nicolson, M McElroy.

Elected in 2022 and continuing their office: A Leslie, D Baker, M Binnie

New member to the council C Collister Prop AL Sec DB

Information on possible changes to the club and constitution

Members Information from the AGM November 2023

Rising costs, increased regulation and shifting trends in leisure activities means golf is facing a time of unprecedented challenge.

A recent feedback survey of NCGC members confirmed that maintaining the quality of the course and improving the facilities of the club house are the main priority for the members.

To be able to do this in such a challenging economic climate means we must consider how we currently do business and make change to 'not only just survive' but ensure our club can' thrive' in the future.

Two important issues need to be addressed.

1. Land Leases

The Club house and outbuildings are owned by NCGC.

The Golf course and the land on which the clubhouse is situated is leased from 3 landowners; Hopetoun Estates, Winchburgh Developments Limited (WDL) and Overton Farm. The leases from Hopetoun and WDL are annual while the current lease from Overton Farm is for 5 years.

These short- term leases leave us financially vulnerable in the funding market place limiting our opportunity to improve the clubhouse and machinery and raise revenue to support junior, women's and new- player coaching. We are losing opportunities to access funds.

To successfully negotiate longer leases with our landowners we must provide a robust business and financial strategy. We are currently working on this document with a projected completion date of January 2024. Thereafter this will be presented to our landowners as part of our negotiations to secure a 10-year lease. We have a scheduled meeting with WDL for the end of January 2024.

2. Legal structure

Our existing organisational structure is that of a Private Members Club with the legal status of an Unincorporated Association.

This structure -while being a traditional operational and legal model of golf clubs -carries liability for the members and Committee.

Recognising these vulnerabilities and the advantages of changing this model more and more clubs are now choosing to separate their personal liability for the club by becoming incorporated.

A club which is incorporated has a separate legal identity allowing it to enter into contracts in its own right and it therefore offers protection for club members. Members agree to pay a £1 if the club becomes insolvent limiting their liability. This structure is also well suited to clubs operating on a non-profit making basis.

To support golf clubs Scottish Golf provided a limited number of grants to help provide Consultancy support managing this change to their legal structure. We are very fortunate to be one of the Clubs who has been successful in applying for this.

The NCGC Management Committee propose that our unincorporated club structure is changed to become incorporated.

Recognising that our club has always operated as a not-for-profit organisation we have considered the best two options which align well with this ethos;

- 1. Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC)**
- 2. Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO)**

After research and detailed consideration of these two options the NCGC Management Committee propose that we become a SCIO- a registered Charity.

This is done through an application to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

This model not only maintains an open and transparent business model but helps us build partnerships with other organisations and creates much wider opportunities for funding e.g., Gift Aid. Many sponsors and funders are now using this charity status as the eligibility criteria for funding.

Having wider access to funding and sponsorship would allow improvements to the club, course and coach development which would in turn offer opportunities to deliver greater efficiencies, improved playability and a more resilient facility for the long term.

To make a robust application for Charitable status we must consider the next steps going forward.

We are now working hard to;

- 1. Revise and update our current Club Constitution* so it aligns with the principles of Charitable status.**
- 2. Complete a robust Business and Financial Plan to present to our Lease holders in January 2024 in order to secure 10-year Leases.**

***The revised Constitution has now been drafted.**

We plan to present the revised Constitution to the members for approval at an EGM in late January/early February 2024.

It is only if we have gained approval from the members for the revision of the Constitution and secured our longer leases can we then proceed to make an application to OSCAR to become a registered SCIO.

We hope all the members will support the Club in an exciting time of change and development for our club.

D Baker on the behalf of the club.

TMC queried whether this would include registration with OSCAR the Scottish register of Charities and this was affirmed,

DB informed the meeting that we had been fortunate in obtaining a S G grant which had allowed us to be shepherded through and that the constitution had been re written to reflect charitable aims. DB further emphasised that one a route had been commenced then a change to another model was not possible.

SB enquired whether the new status would prevent members making decisions and was informed that the current council would become trustees and that all decisions would still be made by the members.

SN emphasised that the SCIO model did allow more funding, and as we needed investment this was a suitable way forward.

DB agreed ad saw this as a way to improve the green keeper's facilities, and emphasised that without charitable status application such as to Edinburgh Airport may well fail.

MMc indicated that lottery funding may be possible.

EC informed the meeting that the constitution woud be sent to all members prior to any EGM and DB said the same regarding the summary.

JP expressed thanks to DB for getting the consultancy money.

AOCB

- 1- JD expressed his dislike of the Containers and whilst all agreed JP did point out the costs and lack of funds, it was the clear sentiment of the room that progress in this area was essential.***
- 2- KMc confirmed that fees for visitors and guests would remain the same.***
- 3- EMc queried the future if no lease extension was possible and DB emphasised the support from WDC in this area and a robust case would be made. Charitable status was seen as a key development in this area.***
- 4- P Lochhead advisor to WDC emphasised the support of WDC and that leisure space was part of the town plan and other land had become the park and so moving the golf club was not possible and the aim was to develop the club as an integral part of the community. The club needed to be viable and sustainable and have a new structure to secure a future. Any approach to Hopetoun Estates would be made with the support of WDC.
TMc did point out that previous dealings with Hopetoun had been fractious.***

5- The disabled loo was to be refurbished and any equipment stored ther should be removed as soon as possible

The meeting closed with thanks to all for attending and for the Captain as Chair.

E Connolly Hon Sec