

# Mid-Herts Golfer

DECEMBER 2008



## I'M TOLD ITS DOWNHILL FROM HERE ON IN! - Chris James. Club Captain



The 2008 playing season has come and gone in what has appeared to me as a flash; although my diary shows that in that flash, I've played in excess of 70 rounds since taking over from Alistair Clark.

It's really great to welcome **Martin Bennet** into the **General Manager's** role and we all owe a big debt of thanks to **Robert Daley** for the magnificent holding job he carried out in our Manager-less year. **Kim Arnold** has also been a tower of strength over this period.

**Jody Wilson** and his team have worked tirelessly to provide a course that is the admiration of visitors and Members in what has been a most difficult growing season. I know that some have been frustrated by the rough but new templates for cutting have been agreed and will be in place

next season, so those that struggled this year will find the carries, together with first and second cut widths, more generous. The greens continue to be a real delight to putt on.

Our Men's club matches have been enjoyable experiences if not all the results, and that applies to me as much as the team! **Mike Gadsden** has provided unstinting support in making all the arrangements and selecting the team and conducting the short straw draw for my partner. I would remind you that these club matches are open to all Members, just put your name down on the match lists to be considered for selection - they are relaxed games, fun to play in and it is always interesting to share experiences and learn how other clubs are getting on in these challenging times.

Mixed fixtures have proved tremendous fun and enjoyment and I must express thanks to **Liz Carter** for making them so. She has been a wonderful partner and I wish her a speedy recovery from her shoulder operation. I have obviously been leaning on her too much this summer! Liz has been very supportive and I pay tribute to her in her role as Ladies Captain which she has carried out in her quiet efficient way. I now look forward to partnering **Su Hawke** next spring in my one remaining match and wish her well in her new capacity as **Ladies Captain** for 2009. The Ladies continue to represent the club magnificently; both on the golf course – with the **Pearson Trophy** and **County Ladies Championship** being just the icing on the cake – and off the course where they do sterling work for the club, often behind the scenes.

I must of course congratulate the **Men's Scratch Team** on winning their League this year and gaining promotion to Division 1 for the first time in our history!! Well done **Darren Green and the team** and the very best of luck in what is sure to be a very tough campaign next year.

The social activities get more plentiful around this time of year and again **Roger Ellis** and **John Tanner** with artistic support from **Denis McCarthy** have provided a feast of varying entertainments for Members enjoyment. The **Halloween** party, with the return of Elvis, was a rip roaring success and Members and guests participation in the fancy dress was a testament to some fantastic members' imagination and creative endeavour. The return of the popular **Draw Nights** with **Alan Greaves** in the kitchen has been well supported and we now look forward to the festive **Carol Concert** with a new venture of the clubs choristers partnering the Richard Hale school orchestra. It promises to be a musical extravaganza but we shall miss the **Battershill** baton! **The New Years Eve Dinner Dance** tickets are going well to be followed in January by the annual **Burns Supper** and in February by the popular **Captain's Charity Quiz** night hosted by **Professor Higgins** and his "egg-head" team. He has promised a different night to test everyone's grey matter.

I cannot conclude without referring to the rumblings in certain quarters following my plea through our **Swindle Conveners** for Members to be more **courteous** and **considerate** of other players and to abide by club rules regarding starting. I did make an appeal to everyone in the June Mid-Herts Golfer because I'd witnessed this growing malaise within golf generally and hoped that at Mid-Herts we could rise above such behaviour and maintain our traditional standards of courtesy and friendliness. Alas we have continued to receive complaints. Invariably there are two sides to each story so trying to get agreement is nigh impossible.

I had hoped that having made the point it would be accepted and observed and we could move on. The increasingly popular swindles do encounter difficulties in getting players round, especially in the winter months, and we will look at ways of mitigating these problems, whilst minimising the effect on others who are equally entitled to be on the course.

So at this time of year, as we move into the season of goodwill I ask for us all to be respectful and considerate to others, both on the course and in the clubhouse, Club rules, guidelines and pure common sense, if abided by, allow us to keep an even keel. After all we all wish to enjoy our golf and relax amongst friends.

**I wish you all the Seasons Greetings and a Happy, Healthy, and I hope, Prosperous 2009.**

## **ON THE COURSE The Winter Development Programme - from Paul Dugdale**

As usual the onset of winter heralds the beginning of a busy programme of course development activities. This winter the following areas will be top of our agenda:

### **1) Continuation of the tree management work**

We have obtained permission to remove the small tree from the middle of the first fairway, the rowan in front of the 5<sup>th</sup> green, the beech hedge in front of the 6<sup>th</sup> tee, three silver birches on the right of the 11<sup>th</sup> green and the birches among the cherry trees between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> fairways. This work will be completed over and above finishing the programmed tree work on the right of 17<sup>th</sup> green.

### **2) The beginning of a project to replace the tee markers**

Our tee markers are now very shabby, so following the imminent re-measuring of the course we plan to begin replacing them with new marble markers that should have a minimum 10 year life span. Prior to the order being placed for these the ladies committee will re-visit the ladies card to ensure that the stroke indices reflect the current set up of the course

### **3) Ensuring that the template that we developed during the summer months becomes the norm**

During recent weeks the Greens Committee and the Board of Management have received much praise for the condition and set up of the course. We must thank Jody and his team for all their efforts in what can only be described as a particularly unusual and trying year with regards to weather conditions. The template we developed during August works very well and we plan to manage the course using this going forward, with the possibility of making some minor amendments from time to time. A copy of the new template will be reprinted and left in the Manager's office should anyone wish to view it.

### **4) Levelling off the ladies tee areas on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> holes**

In recent years the ladies tees on the 7th and 9th holes have become increasingly domed making finding a flat lie quite a challenge. We will lift the turf, flatten these out and replace it again which make a small but significant improvement to these holes.

### **5) 'The Heather Project'**

Heather was once an outstanding feature of our course and we would like to return it to that state again. To this end Jody and I went to visit one of the finest heather covered courses in the UK, Hankley Common. Our objective was to learn from the experts how to deal with the heather we have, how to further develop it and how to reintroduce more. We discovered that by next spring there will be a selective weed killer that we can put around our heather which will kill the grasses that strangle the heather. In addition to this we must cut our straggly heather back to approx. 7-9 inches to improve its growth.

To begin the project we have chosen five areas to cover in heather which will mean approx. 200 square metres of GUR for the next two years. Only two of these areas will interfere with normal play and I hope that in five years time we will be showing great benefits from this. We will strip back the chosen areas to try and stimulate the underlying heather that is already present and supplement that with heather seed and some heather plants.

The areas we have selected are as follows:

**On the 3rd between the copse and the woods left**

**In front of the 6th where the beech hedge was**

**In the second rough on 15<sup>th</sup>**

**We will remove railings to the left of 17th green and cover that bank in heather**

**In front of the 18th tee.**

These areas have been marked off with red paint so any comments can be made before we start the work. I believe that this project will make a significant contribution to the long term development of our beautiful course and trust that we can expect members support during the project's initial stages.

**Here's to an enjoyable winters' golf for everyone, happy golfing!**



## **MID-HERTS CALENDAR**

**We all know that Mid-Herts is a beautiful golf course.**

**Now Richard Burn has captured some lovely photographs of it for a Mid-Herts Calendar.**

**The Calendar is available at £10 - with all profits going to Ladies' Captain's Charity - **Herts Air Ambulance**;**

**Place your order for a copy by 19<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER either on the list at the bar, or with Lewis Hawke**



## **KEEPING PACE: A Note from John Sefton - Chairman of Board of Management**

The world of golf in this country has changed dramatically in the last 10 years, and both Members and your Board are having to come to terms with the new realities. Waiting lists for membership have largely disappeared, and we have to manage all aspects of the club carefully. We must ensure the club remains financially sound while providing members with a course and facilities of which they are justifiably proud.

Against this background we have striven to keep next year's subscriptions competitive with other clubs in the area with similar facilities. This has been possible thanks to:

- **The successful Open Day which attracted 30 new members**
- **Some increase in society bookings**

However, we know that we continue to face a variety of challenges and it is important that we control our costs consistent with maintaining the course and club house to the standard which meets your expectations.

At present the course is in a superb condition and our thanks must be extended to the green staff. We are very aware of your concerns about the difficulty of the course during the summer months and let me repeat again our statement that the present layout will be the template for future years (see also Paul Dugdale's note on the Course). We recognise the average age and handicap of members and the course has now been set up with those parameters very much in mind.

Our ability to retain subscriptions at competitive rates is only possible if we generate other sources of income and this essentially means increasing visitor income. Martin Bennet - our new General Manager - will be focussing a great deal of his time on attracting societies and individual visitors. To be successful we need the full co-operation of members: consideration and a friendly welcome from us all is an essential ingredient of a successful day at Mid-Herts for visitors. The multiple starting points - a very positive feature of the club - can make it more difficult to filter visitors onto the course and your understanding is required.

The new golfing environment demands a re think about established practices and next year the Board will be presenting ideas to members as we seek to address the future. Mid-Herts has an excellent reputation but we must constantly question the way we manage the club to attract new members and retain your good will.

In the meantime may I, on behalf of the Board, wish you a very enjoyable Christmas and happy golfing in 2009.



## **WOODMEN CELEBRATE TWENTY FIFTH ANNIVERSARY - from Peter Rook**

This year marks the **twenty fifth year** since the inception of the Woodmen section by its founder **Frank Allen**, so it seems appropriate to set down again the objects and activities of the Woodmen.

We are a seniors section and are open to all members of the club who are **55 or over and substantially retired** and exist to allow senior members of the club to socialise and play golf with their contemporaries, with the well being of the club being paramount at all times. There are no fees payable and no other requirements but it is requested that anyone wishing to participate notifies the incumbent Woodmen Convenor of their wish to participate in Woodmen events so that a register can be kept for ease of organising and financing.

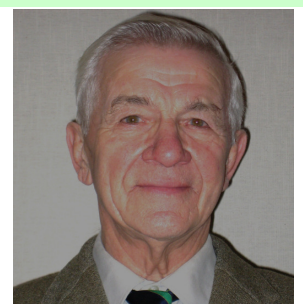
Woodmen meet on **Monday, Wednesday and Friday** mornings for social four balls as well as ad hoc games at other times.

Regular matches are played with the ladies and junior sections and inter-club matches are played against several other clubs in the county which helps to foster our reputation as a friendly and well organised club with good facilities and has resulted in members who have left other clubs choosing to join ours.

Our internal competitions include Singles knock-out, Doubles knock-out, Millennium Trophy and mixed competitions for the Shags Trophy and Cavanagh Trophy. There is also a Summer Eclectic and a Winter League competition.

Teams and individuals also compete in many club competitions and this year a Woodmen team won the club AM/AM competition which shows that the standard of golf is high and competitive. We are a very relaxed section that tries to make a positive contribution to the well being of the club. We have only one proviso and that is that in selecting teams for inter-club matches priority is given to those who play regularly in Woodmen events and to those who give time and effort and contribute in general to the well being of the Woodmen Section.

So if you are interested contact the current convenor; **Peter Rook. - 01279 842460** to let me know that you are keen to participate.



## ROBERT DALEY AWARDED HONORARY MEMBERSHIP

Members will be aware of the indebtedness the club owes to **Robert Daley** who, over the past year, has given of his time freely in acting as Interim General Manager until the recent appointment of Martin Bennet.

Robert has been a member of Mid-Herts for 44 years and during that time has served the club in many capacities. The Captain's Committee and the Board of Management have discussed how best to recognise his distinguished services over such a long period and especially this last year.

We are now very pleased to inform you that Robert has accepted the offer of Honorary Membership of Mid-Herts Golf Club in recognition of his outstanding services.

We are sure Members will join with us in thanking and congratulating Robert.

## Summer Competitions Winners – Men's and Mixed.

**The Challenge Cup** – John Howland-Nielsen beat Stu Fitzgerald

**The Knock-out Medal** – David Hall beat Andy Bye

**Centenary Cup** – 1<sup>st</sup> Nigel Dickinson, 2<sup>nd</sup> John Terry, 3<sup>rd</sup> Paul Mayles

**The Bowen Trophies** - Willie Martin & David Bradbury beat Howard Collins & David Fray

**Jubilee Cup** – Eddie Linton beat Chris Wilmott

**Associates/Five-Day** – Keith Andrews & Andrew Innes beat Alan Jackson & Colin Hicks

**Berry Bowls** – Alan & Di Jackson beat Stephen Murray & Lindsay Murray-Gray

**Mid-Week Mixed Foursomes** – Neil Mawdsley & Su Ludlow beat Paul Dugdale & Ann Whittet

**The Tom Brown Trophy** – Overall Eclectic Winner – Willie Martin beat Dave Smith

### Other Competition Winners

**The Hampden Bowl** – Dick Howland: **The Turner Tassie** – John Terry

**The President's Plates** – Mark Sedgewick & Ben McElhinney

**The Silver Goblets** - John Saunders & Willie Martin: **Turkey Trot** – Colin Howard & Tom Allen

### From the Office: by Martin Bennet

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all those members who have made me feel so welcome in my first weeks here at the club. Along with the positive feeling from the staff as well, I feel that my time here will be most enjoyable.

As you know, the Board of Management have charged me with not only enhancing the communications with Members but also increasing the Membership and Visitor numbers.

I am sure that the friendliness shown to me will be shown to the new faces around the club, as either new members or visitors. Both are a vital part to the well being of our business. As a Members club we rely on new members to keep the club flourishing and what better way to attract those members can there be than a warm welcome from the existing membership.

Remember that today's happy visitor may well be tomorrow's new member.

I hope that those of you who are receiving the **weekly email** are finding it useful. When there are tee reservations, a glance at the diary will enable you to see when and where is the best time to come and play.

**I look forward to meeting you all over the coming months. Good Golfing**



### Our New Ladies Captain - Su Hawke



My first impression of Mid-Herts Golf club was when, as a 10 year old I was dragged around by my father to help him find his wayward balls and retrieve them. Now, more years later than I care to mention, he would have been amazed that his grumpy daughter would have decided that – firstly golf was in fact a great game and - secondly would be here as the new Ladies Captain.

We need to maintain the best of our traditions and values but must encourage, promote and move forward to ensure the future. We, the members, are the most important asset and have a good reputation for friendliness. We must continue that and be positive about our golf club. Ignoring some of the more trivial irritations - it's not the woodpeckers laughing at our shanks, green

keepers starting their machines when we are driving off or even the weather that makes our golf difficult. It's us.

Remember we could be stuck on the M25 going to work or worse still not be able to walk around the course. We are all here at the end of the day for golf, friendship fresh air and above all to have **FUN**

I am really looking forward to my year, I am sure I will not be able to please all the people all the time, but I would assure you all that I will always try and be fair, honest and open. There will be burning issues, controversies, and possibly changes. Whatever these may be about I hope they are discussed openly before there are any confrontations.

**Happy Golfing in 2009!!**