

President's Report 2021-22

When, at the end of 2020, the Past Presidents suggested that I and my colleagues on Council stood for another year to compensate for a challenging period in office, we were unaware that 2021 would follow such a similar pattern. As we now enter 2022, I feel that we will finally be coping with this virus by the time we start the new season, and we will really be 'back to normal'.

Having said that, 2021 has been a relatively positive year for Horsforth Golf Club, although I am very conscious that there are those who have not fared so well, either due to the Pandemic, or for other personal reasons. Overall, the club is in a stronger financial position than might be expected, and following the loss posted in 2021, we expect to be in profit at year end in May.

As a club, we have full 7-day membership, a stronger Ladies section, Juniors paying a nominal fee and a solid income from members fees where prompt payment is so important. We have lost revenues through lockdown and have had to work hard to cope with staff shortages through the continued restrictions, but when able to, we have taken many bookings, and members have supported the bar very well. Sadly, we lost our Steward of many years, Chris Taylor, in December after illness and our sympathies are with Katrina.

The Practice Ground detail will be covered elsewhere, and although it is a disappointment for all that it has not been completed before the winter, we must keep our eyes on the prize of a brilliant club facility for many years to come, which will open in 2022. I have heard no end of positive comment about the 18th and how it adds to the course. The Landfill has enabled us to create a Course Development Fund, to which we intend to keep adding, enabling us to continue to improve the course over time.

Business Development under Brian Roddick have built a costed 3-year plan for spending on the course and clubhouse, as part of a clear process to help us prioritise and justify spend, bringing forward well managed and funded projects to improve our club. These will include upgrades to the kitchen, an indoor swing centre, driving bays and further investment in bunkers and drainage over the coming year.

The administration of the club has seen considerable change this year, and I am so glad that the new people have settled in so well in the case of Jonathan Pearson the manager, Ian Schofield as Treasurer, and Lynsey Bull as Jonathan's assistant. The club is very grateful to David Johnstone for all his work in the office over the past few years, always willing to step in and lend a hand, and also being a vital "corporate memory" for all the things that needed to be done.

A real improvement is in better member communications and in particular the direct communications from Kyran Lilley and his team, supported tirelessly by Ian Hawkyard, our Head of Greens, as they have worked hard to present the course as one of the best in North Leeds. Our Greens have certainly benefited from the "little and often" approach taken by Kyran, and the investment in the new machinery has been justified.

We have had many challenges for the House team to address from staffing levels to maximizing events and completing building projects. We are indebted to Kevin Hill for his leadership in completing the Members patio area which has proved so popular, refurbishing the 19th, replacing the boilers and securing the resources of Andy Rothera and Janet Jackson.

A significant development this year has been the growing importance of 'Safe Golf', not so much for the protection of youngsters, but more for the understanding and management of the challenges of old age and our senior members. I am so grateful to Gerry O'Kane, Carol Outhwaite (VP) and the Manager for creating a playbook for us to follow as and when issues arise. The safety and wellness of our members is a vital part of this club, and we should be proud of how we care for our fellow members.

We have managed to run a number of events in the club, all of which take a deal of organizing so I must thank Billy Hayes and the Social team for putting on the Murder Mystery night, the Motown Tribute Band and a brilliant Captain's / Presidents night amongst others. There is a great calendar for 2022 starting with the Burns Night and then a Sportsman's dinner to follow and more bands.

One surprising upside of lock down and the enforced restrictions is that people have sought out things to do, and the club and course have benefitted greatly. The list of over 60 volunteers appeared in a summer newsletter, doing so much for the club, which includes stick clearing, divot repairing, drainage, removing the old heather by the 9th, helping with the 18th drainage trial, making or refurbishing paths, clearing out under the Rhododendrons on the 15th, installing the fountain and electrics, sorting the drain under the pro shop, repairing the outer wall in the Ladies locker room, upgrading the lights and decorating the snooker room, repairing a dry stone wall, removing logs, litter picking, painting the Ladies toilets and many more. Thank you all.

As ever the club has enjoyed the tremendous support of our professionals Dean and Simon, and I look forward with them to the opportunities that the practice ground and the proposed swing centre present this year. Thank you for your patience and understanding – we know it has been a rough year.

I have very much enjoyed my time as President of this great club, and as I said when I took office, I have tried to protect the traditions and DNA which make the club what it is, but also to seek to improve and develop the facilities, and to modernize where we can.

My President's day in September was well supported and a great opportunity to meet so many of the members, many of whom I have enjoyed a round with over the two years. I greatly enjoyed my mixed President's trip to Forest Pines where a team could include handicaps ranging from 2 to 62!

I am indebted to Paul Edmondson for his energy and enthusiasm for 'betterment', not just in support of my term, but in setting the "can do" agenda which we have followed since his term as President in 2016.

Whilst I have mentioned several individuals, I must thank all Council for their support, commitment and challenge through the last 2 years. It is the robust debate which makes for good decisions and enables us to move forwards, always mindful that we are merely volunteers and we might be required to play golf together at any time in the future.

Perhaps my greatest thanks go to my wife Sue who has supported me throughout, while also being secretary to the Ladies section. She has been a great sounding board and offered good counsel when emotions might have got the better of me.

I wish Carol Outhwaite and Trevor Pearson (VP) great success in the coming year, confident that they will be a great team and continue the development of Horsforth Golf Club.

David Coverdale

President 2020 - 2022