



Captain's report for the Craigielaw Golf Club AGM

To be held on 11th November 2017





Introduction

When I became captain 2 years ago, I wanted to improve the communication within the club. My ramblings in the monthly newsletter have hopefully provided plenty of news about the various aspects of the club and the members along with the successes and even the odd failure. Thank you to those who have helped and let me know about various news items, particularly, Gordon McSorley, Craig Davidson, Gordon Smith and Evlyn Raistrick.

This report is to some extent furthering that desire in summarising much of what has happened in the club this year. I would like to say a big thank you to all those involved in helping to put this report together, particularly Hilary Pauson, David Raistrick along with Anne, Derek, Jonathan and Cameron from the club. Their help and input has been invaluable and without it, the report would have been shorter, but more importantly less informative and inclusive.

Members Liaison Committee (MLC)

The MLC is charged with helping with the communication between the club, its members and the estate, and it has been good to see the membership raising issues with us throughout the year. I hope the minutes of the quarterly meetings (my thanks to Hector for taking the minutes) which are posted within the expanded MLC section of the website have helped in this regard.

I would like to place on record my thanks to Hector McLean, as past captain, Gordon Smith as vice-captain, Iain Smith, Chris Lannin, Sylvia McLean and Iain Clark as the members' representatives along with Martin Andrews and Derek Scott. Their support and input has always been constructive and led to some challenging discussions about various matters throughout the year. Thank you all for making the last 12 months work so well.

Golf Course

Once again, Brian and his team have done a fantastic job with the course over the last 12 months and we owe them a huge thank you for all the work they do.

Over the last few months they have taken on two new members of staff which takes their team up to seven full members of staff. Daniel Fergie, our new trainee and green keeper Kevin Murphy. This will ease a little the work constraints that occur during their busy golfing year with the added wet weather. This year has seen record levels of rainfall from June to October which the course has dealt with well, but this has increased disease pressure on our greens. In addition are the new fungicide restrictions which means they have had to change their work practices to counter the ever changing weather patterns.



It is very clear that the vast majority of comments during the year, from both members and visitors, have been hugely positive about the condition of the course, and in particular the greens and their surrounds. Actions such as using ropes to protect areas of the course from wear and tear, ongoing work on the green surrounds, planting some new shrubs around the course, more shaping of the fairways and adding that second cut in the rough have all led to a great quality golf course, and one we should be proud of. As you know, our agronomist - David Stansfield – has been very impressed with the work done and the resultant condition of the course.

The Office

2017 has been another busy year and we are already working on the 2018 diary of events, if you have any suggestions for events please talk to one of the MLC members or come into the office. As you are aware the golf office is also used by the events team at Gosford House and there is a new face in this team. Caroline Smith joined the Gosford team earlier this year and has now settled into the office and although not able to deal with any specifics related to the club, Caroline will happily try to help if she can.

The Clubhouse

2017 has again been an excellent year for the clubhouse with a number of golf and non-golf events. When you think of so many clubs whose clubhouses sit half empty, it is a joy to see our clubhouse thriving. Many thanks are due to the team, past and present, for all their professionalism and the friendly approach that continue to make the Craigielaw clubhouse the success that it is. Feedback from members, visitors, guests and residents, both verbally and on Trip adviser and other media outlets has been excellent.

We did see the departure of the two John's in the summer as they moved onto Luffness – and I would just like to say many thanks for all their excellent work over the years since the club opened and I know the Luffness members are enjoying the new offering they now have. However, their departure opened up the opportunity for a new team here at Craigielaw with new ideas and I am sure that the new team, headed by Anne Burns and her assistant manager Audrey Fergie, will continue to provide the excellent service we have come to expect. Like any new start, there have been challenges, but with new faces on the team, they are striving to build the strong team they need to move forward, so please introduce yourselves to the faces you are not familiar with. The kitchen team, headed by John Burns, has stayed very much the same, but they have listened to requests made by the members and introduced changes to the menu. The new team have more new ideas and plans for the coming year, and are always keen to hear from you if any of you have suggestions. I for one am looking forward to seeing those new plans come to fruition.



The Lodge

This year has seen another increase in visitor numbers to the Lodge and they have come from a wide variety of countries. I am pleased to say that the feedback from guests remains very positive with the location and friendliness of staff and members being the main focus of the feedback. We have managed to maintain our 4 * rating with Visit Scotland and are also rated very highly on the main hotel web sites. We recently attended the Scottish Golf Tourism Week and there was a great response from the golf specific travel agents that attended this event who are all keen to send golfing visitors to not only Craigielaw but also the wider East Lothian area.

Social news

The Captains Invitational was a great success with local captains/vice-captains playing a friendly stableford against Craigielaw members followed by an excellent supper afterwards. It was also great that one of our relationship clubs – Oddur Golf Club from Iceland made the trip. The winner however was somewhat more local with the club captain from Kilspindie running off with the trophy. Many thanks to all those involved in ensuring it was a great day.

As always, we had numerous and successful social events throughout the year with the Christmas turkey trot and the summer shotgun again being the highlights. We also had some more relaxed events including the Super 6's, the Par 3 championship and a new venture on the calendar - 9 hole evening medals. They are all designed to help members enjoy what the club has to offer, especially with diaries being very busy with other events, golfing or otherwise!

Many thanks are due to the organisers and the catering staff for making them such a success.

Member's news

Grant Forrest qualified for the Challenge tour in 2017 and has had some excellent results in debut season including two top 5 places and several in the top 30. However, at the time of writing, he had just produced an outstanding performance in China coming T2nd and as a result has risen to 30th in the order of merit. Sadly, he came up just short in his attempt to make the top 15 and earn his tour card, but a fantastic debut season and he can only go upwards from here.

Jane Turner had a successful year on the LET access tour winning the Bossey Ladies Championship along with several other top 30 places ending the year in 12th place in the order of merit. Gabrielle MacDonald was part of the Midlothian team who won The East Inter-County title at Stirling and also played in several other national events around the UK including 2 top 20 positions in the early summer. She did of course also win both the scratch and handicap in our summer meeting.

Craig Davidson and Jonathan Low had qualified to represent Craigielaw in the Lothian champions and handicap league by winning the club A & B championships. Jonathan went out in the 3rd round,



but Craig played magnificently throughout the qualifying rounds reaching the final played at Longniddry, but sadly came up just short. A magnificent achievement all the same and he has set the bar very high for next year when Craig will again represent the club. Tom Robertson will be our representative in the handicap division.

We had some players helping Kilspindie celebrate their 150th anniversary. And the hope is that a 4-way event will in future rotate around the 4 Estate owned clubs - Musselburgh, Kilspindie, Longniddry and ourselves.

Kay Lannin had a successful year, with the highlight surely coming in the East Lothian Ladies Championship held at Muirfield, where having successfully come through the qualifying round played her way through to final in the knock out stages. Sadly, she lost on the 3rd extra hole, but a great effort.

Arran Hastings came T36 in the Scottish boys. Lewis Reid also played in the Scottish Amateur. Lewis Irvine represented East Lothian Schools in the Scottish Seniors Pro-am, several juniors played well in the Stephen Gallagher Foundation and also in various US Kids events across the world.

Many congratulations to all those that secured a hole in 1 this year. However, a random story I heard was of a hole in one on the 10th. Sadly, the ball did not go in to the hole on 10th green, but the bin on the 11th tee. That individual shall remain nameless.

I am sure that there have been many other Craigielaw golfers who have excelled during the year, and apologies for not mentioning them here, but congratulations to you all.

Finally, I would just like to remember Lionel Freedman who sadly passed away earlier this year. Lionel was a great friend of Craigielaw and of course the World Hickory Championship and will be sadly missed. His donation of books that has enabled the club to create a library was a wonderful gesture.

Major event Winners

Many congratulations are due to all those who played and won events throughout the year. They are too numerous to mention here - though they were listed in the various newsletters and on the noticeboards - but here are a few of the major event winners:

Club Champion	Craig Davidson	
B Champion	Tom Robertson	
Medal Winner's Play-off	Ian Smith	
Spring Meeting (Scr, H/cap)	Allan Reoch	Mark Glynn
Summer Meeting (Scr, H/cap)	Gabrielle MacDonald	Gabrielle MacDonald



Autumn Meeting (Scr, H/cap)	Craig Davidson	Gordon McSorley
Seniors Matchplay	Barry Sinclair	
Ladies Matchplay	sadly not played	
Junior Champion	Lewis Irvine	
Junior South Links Champion	Ollie Mukherjee	
Winter Foursomes	Ryan Joyce & Craig Davidson	
Summer Fourball	Barry Sinclair & Roddy French	
Summer Singles	David Gray	

Visiting championships and societies

We once again hosted the US Kids in June – and some fantastic golf was seen. Many thanks to all the members that helped out with marking, scoring, ball spotting etc and to the club house staff, the pro shop and the green staff for ensuring we present CGC in the best possible light. Lothian's golf has hosted the event over many years now and I know other areas in the UK would love to host US Kids. However hopefully that will not happen and we will continue to host this event.

Across the whole year, the feedback about the course and the clubhouse and the staff were excellent. One example I heard when I was in the clubhouse one evening in the summer was feedback from the Gleneagles touring party (not actually from Gleneagles, but from southern England) -“why have we not played here before? We all thoroughly enjoyed the course and the clubhouse hospitality where we enjoyed a great meal served by great staff – a great outing. And we will be back in the future.”

Of course, we had many visiting societies throughout the year, many of them staying in the Lodge as part of their trip. I hope they all enjoyed themselves and we look forward to seeing them, and others in the future. It is of immense credit to all the staff at Craigielaw that the feedback about the club, the staff, the food and the course throughout the year has been hugely positive.

CGC teams

Craigielaw played some excellent golf throughout the Inter Club league where we play Longniddry and Dunbar home and away. 3 excellent wins and a draw saw us successfully retain the trophy. Thanks to George McGill for once again organising the matches and to the various players who did us proud. I believe that Kilspindie will join the league next year making it a four way league.

The winter league team played magnificently all winter and were successfully promoted to the top division. The 2017/18 campaign has begun and they have won 3 out of their 4 matches so a great start.



The summer league team had a year largely made up of hard luck stories, losing a lot of close matches in the closing holes. However, we have a very strong squad and it bodes well for both the upcoming winter league and next year's summer league.

The Auld Bucks annually play senior matches against North Berwick [H & A], Longniddry, Gullane and Glen [H & A]. Results to date – 6 wins, 1 loss with no cancellations – a great season.

Craigiellaw Ladies play 6 Friendly matches each season – three home and three away. This year a new fixture against Musselburgh was initiated, following the closure of Whitekirk last season. Unfortunately playing at home did not work to our advantage this year and we lost to both North Berwick and Kilspindie. The inclement weather over the summer (of which we are all doubtless aware!) sadly led to the cancellation of two matches (against Longniddry and Gullane) and consequently next year's matches will mainly be away fixtures. Perhaps the prospect of a round at a different course (and lunch!) may encourage more lady members to sign up for these? You don't have to be a member of the 18-hole course – members of the South Links are eligible to participate. A sign-up sheet will be put up on the Ladies noticeboard early in the New Year, together with a reminder that when we say "friendly" we mean "friendly". And of course, playing in these matches also allows people to meet and play with other members (and indeed members of our opposing clubs) whom they may not have come across.

The Craigiellaw Juniors have had a fantastic year – culminating in winning the Lothian's Junior league. Not only that, but Lewis Irvine came 6th (with 5 Craigiellaw players in the top 15) in the scratch league whilst Lewis pipped Fergus Brown to the handicap league. Well played everyone. As a result, they then represented East Lothian in the Scottish Junior Team Championship played at Glenbervie. The team of Ryan Yuill, Fergus Brown, Lewis Irvine, David Halliday, Josh Grahame and Malachy Hayward (with 5 out of 6 scores counting) came an excellent T3rd and even better Ryan came T1 in the handicap event. A great result for the team.

I am sure that all the various teams would like me to say a big thank you to the team captains, the staff in the pro shop, the bar and catering staff and the greens staff for all their hard work throughout the year. We would not succeed without all your support.

Intra club group news

Such groups include The Larks who play early on a Sunday morning and the Auld Hares who play during the week, though there are undoubtedly more that play over the week.

The Larks have been running since the club opened and have about 16 players of varying ages, swings and abilities, but always playing with a sense of humour. They play for numerous trophies throughout the year, including ones for an eclectic score, 2 matchplay events, a strokeplay event and finally the "piece de resistance" – the gardening trowel. They even enjoyed a trip up to Blairgowrie this summer. All of the trophies are keenly fought for and celebrated, but the winning of the trowel has seen increasingly elaborate celebrations! It is a testament to the friendship within the group that a number of the 16 are founder members of the Larks.



A Christmas dinner with partners is the culmination of the year where amidst great company an excellent meal and an odd glass of something are enjoyed by all. The inevitable heated debate over revising the handicapping system takes place along with many a story, true or otherwise, of so near and yet so far, if only etc etc being swapped across the table. With the suspense killing everyone, the captain – currently “Oh Barry” Sinclair – then hands out the various trophies to the lucky few.

Like the Larks, the Craigielaw Seniors Section was set up shortly after the Club opened and remained as such until 2004 when it was renamed **The Auld Hares**. The lower age limit for membership is 55 and currently there are 30 men and 6 lady active members. There is a competition every Tuesday with most competitions being Stablefords though other competitions also take place:

A green jacket is played for at the time of The Masters which this year was won by Evlyn Raistrick
The Open a fine claret jug presented by past Captain Bill Edgar is played for and won this year by David Raistrick

In its 13th year the Ryder/Solheim Cup – was retained by the Home Scots, beating The Rest of the World by 11 matches to 8

The Clarke Cup for the best Stableford score during the year

The season ends with the Xmas party and prize giving on 12 December – main trophy being for the gross eclectic which at the moment has our youngest member Gordon McSorley leading with 56, a margin of 3 over his nearest rival but still 1 short of the record set in 2015.

As mentioned in the team section, the **Craigielaw Ladies** are always keen to see more ladies join them, whether it be in matches of just joining in on the odd bounce game so please get in touch via the pro-shop or one of the ladies.

On behalf of all such groups, I am sure you would like to me to thank all members of staff at Craigielaw, from the Pro shop to green staff to the restaurant and the bar. You all do a wonderful job and make us feel proud to be members of such a great club.

Junior news

It has been a very successful season for the juniors at Craigielaw this year. Gordon Smith has worked hard to pull together a strong junior team who went on to win the League this season for the first time since 2006. With this team still being very young we hope there is more of the same success to come in the next few years.

Lewis Irvine has had a very successful season winning the East Lothian Junior golf league Handicap order of merit beating Fergus Brown to 1st spot by just 8 points. Lewis also won the Junior Club Championship this year beating Ryan Yuill in the final which was no walk over as Ryan put up a very good fight in the final.



Massive congratulations go to Lewis and Josh Graham who have both been selected to play for the East Lothian select team over in Arizona - an opportunity which doesn't come along very often. Another win from a Craigielaw junior this year seen Andrew Hendry bring home the Oceanico World Kids Golf Boys Under 12 trophy in Portugal winning by an impressive 10 points. Fergus Brown also did well in this competition managing a top 10 finish. Well done to both boys. A mention must also go to Fraser Walters who at only 7 years old who has had an incredible season. Fraser played in the US kids golf championships here at Craigielaw earlier in the year and his impressive finish that week saw him Qualify to play in the US kids world finals in Pinehurst where he went and did Craigielaw proud against some of the best kids in the world at his age. Fraser then came home and the following week played in the British Kids Championship at the Celtic Manor in wales where he finished 2nd, which again is a fantastic achievement of which Fraser should very proud.

Gordon would like to thank all the Juniors that have been involved in such a successful season, it would not be possible without all the hard work the Juniors have put in. We look forward to next season and hope for some more of the same Success.

Cameron would also like to thank Gordon Smith for all of his hard work and time that he sets aside to make sure the Juniors have these opportunities.

Joining the mutual appreciation society, I would like to add my congratulations. Aided by Gordon Smith, our vice-captain, and Cameron in the pro-shop, their positive attitude, hard work and respect for each other and their opponents, I think it is fair to say that the juniors have had a magnificent year.

Pro Shop news

The pro shop welcomed a new member of staff in Craig Imlah, Craig who is a qualified PGA Professional was working with our greens staff for the last few years but has returned to the professional shop to assist with the operation. I would like to take this opportunity to remind all members that the professional shop is here to service the members' needs. All prices are internet matched and we also operate a price match system. I would also like to remind members that if they are looking to make any purchases please speak to our professional staff for help and advice.

We now have on-site one of the best Custom Fit facilities in the country which gives Craigielaw members a fantastic opportunity to improve their game. Whether it is either through seeking advice on equipment, or lessons using the Trackman technology which gives accurate information and is widely used by the best players in the world, we are here to help.

Cameron and Craig have started running Group Coaching sessions for Ladies and Seniors which will continue throughout the winter (weather permitting). Cameron's Junior programme will also continue throughout the winter with a full schedule to be announced soon. On the coaching front,



Grant Forrest who is coached by Jonathan is having a successful season on the European Challenge Tour. At present, he is currently playing in Oman competing in the Tour finale hoping for a strong finish that might see him achieve his tour card for the main tour. (Footnote - sadly he did not quite make it)

Finally – congratulations to Cameron for passing the latest set of his PGA exams (for info, I think Scott also passed his at the time he moved on to North Berwick).

Conclusion

On behalf of the MLC and all the members, may I say a huge thank you to all those in the pro-shop, the catering and bar staff, the office staff, the lodge staff and the greenstaff, for contributing to Craigielaw Golf Club having such a successful year.

I genuinely believe that we have a great product here at Craigielaw - a great course, a great clubhouse, a great team and a great membership. It is also fair to say that like any other business, there are challenges, but providing we meet them head on and in the same positive and constructive manner we have always done, we can really look forward with great pride and optimism.

I would like to say that it has been a real privilege being your Captain over the last 2 years and I have thoroughly enjoyed representing the club whether it be attending various events and functions, undertaking prizegivings, refereeing finals or supporting various club/team events.

I would like to say a few thank you's before I go - to the members of the MLC, to all those who work in the clubhouse, to Brian and his team who do such a great job out there on our course and to all the members for all your support and guidance. Also to Derek for all his advice and help – thank you for keeping me on the right track. And to my wife Tracey and my son Alex for bearing with me and my excuses for not always being around.

Finally, I would like to wish the incoming Captain, Gordon Smith all my best wishes as he takes over the Craigielaw tiller. I am sure you will all be as equally generous with your support for him as you have been with me.

Duncan JS Thomson
Club Captain