



NEWSLETTER

Issue 8 August 2009

Message from the Captain

Welcome to our Summer Newsletter, my first since I became Captain of Helen's Bay Golf Club on 5th March 2009 and the 85th incumbent to hold this honour.

Whilst this is only a short period, a lot seems to have happened. Leaving aside banking woes, MP's expenses and our somewhat unreliable weather (!), I am enjoying my term in office and have been delighted (but not

surprised) at the level of support I have received not just from Council and the officers of the Club, but from the membership as a whole and the local community of golf clubs.

I am of course only building on the traditions and groundwork of those before me who have strived to make Helen's Bay not only a great golf club, but also a warm and inviting place where family and friends feel welcome. As we know, golf clubs face challenges on all fronts but a smile, a handshake and a kind word cost nothing and is something we can all do to continue and develop this important ethos.

New Members

An informal open evening took place on Monday 15th June where I along

with other officers of the club and council members welcomed new and interested members.

The evening was very well attended with our Honorary Secretary John McCullough acting as 'MC' for the night. Those present were then invited to a hot buffet meal and wine. During the meal, members of Council were on hand to answer queries and personally welcome attendees.

All in all a very enjoyable and successful evening was had by all and by agreement this is a format that will be repeated on a reasonably regular basis

The Captain's Table

The Captain's Table is an informal lunch (or sometimes tea) hosted by the Captain every Saturday for golfers about to commence or returning from 'battle'. Prizes are presented on a periodic basis to those members who have won competitions throughout the season. (advanced notice is given when prizes are distributed). Even if you can only stay for a cup of tea or coffee, any member is very welcome to attend.

The origins of this great tradition are shrouded in mystery. One view is that as members came to play from Belfast by train they all had high tea before catching the return train. There is a story that once, when members hadn't appeared in the station when the train had arrived from Bangor, the guard came down to the clubhouse to see what had happened to them! Can't see that happening now!

In the club's Centenary Book however it says "...at the time of the Club's birth, he (George Herbert Brown who was the first Captain) was already commodore of the Royal Ulster and his yacht, Halcyon, moored in the bay while he played golf. On summer evenings sailors would be rowed ashore to join golfers at tea. Almost certainly it was the origin of our unique Captain's Table..."

Part of the tradition is that the Captain does "mother" and pours the tea and coffee for everyone. There is also an inscribed silver cigarette case which the Captain handed round which was used until recently.



I have received tremendous support from the membership in keeping this tradition up. I encourage and welcome all of those who have not yet attended to come along and enjoy some great craic and camaraderie.

Finally on the social side, I have attended a number of functions at the Club which have been highly successful including the Jazz Lunch and the May Ball. I would like to encourage everyone to participate in the social functions in support of the Club. Many thanks to the organizers for their hard work and to members and their guests for making a great night.

Golf Exploits

I would like to include my participation in the Pierce Purcell Competition representing the Club with Michael Mooney as my partner.

Also on Sunday 17th May I

represented the Club in the Ulster Cup against Scrabo - past winners of this prestigious event. We lost 4 ½ to 2 ½ which was quite a respectable score.

More recently, Helen's Bay have enjoyed a great run in the Holt Shield, reaching the quarter finals and taking a 4 -1 lead away to Ballyclare. The Holt Shield was founded in 1963 at Belvoir Park and is competed for by clubs in the greater Belfast area - currently numbering 40 or so. Helen's Bay have yet to win this prestigious trophy so it would be great to see our team lift the silverware.

Irish Open Pro-Am

I was fortunate enough to represent Helen's Bay Golf Club alongside David Graham Peter Clarke on Wednesday 13th May at this year's Irish Open pro-am tournament, held in the beautiful links setting of Baltray Golf Club, Co Louth. Whilst

we didn't lift the winner's trophy, we did manage to uphold Helen's Bay's honour! The welcome we received and the hospitality shown to us throughout the day was truly remarkable. We were also particularly impressed at the way all the professionals took time and a genuine interest in the amateur scene. Pdraig Harrington made an excellent speech at the close of proceedings and prize-giving although unfortunately his passion and support for the amateurs didn't quite translate into success during the 'big' tournament. Even pro's can have the odd off day - there's hope for the rest of us!

Finally, I look forward to welcoming as many members as possible in person over the coming months and in doing so continue to see our club thrive and prosper.

Robert G Sinclair

Captain

Lady Captain's News

JUNE 2009

It is now three months since I became Lady Captain and I am delighted that the sun has finally arrived and we can hopefully now start to enjoy our golf.

The poor weather affected many of our competitions and I have to give praise to the Ladies who continued to play through wind and rain. I should also like to express thanks to Glenn and his staff who have been struggling with the elements in an effort to get the Course into order. At times it must have felt like three steps forward and four steps back!

Despite all this all the I.L.G.U. matches have taken place and while we were not so fortunate in some of these we are delighted that our Junior Foursomes Team is now through to the 3rd round having defeated Galgorm Castle and Royal Portrush. The team now play Rockmount in the next round and we know this will be a tough match. However we have a great team very ably captained by Ruth Cochrane and we wish them the very best of luck. We are extremely proud of their achievements so far.

I have particularly enjoyed meeting

so many lovely people through the various matches I have attended. Two occasions stand out - the first was the Intermediate Teams away match against Enniskillen. It was a glorious sunny Saturday and we were treated royally and made very welcome. Unfortunately we lost that match by one hole but what a happy and memorable day it was. The other memorable day was our Junior Foursomes away match at Royal Portrush. Another gorgeous day and this time I played 9 holes with their Team Captain while the match was in progress. Again we received wonderful hospitality and of course the icing on the cake that day was our win!

My sincere thanks go to all Team Captains and to all those who represent the Club both in I.L.G.U. and Friendly matches. - I very much appreciate your commitment and your time.

I started my year with a get together of all the North Down Lady Presidents, Lady Captains and Friendly League Team Captains - a most enjoyable morning and a great way to get to know each other. On Friday 28th of August, Helen's Bay will host The Reid Cup Golf Competition and a dinner for all North Down Lady Past Captains and at the end of September we are hosting the Summer Friendly League End of Season Dinner and Presentation of Prizes. We are honoured to be hosting these events this year.

The Club mixed competitions are now underway and are deserving of

our full support especially in the light of the work and commitment that Roy and Liz Jackson put into these events. We are very much indebted to them.

I am thoroughly enjoying my time as Lady Captain and I count myself very fortunate to have Liz Jackson as my Honorary Secretary and also a very supportive Committee. I thank them and all the Lady members for their continued good wishes and their warm friendship.

I enjoyed a wonderful Lady Captain's Day on 23rd June and was delighted to present first prize to Barbara Edwards, a deserving winner on what was a most memorable day.

Finally may I wish you all good fun, good health and good golf in the months ahead.

Pauline Clarke

Lady Captain



Captain's Day 2009

Was played in blustery conditions on a course in near perfect condition – a true and fair test of golf.

The day was a model of organisation – from all the volunteers in the starter's office at 7.30am to the bar staff and catering team at 1.30am! There was a fantastic atmosphere in the club and on the course, helped by the wonderful and varied entertainment throughout the evening – jazz, comedy and dancing– truly something for everyone.

I was especially pleased to welcome so many of our younger members to the club. They are our future and unlike many golf clubs, Helen's Bay has a vibrant and growing membership (up around 10%) which has also translated into success in many of the club competitions.

Captain's Prizes were won by the following members:

1st Michael Bell	41
2nd Mark Wilson	40
3rd Brian Stewart	39
Bob Cooke	Best Gross 73
Paul Boyle	Best Front Nine 22
Frank Graham	Best Back Nine 21
Raymond Hopper	Putting Competition 30
Stephen Davison	Longest Drive
Darren Mitchell	Nearest the Pin

Michael Bell was a deserved and popular winner and gets cut to 6 for his efforts. During his acceptance

speech, he commented that he had been practising his golf swing whilst on holiday in the swimming pool – a novel but highly successful technique.

Other highlights included our Past Captain Frank Graham winning the best back nine.

May I take this opportunity to thank all members & guests, our caterer and bar staff, the green keeping staff and the huge band of willing 'behind the scenes' volunteers who gave of their time so generously to ensure Captain's Day was such a huge success.

I am honoured to represent Helen's Bay Golf Club and look forward to continuing to meet and speak to as many of you as possible during the rest of my term in office.

Robert Sinclair

Captain



Course Update

Our Course Manager Glenn Culbert and his team endured a frustrating time early in the season with prolonged spells of wet weather making course conditions very difficult. It was very much a case of one step forward and two steps back with much behind the scenes preparation being completed.

The recent spell of warm(ish) dry(ish) and windy weather has meant that this preparation has reaped results and the course is in great condition. The greens in particular are firm and true with many members and visitors alike commenting upon their condition.

Golfers will have noticed the recently installed drains at the 3rd, 4th and 5th fairways. These main drains will provide an outlet for water building at the top end of the course and provide a basic infrastructure to enable further drainage work which will ensure drier ground conditions. A big thank you to the Ladies Committee who made a significant financial contribution to this work.

You may have noticed various white, yellow and red marks on the course. Recently Howard Swann,

a recognised Golf Architect (who is working with Donaghadee GC) visited for a day, and reshaped our fairways and greens.

Our course set up and shaping had not been reviewed for some 10 – 12 years and Howard has reduced the size of several greens, realigned landing areas and introduced aprons at all holes. The aim of this work is primarily to improve the playability of the course and ensure it is a fair test for all ages and standard of golfer. Feedback to date has been very positive.

As well as planning for our summer work the Committee has started to compile the 2009 / 2010 autumn / winter work schedule. It is our hope to do further significant drainage work in an effort to improve playing conditions. This obviously will be dependent on finances.

Feedback from members is important to the Committee and is welcomed. Please feel free to approach myself or any members of the Committee to discuss.

Richard Mann

Greens Convenor

GOAT's – Golf on a Thursday (Night!)

The Thursday Night competition is a league that runs over the summer (I use the term loosely) months from April to September. The winning player is presented with the Jimmy Harvey Cup in memory of a great club supporter and stalwart.

A formal timesheet is placed in the men's locker room every Thursday night for the next week's play, with slots being available from 4.30 onwards. Points are awarded from first to tenth and prizes given out on the night for 1st to 5th - as well as golf balls for those with 2's.

For those 'unlucky' golfers not in the points, a chance to tell your partner at home you are winner still exists courtesy of the famous "pulley outie" – all cards go into a draw and one is picked out at random for a classy bottle of wine. If you are not there – you can't win and a re-draw takes place!

The season closes this year on 3rd September with a grand prize giving after the golf where every competitor walks away with a prize. Although the golf is keenly fought with a number of full qualifying competitions, the emphasis is on a great fun and informal night where members play golf, have a meal and a drink or two and enjoy the craic.

There are usually a few spare slots so if you haven't already, why not come along and have a go?

New Website Launched – www.helensbaygc.com

The new look Helen's Bay website is now available, with a more up-to-date design and an improved structure. As well as giving the website a cleaner and more modern design, we wanted to make it more user friendly – which meant a complete overhaul. Member Paul Boyle has been instrumental in these changes and on behalf of the Council I would like to formally record my appreciation for his efforts.

Popular sections such as The Restaurant and Visitor Information have been improved and we've added more ways for you to give us feedback on the course and club. We have also updated the "Location" section making easier for visitors to find us. One new innovation is the addition of results and news from the Men's and Ladies' competitions.

Finally, as part of our role in the local community we've also added a new section - "Community News", where local groups and charities can advertise their upcoming events free of charge.

The website is updated on a very regular basis and is a vibrant and eye catching source of all sorts of information on the club. Please let us know what you think by sending us some feedback which you can do in person or via the website itself.

IT Updates

Like all organizations, Helen's Bay Golf Club is increasingly reliant on its IT systems. These had become somewhat outdated and a recent upgrade took place behind the scenes to improve the performance and security of our computer network.

Consideration is currently being given to a range of other projects aimed primarily at improving communication between the club

and its members. For instance, putting in place a system that gathers and stores members' e-mail addresses securely so that newsletters like this one can be sent electronically and members, visitors and societies reminded on a regular basis of forthcoming events.

We recognize the club needs to move with the times and to take advantage of new developments in IT, however one of our primary considerations with any change is to make sure that all members needs are catered for - not just those who use that new fangled internet thingy! Any new systems that are introduced will be done so after careful consideration with the specific aim of making better use of our course and Club facilities and making membership more enjoyable.

Your ideas and feedback are welcomed.

Dermot Cleere

Website & Communications



Social Events Update

2009 has been a busy and successful year so far. Recent events include the ever popular Jazz Lunch on 26th April featuring the Apex Jazz Band. 128 members and their guests attended including many children at this family orientated event, which is great to see.

Tall Ships

One of the highlights of the year is the tall ships event, due to take place on Sunday 16th August 2009. Featuring all day Jazz from The Apex Jazz Band, Barbecue, Treasure Hunt, Ice Cream Parlour, Photo Competitions and much more, this family orientated event promises to be a unique and special occasion in our club's history. My thanks to the two Dennis's – Farrell and Logan - whose inspiration and hard work have made this event possible.

Upcoming Events

Book your place for the next Jazz Lunch scheduled to be held on Sunday 25th October 2009.

The Social Committee are always looking to provide new and entertaining events. In this spirit I am pleased

to announce two more dates for your diary:

ABBA Tribute Band - Saturday 22nd August 2009

Neil Diamond Cabaret Show – Saturday 10th October 2009

Both shows starts at 9.00pm and cost £10.00 per person. Tickets are available at the bar (reference Mark Kelly) for both these events and should you wish to dine, please book direct with the caterer.

Robert Anderson

Social Convener



Fundraising & Sponsorship

The task of securing sponsors in a recession must be the most difficult job in golf today!

Our tee boxes are no exception, with their three year contracts due recently for renewal.

Sadly, although we have lost several supporters, we are also pleased to welcome a number of new names. We thank the following for supporting the Golf Club.

- Ballyrobert – Vauxhall
- Bank of Ireland
- JP Corry & Co
- Europa Generale
- Federal
- Met Steel
- SS Moore Ltd
- RSA Belfast

We are also delighted to welcome the following new sponsors:

- Robert Neill & Co Wine Importers
- Dennis Farrell
- Denis Logan
- Dermot Rollins

We would be pleased to hear of anyone wishing to sponsor a tee-box, please contact either Dennis Farrell or Denis Logan.

Your Council

There are currently 16 members serving on the Council.

Full Council meetings take place monthly however like most businesses, the actual work is carried out behind the scenes by various sub-committees who engage with members, office and bar staff, the greenkeepers and our caterer – to name but a few.

We welcome any constructive comments and suggestions - and even criticism! Our role is to serve all members in making the club a better place and we can only do this with your support. If you would like to draw attention to any matter or just have a good idea – please let us know by contacting any of the members or the office on 028 9185 2816 or by e-mailing mail@Helensbaygc.com.

Robert Sinclair	Captain
Peter Smith	Vice Captain
John McCullough	Honorary Secretary
Sam Goldblatt	Honorary Treasurer
Dermot Rollins	Immediate Past Captain
Robert Coey	Match & Handicap
Dennis Farrell	Sponsorship & Fund Raising
Denis Logan	Sponsorship & Fund Raising
Richard Mann	Greens & Course Committee
Jim Wilson	House & Property Convener
Peter Clarke	Juvenile Convener
Peter Martin	Membership Committee
John Coote	Membership Committee
David McCullough	House & Property Committee
Robert Anderson	Social Convener
Dermot Cleere	Website & Communications

New Members

Open Evening – Monday 15th June 2009

A well attended and highly successful informal welcome evening took place on Monday 15th June. New and prospective members were welcomed by the Honorary Secretary, John McCullough acting as MC for the night!

Captain Robert Sinclair gave a brief and informative overview of the club's history and ethos, focusing in particular on the strong and enduring links with the local community as well as the friendly and welcoming atmosphere that is such an important part of the club's tradition.

He was pleased to note that we appear to be bucking the trend and increasing our membership during these difficult economic times. Our house membership offer of £95 in

particular has brought in many new members, a number of whom have gone on to become full members.

Vice Captain Peter Smith focused more on the golf side of things - we are a golf club after all! After commenting on how well the course had come back after such a long and wet winter, it was pleasing to note that Helen's Bay were progressing well in many of the inter club competitions. This was in no small part due to some of the 'new blood' coming through from the junior section which is vibrant and growing. Unlike many clubs, Helen's Bay's age profile continues to fall and this can only be good news for the long term future of the club.

John McCullough concluded proceedings by reiterating the welcome to all new and prospective members who were then invited to a hot buffet meal and wine. During the meal, members of Council were on hand

to answer queries and personally welcome attendees.

All in all a very enjoyable and successful evening was had by all and by agreement this is a format that will be repeated on a reasonably regular basis

Our friendly and welcoming ethos is something that is often commented upon and this event provides the perfect platform to build on this.

Peter Martin
Membership Committee

