



MEMBERS LIAISON COMMITTEE CAPTAIN'S REPORT 2020-2021

A year again much affected by COVID legislation, yet one which produced so many successes for Craigielaw members.

It was not possible to hold the 2020 Members Liaison Committee (MLC) AGM but John Murdoch, vice-captain and I were able to meet with members in the Members Lounge on the 7th November and receive comment on the Captain's Report and other matters of concern. We'd moved into tier three and the clubhouse was fully open. The new WHS had been launched, with Jonathan and the pro shop staff having to deal with many queries and entries were being taken for the winter fourball. The Winter League had started and indeed was played to completion with only East Lothian golfers playing in the later stages. There was a curtailed fixture list including some Wednesday and Saturday medals, along with the annual Turkey Trot.

As a result of the comments from members, we were able to produce a MLC Management Plan allowing us to deal through this difficult year with many of the issues identified as needing attention. The remit as ever of the MLC refers to the course, the clubhouse, competitions and communication.

Communication to the members has been through members updates, some thirteen since November 2020, all on the members page of the club website. All followed the guidelines and legislation passed down from the Scottish Government, Sport Scotland and Scottish Golf. Some may have thought to operate outwith such advice but this was not the case at Craigielaw and with the full support of the Wemyss and March Estate, the club has come through some very difficult and challenging times.

Communication by email is seen as the best way to reach all members. The Craigielaw website does not really give us news updates and many of us will find current Craigielaw news on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. It is hoped in the future to bring all aspects of communication together through one source.

As per November the previous year we thought to be able to continue playing golf and competing, even if restricted in terms of hospitality but on November 19th we were to receive a members' update, detailing tier changes and travel restrictions across Scotland, which meant only those residing in East Lothian were able to play at Craigielaw. Crossing county boundaries was not permitted and although not policed as such, the pro shop staff sought to manage only bookings that were allowed. Craigielaw was open through December and over Christmas but as said only for East Lothian residents and still restricted to two households and with no alcohol. Sadly all events including medals, the winter fourball and the Turkey Trot were cancelled, and it was not possible to organise donations to the East Lothian Foodbank.

The members update on the 21st December moved East Lothian into tier four which meant the clubhouse was closed again and we were back to using the rear window of the pro shop. This was followed on 4th January with a note advising that only two balls from two households would be allowed. It wasn't until the 12th March that a four ball from four different households could play.

For the second year running, we were to lose our Medal and Trophy Winners Day in March. Trophies for 2019 and 2020, were presented though at the 20th anniversary event. There will be two new trophies also to be won next year, as it was decided to do both a Wednesday and Saturday medal Order of Merit.

Through all of this time from the very first lockdown and until May, the Lodge remained closed, with all staff on furlough. New accommodation was completed however, in what had previously been the upstairs large reception room.

January 2021 saw the appointment of a new head greenkeeper, Paul Hay from Gullane. When members finally returned on the 16th April they were able to see the impact of the course works under new management, a good winter and of course less traffic on the course. Perhaps not enjoying some of the roped off areas, so necessary then and to return as I write to allow the course to be maintained over the winter months. The course though has stood up amazingly to what must have been the busiest few months ever with members bookings up 65%.

Everyone welcomed the new flagsticks, though these have recently been temporarily replaced with stronger ones to withstand wind and winter conditions, and rakes are now back in the bunkers, with an option to use until Scottish Golf advises otherwise. Divot mix bags will be made available to members shortly. Meanwhile members are asked to continue to replace divots and as requested so many times before, repair their pitch marks.

The MLC arranged a course walk in May with Paul and Jonathan and it was interesting to go over some of the details of the Tom McKenzie, Twenty Year Report. Major work will be done on the drainage and changes to the burn at the front of the 11th green, and also at the 17th, with the removal of the large trees in the garden on the west side. Dependant on the contractors, it is hoped that these works will be completed by the end of the year.

Travel restrictions were not lifted until the 16th April which coincided with membership renewal. Most members did understand and accept the situation and not long into the new season, most had renewed their membership, held at the previous seasons level with those from outwith East Lothian receiving a credit voucher in some small recompense for all the months lost. New members came along in some number and at this time with a full membership in almost all categories, Craigielaw has a waiting list for full membership. Current membership - 220 Full, 152 Five Day, 50 Juniors, 35 Young Adult, 50 South Links Juniors, 100 South Links mixed, 100 Academy

The clubhouse re-opened on the 26th April with food and non-alcoholic drinks available but still with restrictions around numbers and households, indoors and outdoors. Ann Burns had intimated that she would retire as clubhouse manager and Carol French agreed to act as manager in the meantime. Carol and a number of furloughed staff returned to oversee those early days of the opening of the members' lounge and restaurant. Our new clubhouse manager Vanessa Torquemada joined us in early May. Staffing through all of this last year has proved difficult in the hospitality industry, none more so than now but the club continues to work towards providing the service that is expected by Craigielaw members.

Through these busy times, the pro shop staff have somehow managed to find slots for all those wishing to play and are continuing to add in extra times to cope with the demand. Many clubs adopted restrictions in the number of times members could play in a week, restricted guest access and allowed different booking windows for different regions. The aim at Craigielaw was to keep booking simple and look after all member requests. Our thanks to Craig, Cameron and Steve who have achieved this with such patience and good humour. It would be good to hear from members their thoughts on the booking system and how it has worked for them over the last months and any changes that might be considered for the future.

And finally in May, the start of a new season with the publication of a provisional fixture list. The first time that members were able to use HowDidiDo for medal results, though many had already used it to record casual rounds. The Summer League had started at the end of April, Junior, Senior and Ladies matches returned in May and junior coaching, which led to the first year of the golf sixes competition started in April.

In June following the Club Championship Qualifier, we held the 2021 Club Championship A and B divisions, and as ever at Craigielaw, there were men, lady and junior qualifiers. Kenny Glen beat Craig Davidson in the A Division and Stephen Sharkey beat Darren Davidson in the B Division.

But it wasn't until the Summer Shotgun in July that we were able to hold our first full club competition and really the first opportunity to welcome the many new and existing members back to events at Craigielaw. Amongst the latter are some 80 original members, with 20 playing on the day. The winning team - Keith McParland, Neil Feenan, John Cochran, Steven Cockburn with a score of 50.7.

The only knockout competition held this year was the summer fourball, with entry and results on HowDidiDo. After a number of delays caused again by COVID, the final was played on the 31st October with Dave Nicolson and Charles Reid beating John Burgess and Michael Hughes

The important event of the year, though was to be the celebration of twenty years of Craigielaw Golf Club. Yet again COVID restricted what was possible. It had been hoped to organise a golf jamboree with members,

families and juniors enjoying events on all of the courses and in the courtyard and to hold an evening reception at Gosford House but all of this was curtailed to what was however an enjoyable and competitive Shotgun on the 14th August with an equally enjoyable clubhouse reception to follow.

The winning team - Guy Dalziel, Allan Smith, Keith Macdonald, John Murdoch with a score of 56

A video record was produced from the early days of construction of the golf course on Craigielaw farm, to its completion including photos of members, events, wildlife and more over the twenty years. It is hoped also to produce a similar written record.

We held an Invitation day at the end of August, won by Steven Hendy and Graham Price with 43 points on a card count back from Craig Davidson and Brian Hammon. An event though that perhaps needs to be looked at next year to bring it back to what had previously been an important one in the calendar.

In 2010, we had been able to celebrate our 10th Anniversary at Gosford House when the 13th Earl of Wemyss and March spoke of the long family association with golf in East Lothian, particularly with the early days of Kilspindie when it had moved in 1899 from land east of the Peffer Burn to estate land on Craigielaw Links and of the two trophies that had been presented by the family to Kilspindie in those very early years.

The first of these, the Wemyss County Cup is the oldest foursomes competition in the world, having been played for since 1868 and was won this year in June by a Craigielaw team, comprising Dave Nicolson, Guy Dalziel, Ross Colquhoun, Gerry Gilmour and Craig Davidson. Craig was then to go on and win the second of these trophies, the Hope Medal again played for since 1868, at Kilspindie in September.

In July Angus Carrick won the Scottish Men's Amateur Championship at Murcar Links and was selected to play in the Scottish team that finished second in the R&A Home Internationals. He and Kenny Glen also played in the winning Lothians Team who played in the Scottish Men's Team Championship, at the Kings Golf Club, Inverness, Lothians winning for the first time since 2007. Kenny Glen finished the Lothian Order of Merit 2021 runner up after defending this title from the previous time the event was played in 2019

Grant Forrest who, along with Gabrielle Macdonald had played in the very successful Craigielaw junior team some ten years ago was to win his first major European tour event, the Hero Open in August at St Andrews. He followed this with another great result at the Spanish Open in Madrid, finishing 3rd, and currently lies 36th in the Road to Dubai.

Gabrielle, following a very successful 2021 season on the LET Access tour, including two great wins in Sweden and in Switzerland, was to gain her full European Tour Card in September.

Lloyd Saltman embarking on a return to the European Tour, recently won on the Tartan Tour at the Renaissance. Lloyd is one of three Honorary Members at Craigielaw, from his early years of success, both as an amateur and as a professional, along with the first captain Bob McInnes and the starter from the early years, Gordon McLanachan.

Cameron Mukherjee is the current under 14 Scottish boys champion, and his brothers Oliver and Samuel represented Scotland at under 16 level in the boys Home Internationals. Cameron won the U15 final at the Simmers Cup, played at Craigielaw on the 12th October.

In team events, the summer league team had a very successful season finishing top of their league and in a very close final v Duddingston, played at Bruntisfield, they were unfortunate to lose at the first extra hole. It was good to join the team at some of their fixtures and also at the final, along with a number of Craigielaw supporters. Season 2021-22 has just started for the winter league team and should prove slightly easier for Rodney French to organise, following last year's competition when only East Lothian members were allowed to play in the team.

The junior team qualified in second place from the East Lothian Junior League to compete in the Scottish Junior Team Championship at Crail on the 26th September. The team captained by Daryl Yuill, along with Ryan Yuill, Magnus Braby, Alexander Yuill, Gregor Thomson and Fraser Walters won with an average stableford score of 39 - Fraser scored 47 points! A week later in early October Magnus won the junior club championship, playing against Diarmuid Slaven, one of two brothers from Drumpelieir. And on 31st October, at North Berwick, after playing in all of the 10 events, Craigielaw won the East Lothian Junior League, nine points ahead of Gullane. Magnus finished third in the scratch Order of Merit and Daryl, second in the handicap Order of Merit. Many congratulations to all who played through the season and a special thank you to Gordon Smith who looks after the junior programme.

The seniors have played eight matches this year winning two, losing four and halving two. The ladies have played five matches losing three and halving two. They also played in the annual Sime Salver, played this year at Haddington and competed for by some 25 ladies teams across the county. All the team match results including links to all of the leagues can be found on the members page.

There was also a new junior event this year, the Golf Sixes for our new and younger golfers, played on the South Links and nine hole courses at other clubs and all as a result of the enthusiastic coaching of the juniors by Craig Imlah and Cameron Donaldson. The team finished third in this inaugural event. In early October they played their junior championship on the South Links course with Leo Rodriguez beating Sofia Smith in the final. And at the end of November a new order of merit trophy will be presented to the leading golfer in this group. The success of this programme can be followed on Facebook , posted throughout the year by Craig and Cameron.

Along with our low handicap golfers, many other Craigiellaw golfers play in competitions and represent the club at various levels and with much success. Tara McTaggart, who played in the winter league team, decided to turn professional in August at the end of a very successful amateur career. Hannah Darling often seen on the driving range at Craigiellaw won the R&A Girls Championship amongst many other events and played in the GB&I Curtis Cup team. In September, Hannah headed to the University of South Carolina to continue her successful golf career. Carys Irvine is an ambassador for the Stephen Gallacher Foundation and a member of Scottish Golf's Young Person Panel.

Many congratulations to all of our members who have contributed to such a successful season, despite the many challenges they have had to deal with through this second year of COVID restrictions. We wish them all, success at home and abroad in 2022.

At the end of September I hosted the captain's golf day. Not as in previous years with captains and guests from other clubs but taking the opportunity to invite Craigiellaw members who had contributed and assisted through my two years as captain, including the Members Liaison Committee, along with Honorary Member Gordon Maclanachan, past captain Duncan Thomson, Carol French who had served the members over many years in the Members Lounge, a number of our top golfers and Dave Warren who looks after all matters junior golf in East Lothian. We played golf in very windy conditions with John Murdoch, the vice-captain and his team winning by a small margin. We enjoyed a sociable dinner afterwards with much golf chat and lots of suggestions for the future of golf at Craigiellaw.

My thanks to Rodney French, Gordon McSorley, David Raistrick, Henry Cockburn, Kathleen Morris, Sylvia McLean, Kay Lannin and Gordon Smith, many of whom played on the day, for all their work organising teams, matches and county leagues.

At the AGM on the 6th November, I will step down as captain. Certainly an interesting two years that could never have been foreseen. You will see from my report that golf is as strong as ever at Craigiellaw but, important to note, that it is only one part of the business. As an MLC we hope that Craigiellaw will always be seen in the first instance as a members' club with the interest of members coming first. In these difficult times though other parts of the business have been severely challenged, especially in all matters relating to the hospitality industry and this does impact on the business as a whole. Staffing has proved a particular and ongoing challenge, the supply industry also and now the increase in the cost of energy will add further to the cost of running the business. Through all of these challenges the Trustees appointed by the Wemyss and March estate have proved supportive and continue to be so. Through Martin Andrews, we thank them for such, allowing us all to fully enjoy our golf membership at Craigiellaw and look forward to the planned refurbishment of much in the clubhouse, including the members' lounge and works in the car park and surrounding areas.

Derek, continues to manage all aspects of the business, through the myriads of all COVID legislation and restrictions. I thank him personally and on behalf of the MLC and all members.

Jonathan is his right hand man, our head professional, guru on all things WHS and importantly the golf course. Jonathan continues to work with HowDidiDo to ensure that it can deliver results on all competitions. So far we've been able to see leaderboards for medals, knockouts and shotguns but more is to come in the future. His team of assistant professionals, Craig and Cameron do a great job in the pro shop and of course with coaching, including the very successful junior programme this year. Steve Thompson handles all other matters in the pro shop, especially the demands of a busy booking sheet. My thanks to all.

The golf course is as good as it has been over these twenty years. Our thanks this last year to Paul Hay and his team and also to Brian and Colin McKendrick, who are still part of that team and to Kieran Moffat (now at Muirfield) who have previously worked at Craigiellaw as head greenkeepers

The hospitality industry has been challenged more than most and it's been a difficult time for Vanessa to take up a new post as clubhouse manager. I wish her and the ever changing staff well and look forward to an enjoyable festive season this year at Craighielaw.

There will be some changes to membership of the MLC. John Murdoch will take over as captain, I will stay as past captain, Gordon Smith will step down from the MLC but will continue as junior convenor, and George McGill will also step down. Chris Lannin, Iain Clark, Duncan Mennie and Rodney French will continue as members. My thanks to them all for their helpful contributions and wise council over these last two years

My thanks also to the many members I have met and talked with on matters of Craighielaw and much more over these two years. It has been a pleasure and honour being your captain. I wish John well in his captaincy and hope that although there will challenges ahead that life and golf will return to some kind of normality.

Evlyn Raistrick

6th November 2021