

1993 – Centenary Year and a New Course

The centenary year celebrations commenced in April with the opening of the new course layout. The purchase of 17 acres of farmland to the south of King Castle Wood, and the addition there of four new holes, had enabled the Club to extend the course by about 400 yards or so, raising the men's par to 70 from the previous 67 (Ladies to 73 from 70).

A grand opening saw Club Captain Tony Cope and Ladies Captain Daphne Pring process by horse-drawn carriage from the Cathedral Green to the Club.

They then held a ceremonial cutting of a ribbon at the gated entrance to the "new land", site of new holes 5 to 8. Also in attendance were Club and SGU President Trevor Holman, the Mayor of Wells Alan Hague, and SGU Vice-President Charlie Carr, among others from the Club.



Throughout the year the various events were well managed by Alan Shore and his committee (see previous chapter), and included the following

- the blossoming of a "100" flowerbed arrangement planted by Mike Cockram on the bank above the double green (12/15) in front of the clubhouse.
- a competition played over the original 9-hole course with players in period dress, as they had been for opening day in April (see photos in Centenary Year folder in the Clubhouse Bar).

- various special competitions and events, including a group of younger members (Bradley Whittaker, Shaun Palmer, Peter and Rob Rossiter) who were sponsored to play 100 holes in a day, raising over £2000 for the nominated CLIC charity.
- a centenary summer dance which, like the other social events which accompanied some of the competitions, were held at the Club thanks to the provision of the marquee erected on the car park (now the site of the current clubhouse).

Altogether over £5000 was raised for CLIC in the year, which had also included a Celebrity Charity Team Event, a competition with Variety Artists Golf Society members, and a competition with other centenarian clubs in the area.

Also during this year Club Professional Andrew England and his assistant John Goymer left to open his own course, and he was replaced by Adrian Bishop. George Davis was elected Captain of Somerset Captains Society, James Slade became Club Champion, and Catherine Nicholson Ladies Champion.

1994 to 1999

1994 – Captains: Mike Cockram (Club), Kathy Kingman (Ladies)

This year brought a further benefit from the excellent work of the centenary committee when “surplus” funds from their earlier fund-raising efforts financed the fitting out of the Centenary Bar in the old clubhouse, in an area that had in the past been variously a pro shop then junior room amongst other uses.

During the year proposals for a driving range and for computerisation of the club accounts were under discussion. A golfing first for Wells, following the course extension the previous year, was the booking of a Somerset county match (versus Wiltshire). Further upgrading of the course continued with the construction of the path from the 1st tee to the 2nd tee and then on to beyond the 3rd tee.

Club Champions for the year: Geoff Fricker and Catherine Nicholson

1995 – Captains: Eric Loxton (Club), Jean Sewell (Ladies)

Early in the year discussions were in hand about a proposal to purchase land to extend the practice field/driving range. This was later agreed for a sum of £18,000. Also, a claim for repayment of VAT over past years was being prepared. This had resulted from a judgement that members' subscriptions to private clubs should have been tax exempt.

During the year there were some alterations to the steward's bungalow and to the clubhouse. There was continued concern over the provisions for "flood relief" arising from the South Horrington development where the old football field adjacent to the practice field was being designated as a "once in 100 years" flood retention area from the estate. This meant any water being retained there would drain away through the low land of the practice field and the 1st/12th fairways to connect to the existing ditch alongside the 13th fairway. It was proposed that a hydrobrake control should be inserted on the piped exit from the flood field to control the outflow through a pipe under the golf course land to the exiting ditch. This would eventually be settled with an easement agreement between the estate developers and the club.

Other developments included some significant tree planting helped by grants from Somerset County Council and Wells Rotary Club and removal of the overhead electricity cables above the 13th and 16th fairways, together with the support contigent poles, carried out by SWEB.

After many years service as assistant secretary Jean Falck retired, and steward Steve Linden resigned, to be replaced by Lyn Linden. Monthly direct debit payments were introduced for the first time. Financial "windfalls" came via the VAT refund of nearly £68,000, augmented by compensation payments from SWEB and British Gas for access to carry out works on course land.

It was decided that the funds received should be retained for enhancement of the club with the board to consider options for both a driving range and clubhouse replacement.

Club champions for the year were: Rob Swift and Catherine Nicholson

1996 – Captains: Eddie Westmorland (Club), Polly Packer (Ladies)

Planning permission for the erection of a driving range with 12 bays with lighting and a storage area was granted, and go-ahead for the work approved at an EGM of the club. Subsequently the detailed plans received building regulations approval and the work went ahead in the autumn at a cost of approximately £40,000. During the year there were problems with the irrigation system being "knocked out" by lightning strikes affecting the electric systems which activated the sprinklers.

Finally, after much chasing by the club, compensation was received from the South Horrington developer for the easement granted for the drainage system.

Club champions for the year were: Rob Coate and Catherine Nicholson

1997 – Captains: Derek Biggs (Club), Eileen Canterbury (Ladies)

Club member and former steward Rob Davis was elected County Captain for the year. This year saw the retirement of long-serving secretary/manager George Ellis who had been with the club for over 7 years. George subsequently served the club as Captain (2001), and later as President for a number of years. His replacement as secretary/manager was Chris Alexander.

The swipe card system for payment of drinks and meals was proposed, and introduced at the start of the following year. The club explored the possibility of providing new greenkeeper's facilities with the possibility of a grant and interest-free loan from the R & A. Also under consideration was further extension to the driving range to reduce the loss of balls brought about by the ability of some members to clear the existing boundary hedge.

Success at county level was achieved when the men's team won the county Rose Bowl, defeating Farrington in the final at Clevedon. Lindsey Elkins won the Somerset and South West Schools Championships. The course suffered one of the wettest winters that could be remembered, resulting in closures and lengthy trolley bans,

Club champions for the year were: Mark Wintersgill and Sue Wells

1998 – Captains: Richard Birch (Club), Audrey Shore (Ladies)

Lin Linden resigned as steward, and subsequently Ray and Pauline French were appointed steward and stewardess (chef). Also Chris Alexander resigned as secretary/manager to be replaced by Steven Butterfield. Clive Keene accepted nomination as President in succession to Trevor Holman. Trevor, who was elected an honorary life member, had been a member for over 30 years during which he captained the club (1982), became Captain of Somerset Captains Society (1982), and President of Wells (1992), following which he became President of SGU in 1993. At the AGM where his honorary membership was conferred, it was believed to be the first time he had been seen to be speechless.

At the previous EGM the decision had been made to go ahead with the swipe card system, with a £30 "loading" at the start of the year for members to purchase refreshments. The proposed new greenkeeper's accommodation was given the go-ahead, and during the year the first moves to a feasibility study for a new clubhouse were started following a letter from a Bristol solicitor acting on behalf of an anonymous client who wanted to make an interest-free loan to the club to build a new clubhouse.

This was also the first year when mention of badger damage on the course is found in the committee minutes, although there had been some incursion on the "new" land in 1994 when a scarecrow by the 6th green was tried to deter the animals.

At county level recognition of the club came with the success of Matthew Parham when he became Somerset County Junior Champion, with Rob Davis, Geoff Fricker and Lindsey Elkins also getting recognition. During this year Lindsey came 1st in the Daily Telegraph Junior Open qualifier at Enmore, playing 5 under her then handicap of 9, a result which took her on to play in the finals at Sea Island, Georgia, a feat she repeated in 1999. Club success came with the Men's team winning promotion in the Bristol & District League as Division 4 champions, and the Ladies team doing the same in the Alliance.

Wells Juniors won the Mid-Somerset Golf League.



Club champions for the year were: Matthew Parham and Catherine Nicholson

1999 – Captains: Dave White (Club), Sue White (Ladies)

This was the second time for Wells to have a husband and wife team holding the captaincies in the same year, although others had held the posts in different years.

A clubhouse development sub-committee was formed to get to grips with the project, some early design proposals were considered, and expenditure was authorised for site survey work and planning application. Committee member Dennis Warren, a

retired surveyor, prepared an outline plan for a clubhouse with sufficient detail to enable an estimate of cost to be produced. This led to ongoing negotiation with the benefactor, through his/her representative, on the terms and extent of the offer, a process which continued through to 2001 before final agreement was signed off.

As an economy of club overheads, the role of full-time secretary/manager was eliminated, leading to the departure of Steven Butterfield, with Christine Searle taking on an extended secretarial role.

Matthew Parham won the SGU Colts and Junior Championship at Bath Golf Club. Lindsey Elkins competed in the English Girls Championship at Chigwell GC, qualifying 10th in the strokeplay before losing out in the matchplay rounds.

Club champions for the year were: Mark Wintersgill and Catherine Nicholson

