

HIGHCLIFFE CASTLE GOLF CLUB

GREENS COMMITTEE



FEBRUARY 2019 Report for Club Members

ALWAYS GREENER ON THE OTHER SIDE?

The Greens Committee wants to encourage members to provide feedback on their experiences playing e.g. reciprocals or Opens at other courses. Naturally, we don't just want the "their greens are better than ours" syndrome as courses often don't compare like with like. But any ideas and suggestions you pick up on your way round would be most welcome ... and will be looked at seriously by your Greens Committee. So, please let the secretary have your constructive comments and we'll make sure you (and all other members via the newsletter) receive a response so that we can all benefit.

GREENKEEPER-CENTRAL

You know what it's like, you go down a route regularly but you don't really notice what's on either side. This was the case for many of us with the 8th fairway. We get a glimpse through the trees of mowers and tractors but we're just not sure what really goes on there. So the Greens Committee decided to take a closer look and, on the 22nd January, we met up with Mike Cartwright in the compound to have a good look round. When you see all the equipment, it's interesting to note that Mike and his team do most of the servicing and maintenance work on the greenkeeping equipment themselves – I can't imagine just how much pressure that takes off the budget! *Greens Committee*

The snow and rain make everything a bit mucky resulting in having to ban trolleys (only) when absolutely necessary to protect the course. We've got ropes and hoops out to guide play around the worst areas and I would like to thank members for bearing with us and respecting these short-term measures to keep damage to a minimum.

The 7th tee is nearing completion and, if course conditions allow, we'll be verti-draining all the fairways again. This necessary work has paid-off in recent years and is a good investment in time for the main golfing season. We also have a couple of minor tree jobs to finish as part of the remaining winter programme.

And looking forward to the summer, we'll be turning-on the irrigation system in early March. Of course, there are always faults (especially in an ageing system) and they all take time to identify and remedy. *Mike Cartwright*

COMMITTEE MEETING 31st JANUARY 2019

These are some of the issues discussed:

- Unsightly gaps in the boundary tree-line will be filled-in during February. Examples are the side of the 14th tee and alongside the first part of the 15th fairway. Suitable broad-leaved, year-round shrubs will be planted to try and mask the views outside the course. As ever, it will take a bit of time for the plants to become established but, with starting work now we will, at least, have the benefit of this year's growing season.
- Some poor-quality trees are smothering better specimens next to them. A fresh start will be made this month to allow the specimen trees to develop unmolested.
- Remember the *fill-up-a-divot-or-two* campaign a few years ago? A fairway was selected; pots of soil/seed were placed near the tee; members were invited to sprinkle the contents into any bare divot hole; and leave the empty pots near the green. It seemed to work well then so we've dusted-off the pots and will be giving the scheme another go.
- Renovation of the 7th tee is progressing well and we look forward to member-feedback in preparation for planning the next phase of tee improvement work in the 2019/20 Winter Programme.
- Feedback on the bunker renovation by Mike Cartwright and the team is very encouraging and, as long as we keep out of them whilst they are GUR, they should look pristine for the spring.
- Members' concern about debris under trees is well shared by the Greens Committee and Mike Cartwright is arranging for a general clear-up of twigs, needles, fir-cones etc. Of course, nature is no respecter of human effort and will replenish the debris ... but we have to keep on top of things.
- The woodland behind the 2nd green is not a pretty sight! Too many discarded bits of waste metal and plastic have accumulated over the years so it's time to start a clear-up. Also need to check the provisions of the Club's waste management policy.

UNDERGROUND PRUNING

As reported in the January newsletter, Mike Cartwright had planned to use the root-pruner on a few fairways and green-surrounds but it proved so efficient that he was able to do round most of the course during the 2 days on-hire!



COURSE MARSHAL CURTIS

So, we've finally secured the services of a real-live course marshal with Nigel Curtis starting his duties in mid-January. Of course, everyone knows Nigel as a stickler for protocol so he's the best possible fit for the job. He has been encouraging us to keep things moving out on the course and to repair pitch-marks. Nigel told our reporter that he's pleased with the response from fellow members so far and that he hopes that the rapport will continue to develop over the coming season for everyone's benefit.