

RICHMOND PARK GOLF CLUB



ANNUAL REPORT - 2006

When we started 2006 it was with the expectation that it would be a year of major change. We knew that after five years of the amalgamation project being on the back burner, the time had come for all the clubs at the Park to finally join forces. We also knew that the consequence of the adoption of the amalgamation plan would see the demise of the Club started in 1924 with J H Taylor as the Club's first President. Sadly, amalgamation did not occur and this is explained later.

With the presumption that amalgamation would be occurring at the end of September 2006 the Committee decided to condense the normal fixture schedule to complete the full programme of events in the nine month period. Some competitions were compromised and the year to September did seem like something of a rush as we attempted to cram all the Club's majors into the shorter period, however we succeeded with the objective and the overall result was most enjoyable for those who participated.

It is fair to say that throughout 2006 the Committee was quite rightly preoccupied with the amalgamation project that failed to complete in September. For the moment the project is dead and buried and with this in mind the Committee has had to take stock of the situation and plan for 2007 and a future without amalgamation. More specifically, we will be reverting back to our normal long form of fixture schedule, we will be increasing efforts to draw new members to the club, we intend to improve our communication links with members, and the Committee can again think of the long-term issues affecting the future development of the Club.

Reverting back to 2006 the year started with a mild winter and very comfortable playing conditions. In fact, the winter conditions were so good that a hosepipe ban was announced in May and then it poured with rain. The daily news seemed to be full of doom and gloom concerning our weather but with only a hint of dry summer fairways we could see that the true weather story was at odds with the political view. Playing conditions through 2006 were generally very favourable and it was good to see some new names at the top of the results pages.

Dinner-Dance and Annual Prize-giving

If the grand plan had been achieved the Club's dinner-dance would have been held last November and it would have been a final wrap-up of the Club's proceedings. By the time that it was apparent that amalgamation would not be proceeding the date options for the Winning Post were limited and we were fortunate to secure a late booking for Saturday 20th January.

Attendance this year was close to 70 which is a substantially less than our normal gathering of between 90 and 100. We were aware that the earlier date would present some problems for a few people and with this in mind we have been discussing the prospect of moving the

2008 date to the first weekend of February. We will obviously give everyone plenty of warning just as soon as a decision is made.

With the smaller numbers for this year's dinner-dance the function room was reduced in size and it made the evening a much more cosy affair; in fact, some preferred it this way and the band appreciated the smaller layout. The trophy table again looked splendid though just slightly reduced in content on account of the absent prize-winners. We saw the return of our usual band – The 60's All Stars – and for those that can remember that far back, the band first made an appearance at our dinner-dance in 1997!

Immediately below you will find a list of our 2006 prize-winners. Congratulations go to all on the list but especially to our Club Champions Dean Morgan, Julie Smith and Tony Archdale (junior). In 2006 Dean returned to play with the Club after a long gap of nearly 15 years and so far as I can judge Dean has scored a first. According to available records Dean is the only person to have been successful to win on separate occasions both the Club Championship and the Junior Club Championship. It is fair to say that he has done this in the right order, whereas I suspect that if his achievement is matched it will be with the Junior as the second of the successes. After the first round Dean was tied with Martin Wright but in the second round he crept ahead winning by a margin of three shots. Julie firmly held onto the Ladies' Club Championship for the third successive year after taking nearly 20 years to get her hands on the trophy. Julie started the second round with a five shot lead over Di Jackett and continued with her winning form to secure another five shot lead giving a win by a total of ten shots. For Tony it was his first sight of the Junior Club Championship. He finished his first round with a three stroke lead and persevered in the second round with another three stroke gain to win by a margin of six shots.

RPGC 2006 PRIZE LIST

EVENT

Senior Men's Club Championship

Ladies' Club Championship

Junior Men's Club Championship

Men's Club Championship Handicap Trophy

Handicap Cup - handicaps 0-24

Pembroke Cup - handicaps 25-36

J H Taylor – matchplay 0-16

Two Courses Cup – matchplay 17+

Ladies' Challenge Cup

Men's Fourball – matchplay

Mixed Foursomes – matchplay

Ladies' Committee Cup

Grand Medal Trophy

Silver Jubilee Trophy

Golden Jubilee Trophy

Diamond Jubilee Trophy

Platinum Jubilee Trophy

Anniversary Cup

President's Putter – overall

WINNER

Dean Morgan

Julie Smith

Tony Archdale

Martin Wright

Diane Jackett

Jini Beacham

Jason Loubser

Martin Goldsworthy

Maureen Slade

Kerry Sargent

Graeme Syme

Julie Smith

Ian Smith

Tracy Wright

Jason Loubser

Sheen Harrington

Nick Rogers

Leroy Johnson

Ros Gray

Richard Kenwood

Cheryl Woodhouse

RUNNER-UP

Martin Wright

Diane Jackett

David Marsh

Maureen Slade

Joan Mulcahy

Martin Wright

Julian Ratnage

Lena Kenny

Peter Cunningham

Tony Pickard

Kate Marsh

David Marsh

Jini Beacham

Richard Owen

Richard Kenwood

Kerry Sargeant

Dean Morgan

President's Putter - ladies	Cheryl Woodhouse	Jini Beacham
President's Putter - men	Tony Archdale	Paul Grand
Captain's Prize	Vic Wadley	Dean Morgan
Lady Captain's Prize	Sheena Harrington	Julie Smith
Richmond Park Golf Club Open	T Watts (Putney Park)	Doreen Dolby
J Q Robertson Trophy	Toby Hunt	Dean Morgan
Coronation Cup	Dave Winter	Bill McSorley
Shaw Cup	Robert Urquhart	Kerry Sargeant
Spring Mixed Foursomes	Norma Lynch	Aileen McKenzie
	Jon Cooper	Jason Loubser
Autumn Mixed Foursomes - Handicap	Doreen Dolby	Jini Beacham
	Stan Potts	Gurpal Sekhon
Autumn Mixed Foursomes - Scratch	Tracy Wright	
	Kerry Sargeant	
Burgess Cup - Greensomes	David Marsh	Nick Heale
	Ian Smith	Stuart Nash
Summer Cup	Robert Urquhart	Dean Morgan
Top Dog Trophy	Dean Morgan	
Dowling Cup	Sheena Harrington	
Lissaman Cup - 3 clubs + putter	David Marsh	Tim Meyer
Barton Bowl - Play-off – top 8 against captain	Maureen Slade	
Charity Cup	Phil Flanagan	Richard Owen
Winter Competition	Richard Owen	Peter Harrington

Membership

As reported in previous years it is always a struggle to attract and retain new members to the Club when the facilities at the Park remain poor and the playing conditions are below par. Through 2006 it is fair to say that for the men we 'held our station' whereas for the ladies the good news is that membership has increased.

Every year the Club encounters a fall off of membership because the personal circumstances of some members mean that they are unable or perhaps unwilling to play with the Club, therefore it is vitally important for the Club to attract new members to keep the numbers healthy. It is also vitally important to ensure that our new members feel welcome and that they are encouraged to participate with our regular playing pattern. As a Club we have perhaps not given sufficient attention to the continuity of play of new members and this is an area worthy of attention for 2007.

The analysis below shows the profile of our membership over the last five years.

	<u>2006/07</u>	<u>2005/06</u>	<u>2004/05</u>	<u>2003/04</u>	<u>2002/03</u>
Men:					
Regular	69	69	73	78	67
Senior	8	6	7	7	6
Junior	0	0	0	1	1
Honorary (playing)	1	3	1	1	1
Total Men	<u>78</u>	<u>78</u>	<u>81</u>	<u>87</u>	<u>75</u>
Ladies:					
Regular	34	33	32	29	30
Senior	5	2	4	3	3
Junior	0	0	0	0	0
Honorary (playing)	1	1	0	0	0
Total Ladies	<u>40</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>33</u>
Total Membership	<u>118</u>	<u>114</u>	<u>117</u>	<u>119</u>	<u>108</u>
Joiners:					
New men	15	13	19	22	13
New ladies	5	4	4	1	7
Rejoiners – men	4	2	0	1	5
Rejoiners – ladies	1	0	1	0	1
Total	<u>25</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>26</u>

It will not escape the eagle eye of some to detect a small progressive increase in the proportion of our lady members to total members. In the world of taxation this is known as fiscal drag! The membership trend has been running since the 1980's when it was forecast that the ladies would eventually overtake the men in number of members, but we have a few years yet before this is the case.

For 2007 the Committee will continue to encourage new members to join the Club. As we all know, this can be a time-consuming process as prospective members complete the three week handicap qualification process, and with the different standards of play and rules to be explained there will be occasions when course hold ups do occur. We would ask for everyone's patience on such occasions because prospective members do tend to be slower on average as compared to our seasoned golfers.

In the 1980's the Club used to field 20 games each week in the summer season. It would be very encouraging to return to this level of member participation, not least because it provides a larger pool of possible entrants for matches etc. To achieve this scale of activity we would need a net membership addition of at least 50 – a tall order but not impossible.

Inter-Club Matches

With the difficult conditions at the Park and the lack of social facilities it is good to see that we are able to retain a few friendly matches which are always played in a good spirit are an important part of the full spectrum of club golf. In future it would be good to see new friendly matches being introduced to the Club. For 2006 the Club had two wins out of the two matches that were played as follows:

Men vs Rickmansworth:

In 2006 there was a welcome change of fortune. With the first leg played on home territory we jumped into a lead of 4 – 2, but the big question was whether this would be enough

against Ricky on home territory. Although Ricky pulled the match back to all square at one point our Club did succeed in at the final hurdle and we finished with a 7 – 5 overall win.

Ladies vs Mitcham:

In forty-fifth year of the annual Rich-Mitch fixture our home team came under pressure and the day ended with a 2 – 2 draw. For the second round at Mitcham the Richmond ladies had the edge and the overall result was a win for Richmond by 5 – 3, and this gave Richmond their third win in succession.

Richmond Ladies vs White Lodge Ladies:

Partly as a consequence of the discussions concerning the amalgamation of the clubs and also a difficulty with fixture congestion, this competition was not played in 2006, however we hope to see it resurrected in 2007.

Association Keys Trophy (Strokeplay) and the Association Salver (Stableford):

These trophies were not played for in 2006 as a consequence of the prospective amalgamation of the association clubs.

N.A.P.G.C. Competitions

Clapham Common Shield (men) [Greensomes Stableford]

In 2006 there was a sigh of relief to see that we were not in a group containing the Basildon team. This at least meant that we had a chance of making progress and we did indeed do comparatively well. In the first round we were victors over Iver by 11 points and in the second round we were victors over Thorney Park by 19 points. In the third round we were up against Hurst. Just before this match started the Hurst captain explained that his team was really surprised to have made so much progress in the competition because his club so very rarely made it beyond the first round. We could of course share this view, and the match promised to be very even. The final result was a win for Richmond by 18 points. The fourth round was a completely different matter and it was where the team came unstuck. Our opponents were Hoebridge with its long challenging golf course and they finished as winners by 11 points. Hoebridge went on to achieve second place in the overall competition and collect the Ellis Cup.

Hawtree Trophy (mixed)

The Club's team came unstuck in the first round against Abbey Hill located up by Milton Keynes. The score was a 3 – 2 win to Abbey Hill but two of the games were decided on the 18th green and with just a bit of fortune could have gone our way. The Abbey Hill team progressed to the area final where they finished one round from being in the national final

White Webbs (ladies)

In 2006 the Club again entered two teams. The 'A' team found themselves at home this year for another first round match against Portsmouth, and sadly, for the second year running Portsmouth were the victors with a 3 – 2 win. Our 'B' team didn't fare any better and were beaten at home 3 – 2 Tilgate Forest.

Internal Matches and Competitions

The Bontor

The Ladies were successful in 2006 with a win of 7½ to 6½.

Ladies' Invitation

Di Jackett selected an excellent partner in Kerry Sargeant to scoop the first place ahead of Sheena Harrington and new Club member Leroy Johnson.

Men's Invitation

As a result of fixture congestion the men's invitation had to be postponed and could not be rescheduled. The men's invitation will return to the fixture schedule in 2007.

The Lockie Trophy

Sometimes called the lucky Lockie trophy it has many uses! The trophy is awarded annually to the winner of the Saturday and Sunday events at the Ladies' Spring Weekend Away. In 2006 the venue was the New Forest where the courses and the hotel were very pleasant, but the weather was thoroughly foul from beginning to end. The winner – after 21 years of seeing other ladies pick up the trophy – was Anne Koychev. As for the trophy, it was last seen being used as a doorstop.

Individual Achievements

- In the Open competitions played at the Park in 2006 we had a comparatively poor year by our standards, however there were some extraneous circumstances:
 - In the Ruskie Hall Open Robert Urquhart was the unofficial winner, however the scorecards disappeared and the competition had to be declared null and void. Ruskie Hall opted not to reschedule the event
 - In the Putney Park Open the Putney Park Committee invoked a post-match rule which had the effect of removing all the Richmond Park entrants from their Open.
 - In the Centurion Open, Sheena Harrington (a previous winner) was the runner-up.
 - In our own Richmond Park Open, Doreen Dolby was the runner-up.
 - In the Association Trophy, the winner was Tracy Wright and second place was taken by Di Jackett.
 - In the Trevor Allen Open we did not achieve a placing.
- There were no hole in one successes in 2006.
- In the Bournemouth Open week there were three excellent results:
 - Toby Hunt finished in 9th place (out of a total entry of 106 players) in the men's 72-hole medal event.
 - Paul Grand and Ros Lake finished 5th (out of a total entry of 80 pairs) in the mixed foursomes event.
 - Toby Hunt and Paul Grand finished 11th (out of a total entry of 74 pairs) in the men's greensome event.

Major Changes for 2007

(a) New Management Contract.

The saga of the new long-term management contract for the Park has progressed over the last 10 years rather like a never-ending soap story. Twelve months ago we were able to advise that the plan was to issue the new contract with a commencement date of 1st October 2006. Various delays occurred with regard to the tender process with the result that 2006 was definitely the year of uncertainty.

The precise position of the parties in the award of the contract is not known, but it is believed that the following is the current state of play. After reviewing the tender submissions the Government's procurement department selected Glendale as the favoured contractor for the management of the course for the next 15 years. The lawyers for the respective parties stepped in and they were mid-way through negotiations when the October deadline passed. The Royal Parks Agency is prohibited under European law from announcing the award of the new management contract until the contract is signed and it is understood that discussions were still in progress at the end of 2006. Irrespective of the bureaucratic activity behind the scenes, it is a virtual certainty that Glendale has retained the contract for the long-term management of the courses at the Park.

(b) Amalgamation.

The pursuit of the amalgamation of the golf clubs was the most time consuming and frustrating activity for the Committee in 2006. The fact that we have an AGM in January 2007 is testament of the failure of the clubs to reach agreement in 2006.

There is no merit in running through the details of the amalgamation saga. In summary, RPGC was the only Association club that was prepared to follow the agreed amalgamation plan of February 2000 and the other clubs are not prepared to entertain the notion of a single club operation. A number of meetings were held on the subject, including a period of five consecutive meetings in five weeks, but as the deadline of October 2006 approached it became clear to all that a consensus could not be achieved.

The failure to reach agreement with the other clubs was hugely disappointing on two fronts: firstly, a considerable amount of time and effort had been expended on the subject in 2006 and the previous six years to no avail, and secondly, the creation of a new club would have opened up new opportunities for all the Association members to play in additional club competitions, county matches and new national events.

With amalgamation ruled out, the question remains – what is in store for the future? To answer this we need to refer back to 1996 and the Jenkins Report that set the scene for the new arrangements at the Park. The Report recognised that the facility at the Park and the service to the public would be best served by having one main golf club rather than a number of very small independent clubs. Since the issue of the Report the Royal Parks Agency has consistently maintained the policy that the Association clubs should amalgamate to form the basis of the single club operation at the Park. The Agency is aware that the clubs have failed to reach agreement for amalgamation and this has come as a huge disappointment. We have been advised that on golf matters the Agency has been fully absorbed with the negotiations for the long term management contract therefore a decision concerning the amalgamation issue has not been determined. Unofficially, the Agency has admitted that if the other Association clubs reject amalgamation outright there seems little to be gained with an enforced amalgamation. The net result is that the amalgamation subject is not yet

completely dead, but RPGC has explored all possible avenues to support the Agency's requirements without success, therefore the Committee has no option but to work on the basis that it will be business as usual for 2007.

(c) Course Developments.

We are all aware that the new management contract places an obligation for the build of a new driving range, a six hole par 3 academy course, and of course a clubhouse. Although initial plans have been drafted these have not yet been shown to us.

As a matter of general policy Glendale has been asked to consult with the Association prior to major course alterations proceeding and we will encourage this liaison through 2007

Everyone is keen to know when the course and development work is likely to take place and we have no information on this subject. The Committee will be very surprised if we are not still using the portacabin in its present location for another two years at least.

Extra Curricular Activities

2006 was a busy year on the golf admin front but it did not stop us enjoying a few extras on the way.

In between his driving duties, treasurer duties, dinner-dance duties, and occasional bookings duties, Dave Williams devotes what little is left of his spare time to organising the Club's away days. There were two successful and enjoyable away days in 2006; the first was to Clandon Regis in May, and the second was held at Hoebridge in September. Unlike 2005, in 2006 we were fortunate that it was dry weather for both events. At Clandon Regis the overall winner was a guest, Robert Katz and at Hoebridge the overall winner was Martin Wright.

It has already been mentioned that the ladies spring weekend away was held in deluge conditions in the New Forest. For the men, Paul Grand performed best in the rain to take the men's prize by quite a large margin. In the autumn the venue for the weekend away was Tewksbury. By contrast, the weather was dry and the playing conditions were very good. Following from her success in the spring Anne Koychev went on to clinch the autumn prize by one point from Lia Donath. Ian Smith played strategically to win the men's competition on the best back 18 from Phil Flanagan.

In 2006 the Ruffians Ryder Cup team of 8 men and 2 ladies made their way to Ludlow to do battle with the Ludlow Ruffians who were captained by Dan, their club professional. In 2005 the Richmond team regained the trophy in convincing style and high hopes were set on beating Ludlow on their own turf, however Ludlow clearly had other ideas on the matter. With the pairs event on the Friday the Ludlow Ruffians sneaked into a very commanding lead of 4½ points to ½. On the Saturday the Ludlow team kept up the pressure and the overall result for the two days was 11½ to 3½ to Ludlow. After Richmond won by 12 – 3 in 2005 we knew that the Ludlow team would be out for the revenge and they did indeed play well on their home course. On the Friday the Richmond team members and many of the Ludlow team enjoyed an excellent meal at Ludlow castle. The arrangements for 2006 were master-minded by our team captain Richard Owen and Michael Hinks-Edwards for Ludlow and it was evident to all that a lot work was performed behind the scenes to make the match a most enjoyable event.

www.RichmondParkGolfClub.Org.Uk - The RPGC Website

As I have said before, we are exceptionally lucky to have Tim Meyer in our 'team' as it is through Tim's efforts that we have a website of note that receives high praise from many quarters. The website was launched in 2002 and by scrolling from year to year it is possible to read about what the Club has been up to on a weekly basis through the last four years. Those of us that are in touch with Tim know that there are not many days when he is not either updating or maintaining the website in some way, or at least parking information for a later insertion. Tim uses his own firm's servers and his firm's facilities to support the website and it is clear that without Tim's support the Club would struggle to find both the financial wherewithal to keep the website at the same level of detail, and secondly we would definitely struggle to find the necessary technological talent to support the website.

The website's hit rate still exceeds 400,000 per annum. Many of these are what I would call 'technical' hits rather than member or general public enquiries, but the fact that the website features prominently on searches means that Tim's linkages are working exceedingly well. It is common knowledge that the website has been a good advertisement for the Club and it has helped attract new members; long may this continue.

Tim is constantly appealing for information and anecdotes to assist the record of Club's news therefore please do not think that the site is the preserve of a few on the Committee because snippets of news etc from all members are very welcome.

The Committee and helpers

Last year I said that 2005 was something of a breeze in terms of administration and organisation but sadly this was not the case in 2006. As mentioned, the Committee was very heavily involved in the aborted amalgamation topic and for nine months of the year the Committee's mindset concentrated on the possible transition to the new arrangements. Email traffic between the Committee members has been huge in terms of numbers and content, and I am sure that everyone is looking forward to a return to some sort of normality in 2007. Despite the activity behind the scenes it was important to keep the Club on the straight and narrow and in this I believe that we were successful. This of course was largely the result of a number of helpers and everyone should be immensely grateful for the helping hands and the teamwork that keeps the show on the road. I will mention a few whose work has kept the Club ticking over:

- The first mention is for the 2006 Captains, Jon Cooper and Cheryl Woodhouse who have exercised control over the two sections of the Club. Both Captains were supported with regard raising team members and other matters by their Vices, Richard Owen and Sheena Harrington.
- Dave Williams has notched up another year as the Club's treasurer. We may have lost track of the year that Dave took over as Treasurer, but I am sure that Dave's wife Lou hasn't forgotten! In addition to churning out the monthly reports for the Committee, it has also been described that Dave single-handedly looks after the away days, and he is instrumental in drumming up support for the dinner-dance.
- As I have said before, the person working the hardest behind the scenes is Paul Grand. On the website, Paul keeps track of the booking sheet data and the competition format sheets. Furthermore, he administers the competition results and produces the weekly reports for the website, and last but not least, he maintains the men's handicap records.

Absent Friends

It is always sad when we hear that one of our golfing colleagues has passed away and it was especially so when we heard the news that Dave Lawrance had died at age 60. Dave was a loyal Club member and could be seen on the course in all weathers. As a player he would often be exceptionally wild and on occasions he could muster some miraculous recoveries, however he always persevered through thick and thin (rough) and typically with a cheerful manner. Sadly, Dave succumbed to a genetic medical problem and in typical style he very quietly retired from golf as his illness took hold. As I commented earlier in the year, Dave certainly brought a lot of pleasure to us as a member of the Club, and I like to think that for the 8 years that he was with us we also gave him a lot pleasure.

The Final Word

I hope you all have a most enjoyable golfing year in 2007 with a few success stories on the way.

Peter Harrington
Secretary
31st January 2007