



# Melton Mowbray Golf Club



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## Greens News – Reflection on 2017 and Outlook for 2018

Dear all,

Unfortunately I will not be able to attend the AGM on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March so I thought I would re-start my news letters and reflect on my first year as greens director and look toward the 2018 season ahead.

I have been a member for just over 30 years and up until last year I'd paid my subs, hacked it around on a Saturday, had a quick drink in the bar and headed off home. I'd either had a good day, a bad day or somewhere in between. I had never really considered what was involved in running the club and maintaining the course.

After a few beers with Phil Curtis during Jack's captains weekend at the end of 2016 Phil persuaded me to stand for Greens Director and I thought "why not, time to give something back".

I have been on a very steep learning curve, this is a complex business and keeping everyone happy all of the time is impossible. However, I do believe we have kept most of the people happy most of the time during 2017! What has really impressed me is the commitment of Paul and his staff and that of the regular dozen or so artisans that willingly give up their time to cut grass, trim trees, flymo ditches..... There are a number of others who regularly turn out to lend a hand when there is a project to complete e.g. a bridge to build or a bunker to fill with sand. Without all of them we would not have the course looking and playing as well as it does.

Here are is a reminder of the key things that happened in 2017:

- Spring maintenance of the greens, recovery was slow due to the weather but we got the benefit during the summer.
- Preparing and filling in the new front nine bunkers with sand and bringing them back into play.
- Getting the 6<sup>th</sup> green back in play after drainage work and a long spell on a winter green (it has worked!)
- Matt Hatton re-joined the greens staff in April.
- The use of the new green iron to produce smooth faster greens during the summer months
- Many fairways and some areas of semi rough were sprayed to kill off the weeds and clover.
- The general presentation of the course through the summer but in particular the excellent playing conditions for all major competitions. There were many positive comments from members, visitors and society organisers.
- We had a very positive assessment of the course by Golf England and the SSS went up by one stroke across the board reflecting the true difficulty of the course.
- We have an excellent safety record and following an audit from a specialist company we have focused more effort on this key topic to do everything practical we can to maintain that record.
- We have rebuilt some of the ditch crossing points.
- We completed the ground work to conclude the 3 year bunker development project and built the ground up to the left of the 17<sup>th</sup> tee to hide the area used to burn tree cuttings etc.
- The car park was tidied up and the driving range had some mounds added.
- The Autumn greens maintenance caused some stress because it did disrupt play for a few weeks, however because the work was done early the greens did recover well and hopefully you will agree that the greens have been in decent condition all through this winter.
- During the last few months Paul and his team have been working hard to service all of the equipment ready to start cutting grass in the next few weeks.

Now looking forward to 2018 we have some key priorities and challenges:

- Prepare and fill the bunkers on the back nine. We can only do this when the ground is dry enough to get the tractor and trailer near the greens without causing damage. We aim to get this done as early in April as possible but we are reliant on the weather.
- Greens spring maintenance. After a fairly aggressive maintenance last Autumn Paul is aiming to use a narrower but deeper tine and then iron the greens. The objectives are to maximise the amount of aeration while minimising the impact to the putting surface.
- Money is tight, as I am sure you will hear from Phil at the AGM, so we will need to prioritise our expenditure.
  - For me the number 1 priority by a long way is to maintain the greens in as good a condition as we can, we must not compromise on this.
  - The second priority is to keep the course well presented, so we will continue with the grass cutting regime as per last year and pay particular attention to the general tidiness of the course.
  - We need to replace some of the worn out bridges with new crossing points.
  - We have a number of projects we would like to progress; new tees / tee refurbishment, drainage in the worse areas on the course, clear the ninth ditch, repair / replace paths, remove some trees..... We need to make sure we have the money in place over and above our maintenance budget to deliver this type of project work and we need to prioritise those activities that have the biggest impact to improve the course and its marketability. Assuming we have the money in place we will plan the work to be done at the end of the summer when we can get heavy machinery on the course without causing too much damage and while the ground and air temperatures are right for turfing or seeding to aid a rapid recovery.
- Fund raising. Paul has some creative ideas for a greens competition called “green keepers revenge” and also a lottery with the prize of a free subscription in 2019, more to come on these ideas later in the year.
- Some challenges:
  - **The weather.** Sadly we have no control over this but as we all know it has a huge impact on the course and the club, last year we were fairly lucky but this year we have been off to a very poor start with heavy rain and latterly the freezing conditions and snow. Hopefully things pick up in the next few weeks, the ground dries out and the grass starts to grow!
  - **Pesticides and Fungicides.** In order to keep golf courses in good condition green keepers have come to rely on the application of chemicals to control pests (worms, grubs, leatherjackets) and disease (fusarium), the issue is that many of the chemicals have recently been banned, so we may see some adverse conditions from time to time. On the greens Paul is still able to apply certain preventive chemicals that aim to minimise the risk of fusarium occurring, the other key weapon in the armoury is regular AERATION. It is essential that we solid tine and hollow tine the greens to keep them in top condition, we plan to use smaller diameter tines more frequently to aid aeration but minimise the negative impact on the greens surface.

As I mentioned at the beginning I was one of the many members who just play the course each week and take for granted that others are doing the work to keep the course maintained and the club running smoothly. I have learnt that there is no magic here just a number of people making contributions big and small. If you have some spare time on a regular basis and you feel you'd like to get involved and put something back into the club but you are just not sure what is needed or what you are able to do then please speak with me or Paul. No one is asked to do more than they can manage and every hour spent out on the course does make a difference.



Tim Mortimer, Greens Director

13<sup>th</sup> March 2018