



(ONE HUNDRED &amp; TEN)

FLOWERS FROM THE LADIES FOR THE GENTLEMENS' LOUNGE

**For the club, the late 1990s were dominated by alterations to the course and the purchase of additional land. In the autumn of 1997 the golf course architects David Thomas Ltd were invited to redesign the 12th hole in conjunction with the latest programme of tree planting. They were also asked to quote for a redesign of the 11th hole with a change of tee position and to undertake additional drainage work. The Oxfordshire family firm of Hawtree were also invited to submit a competitive quotation for this work. Additionally, it was decided to extend the irrigation system to cover all teeing areas. Following receipt of Hawtree's report on remodelling the 11th hole, they were then asked to prepare detailed plans, costings and perspective drawings for redesigning the 6th, 7th and 8th holes and to drain the practice ground.**

Once again, the subject of the possible acquisition of land beyond the present club boundaries was in the air. Having lived for a great many years in the shadow of the threat of the Hazel Grove by-pass in all its many manifestations, the wisdom of providing an insurance against any unforeseen land loss in the future or, indeed, a barrier against undesirable development on neighbouring land was obvious. A Sub-Committee was formed to investigate the possible purchase of the land owned by Broad Oak Farm adjacent to the 2nd, 3rd and 4th holes. It was valued at £105,000, but that was felt to be beyond the club's means at the time. Subsequently a letter was received reducing the asking price to £90,000, but the club considered that this was still too expensive.

Given Stockport's long record of hosting important tournaments, it should have come as no surprise that the Royal & Ancient deemed the Open Championship Regional Qualifying held at Torkington in 1998 a success. Nonetheless it was gratifying to all concerned to know that this would continue for a further five years, and the staff were congratulated on their preparation of the course the Steward for the quality of catering and members for the various duties undertaken. The Royal & Ancient also confirmed that the course alteration work being contemplated at that time would be eligible for a grant and/or loan limited to 50% of the total cost, with a maximum of £100,000, made up of 20% grant, 80%

loan. Such a loan was to be interest free and would be repayable over 10 years. In the light of this, Hawtree's report was discussed and the decision was taken to modernise and reposition the bunkers on a hole-by-hole basis. The recommended professional contractors would be used and the bunkers would not be reconstructed using club staff. With the cost of work to the practice ground and bunkers estimated to be £50,000, it was thought that this could be met by an application to the Royal & Ancient for grants and interest-free loans. Long-term commitment by the club would be needed, but it was thought that captains over the next few years should be able to support the project without too much concern for the financial aspects. While the Royal & Ancient agreed to a grant of £20,000 to be used specifically for the practice ground, an application for a loan for the proposed bunkering work was turned down. This news was received just before Christmas 1998. In January 1999 the contractor, P Rhodes, was awarded the contract for improving the practice ground. Meanwhile a visit was arranged to Grange Park in St Helen's, as a result of which it was felt that a piecemeal approach to the bunkering work was not appropriate, and that the task should be carried out in one operation.

At last it had become possible to purchase 15 acres of farmland alongside the 2nd tee and 3rd fairway and a 1-acre strip alongside the 4th. The price was initially thought to be £80,000, although it eventually turned out to be £85,000. In March 1999, in conjunction with a



TEE MARKERS

topographical survey, Hawtree produced three suggestions to develop the course using this new land recently obtained. It was then decided to postpone work on the 11th hole for 12 months and focus on the bunkers. Hawtree's estimate for rebunkering was £150-175,000 plus VAT. Palmers, who had been the contractors at Grange Park, were expected to come in at a lower price. They had also been responsible for the excellent lifting and relaying to USGA specifications of all eighteen greens at The Alwoodley Golf Club between 1996 and 1998, work carried out so efficiently that the task was completed in two seasons rather than the expected three. At Stockport, however, the weather was unfavourable and it was so poor during the spring and summer of 1999 that no progress at all could be made on the practice ground. In

(ONE HUNDRED &amp; ELEVEN)

NEW LIGHTS ON THE ROUNDABOUT



August an STRI report indicated that problem greens (4th, 7th, 8th and 9th) were due to cold clay, the fact that they were soaking wet and they could not be rectified by surface treatment. Their condition could only be resolved by digging up these greens and starting all over again. This was not implemented – alternative verti-draining and tining and removal of trees resolved the problems, a decision taken by Committee.

But the course was not the only drain on finance. In September 1999 it was reported that refurbishment of the front of the clubhouse was running over budget. At the same time, work to improve the ladies' locker room was out to tender at a projected budget of around £50,000. By the autumn of 1999 the cost of the bunker project had risen to an estimated £152,000. The recommended contractor for this work, Kestrel Ltd, had recently completed similar work (although this was first-time construction, not reconstruction) on the Jack Nicklaus course at Carden Park, the prestigious development in the west of the county, between Nantwich and Wrexham. With the work due to begin in the near future – it was arranged to take photographs of the course prior to rebunkering. The course development would, of course, have a cost implication for the professional. Not only was his income down because of a recent fall in the number of visiting parties, but he had some 1,500 course planners in stock which would be impossible to sell once the work had been carried out.

Within the club, the Committee felt that members were broadly supportive of and positive towards the course development, (although reservations had been expressed) so it was felt that the loan scheme could be re-opened in October 1999. But ongoing changes were always going to affect the detail of that development. For instance, the Hawtree company threw a spanner (albeit of a minor kind) in the works when they advised that they would withdraw their endorsement if the club proceeded in making a new tee in the field while playing to the original green at the 11th hole. Robert Laycock had now become adviser to the Greens Committee and his report highlighted the current drainage problems on the course. The existing drains were inadequate,



IN 1999, 6 LADY MEMBERS PLAYED 126 HOLES ACROSS THE COURSE STARTING AT 4AM. THEY RAISED £5,000 FOR THE CHRISTIES CANCER CHARITY

(ONE HUNDRED &amp; TWELVE)

notwithstanding the miles of piping laid by Barrie when constructing the course.

By March 2000 work was progressing on rebunkering, drainage, and returfing, but in April course refurbishment was again being delayed by the weather. Perceptively, one Committee member highlighted certain areas which suggested that the new drains may not be working satisfactorily. It was initially decided that remedial work on the course would be carried out jointly by Kestrel and club staff. However, by June, it was felt that it was now the club's responsibility, not Kestrel's, to complete remedial work on washed – out drains. The frequent and heavy rains were considered to be responsible for undoing Kestrel's work.

A month earlier, in May 2000, the Royal & Ancient offered an interest, free loan of £20,000, repayable over 5 years, specifically for work on the 11th hole with the proviso that no money would be released until work actually started. So it was decided to let the field by the 11th be used again for agriculture. At the same time it was agreed that all future course alterations or development would be allotted to Hawtree. A new 11th hole was, despite all, still under discussion, now at a projected cost of £35,000. Notwithstanding the drainage problems of the new bunkers, there was another issue concerning them. In July 2000 some of the professionals attending Regional Qualifying for the Open Championship made adverse comments regarding the positioning of some bunkers. Their remarks gave cause for thought, and it is fair to say that the bunkering of certain holes (the 14th and 17th, for instance) continues to provoke debate to this day. No less contentious is the stroke index. Most members would probably say that, for them, the 8th is the hardest hole against par. In December 2000 the issue was discussed.

While there was much support for rating the 8th as the first stroke hole, advice from the Cheshire Union was that a par 3 was perhaps not ideal as stroke 1. So the 4th hole became stroke 1, the 3rd stroke 7, and the 8th stroke 5.

It was not only the Royal & Ancient which complimented the club on its preparation of the course. Members of visiting societies and players

competing in important competitions at Torkington frequently comment on the excellent condition of the course. Despite the various drainage problems recorded above, it is true to say that there are few fairways or greens in Cheshire so beautifully presented as Stockport's. Credit for this must be given to the succession of professional course managers, each building on his predecessor's work. Warren Bevan took office as Course Manager in January 2001, but he found that the machinery was in poor condition. He wanted to hand cut the greens, giving them a faster and truer putting surface, but to do that he needed new mowing machines, and he suggested that a turf nursery was urgently needed. Consequently the Committee found itself agreeing to spend approximately £95,000 plus VAT on the purchase and lease of new green-keeping equipment. The turf nursery was to be located alongside the ladies' 1st tee, and it was not to be used as a chipping area. A loan of £95,000 plus VAT was agreed with Lombard Finance for the purchase of greens equipment. The total repayment was likely to work out at £130,000 over a five year period for this lease purchase agreement, and this was fully repaid during the centenary year.

In detailing the redevelopment of the course during the late 1990s and early years of the 21st Century, other matters have been neglected, the social side of club life, for instance. Prominent in minds as the 1990s closed was the impending Millennium. In October 1997 a Sub-Committee was formed to plan the celebrations for this. Unfortunately, the club's computer equipment was found not to be 2000 compliant and new equipment had to be bought.

Smoking had once been a prominent element of that social life and, indeed, smoking concerts (unimaginable today) were commonly held. Old photographs of members in the clubhouse or on the course frequently reveal the former extent of the habit. Just as in the workplace and public buildings, smoking has gradually been banned so, too, in January 1998 it was banned in the clubroom.

For some time the issue of swipe cards to members had been debated. They had already been introduced at a number of clubs and provided benefits in several ways. Their use enabled members to pay for drinks and/or food at a discount and they increased security around the clubhouse, the locker

rooms in particular. However, such a swipe card system was estimated to cost £8,300, which was deemed too expensive. Accordingly, in May 1998, the proposal to introduce swipe cards was cancelled in favour of new electronic security pads.

Increasingly the club has had to be managed in a professional way. That is particularly true of how its staff – its employees – are managed. During a review of the professional's work in October 1998 it was proposed that the club should have two assistant professionals, one senior and one trainee, and that they should be allocated minimum playing and practice times and be given work and play schedules. Managerial terms and techniques used in commerce and industry had by now become commonplace in golf clubs up and down the country. The need to have good managerial relations with staff was clearly recognised, that the club was a partnership and the fostering of team spirit was essential. Staff objectives should be set and appraisals carried out in a professional manner. To achieve this it was necessary to devise precise job descriptions and establish effective line management, by making it clear to whom each member of staff was responsible. It was noted that following regular meetings with greens staff, for instance, morale was noticeably higher. Appropriate training was required. Health and safety responsibilities were paramount and had to be accurately defined. It was necessary to address seriously issues of equal rights as Tony Blair's Government intended to present a White Paper to Parliament shortly. The increased professionalism of club management is evident in the minutes of Committee meetings with much attention given to the forecasting and setting of budgets, for instance, and the presentation of monthly financial reports. The disproportionate size of many individual maintenance projects meant

that surpluses and losses were more volatile than in the past. Trends had to be recognised and tracked quickly. Monthly stocktaking revealed that profits in 1999 were considerably down: only £4,967 in 1999 as opposed to £8,427 in 1998. They contributed to a projected overspend of £8,000 for the year. It was inevitable that the ladies' locker room project was postponed yet again.

At the 1998 Annual General Meeting, held in September, a discussion took place about individual membership fees. This



DOOR KEY PAD

(ONE HUNDRED &amp; THIRTEEN)

was about a perceived difficulty younger members were thought to have in finding full fees. Senior members in receipt of concessions felt they were unable to support younger members struggling with these. In response, younger members pointed out that it was not the cost of



**July 2001**  
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**GOLF FOR STAFF WAS DISCUSSED. IT WAS AGREED THAT THEY COULD HAVE COURTESY OF THE COURSE ONCE EVERY TWO WEEKS BY ARRANGEMENT WITH THE PROFESSIONAL.**

membership which was a problem so much as having the time to make full use of it. This has become a recurring issue at many golf clubs throughout the land. Nevertheless, the club decided

that it would try to encourage more members in the 26-40 age group. The following spring the question of junior membership was, once again, addressed. A proposal was made to increase the number of junior memberships, the bye laws allowing that they need not be children of members. Soon after, it was reported that the new junior club room was now functional.

A new and potentially valuable source of additional income surfaced early in 2000 when there was an approach from a company on behalf of Vodafone, who wished to erect a tall, slim mast and small cabin in ground adjacent to the green staff buildings. It was likely to produce an annual rent of £3,000 for ten years. The Committee agreed to this initial approach and awaited Vodafone's survey with interest. In September negotiations concerning the mast revealed that it would now produce an annual rent of £4,250 plus VAT. This was valuable, as income from visiting parties was less than in previous years, although it was generally up in other areas. It was agreed to increase membership by 25 full gentlemen. Thought was also given to the possible introduction of trustees. A suggestion was made that the last six years' past captains might form a Committee of Trustees to oversee the club's finances. It was also agreed to instigate a Business Finance Plan. A comparison was made of income and expenditure for the previous five years. The key issue was that income in all areas was vital to the future of the club. While a loan of £350,000 under favourable conditions from the Co-operative Bank was available, the requirements and expenditure of the five-year plan would



**April 2001**  
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**A REMINDER OF THE MOST RECENT OUTBREAK OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE: NOTICES WERE ERECTED ADVISING MEMBERS, GUESTS AND VISITORS TO STAY OUT OF THE FIELDS NEXT TO THE 2ND, 3RD, 4TH, 5TH AND 11TH HOLES.**

need careful scrutiny to ensure that repayments could be maintained. Despite the recent work to improve course drainage, there was still a problem, as much original drainage was now blocked. A trenching machine at a cost of £10,000 would have to be built into the following year's budget. Eagle eyes were necessary to scrutinise all financial statements. Although the financial position was regarded as under control in 2001, it was spotted that £10,000 had been incorrectly taken from the club's account by Yorkshire Electricity Board by direct debit! With a deficit of £14,500 predicted for the year and the overdraft standing at its limit of £175,000, such vigilance could not be neglected.

While the running of Stockport Golf Club has always been in the hands of a Committee with the club captain in the chair, it is now akin to running a small company. In its deliberations about management and accountability it was felt that some form of scrutiny of the Committee's work and actions would be a wise precaution. What was settled on was what might best be compared to the House of Lords, a second chamber

which moderates the work of the government. The Strategic Planning and Advisory Council was this body. It was important that its role and powers were precisely defined and during 2001 draft documents were produced for discussion and amendment before legal checking, with a view to their incorporating into the Articles, hopefully at the Annual General Meeting in September.

On the course work continued, both to improve the condition of the greens and also to prepare for another Regional Qualifying competition for the Open Championship. A visit by Mr Laycock confirmed that the

treatment being given to the greens was the correct approach to accomplish full recovery. Micro tining on a monthly basis was essential to combat thatch. The Royal & Ancient also sent a representative to check on the condition of the course for the Open Qualifying. He was happy with the greens, but he had reservations about the condition of the course in the landing areas and rough. As it happens, course preparation was perfect and following the qualifying competition, the Green Committee was once again complimented on the condition of the course for the event.

As mentioned above, a deficit of £14,500 for the coming year was

predicted in June 2001. With the club's overdraft standing at its limit of £175,000 it seemed prudent to sign a facility letter with the Co-operative Bank but not to draw on it until the level of income was sufficiently secure to make repayments. In July it was calculated that the deficit for the current year was £11,021. If planning permission for the Vodafone mast was granted, income from it would make a substantial contribution to offsetting the deficit. That permission was granted in July 2001. At a meeting between the club's solicitor and Vodafone it was agreed that no material alteration to the mast could be made without the club's consent; there would be a 60:40 share in favour of Stockport Golf Club for any additional income arising from the sharing of the mast; and five years' rental would be received by the club as a one-off payment. For the record it should be added that an amendment was made to part of this deal, with distribution of extra income altered to 30:70 in favour of Vodafone.

With the 2001 Annual General Meeting due, it was proposed that the Strategic Planning and Advisory Council should be a Committee of five, with a majority of three to two, and that SPAC would not have greater powers than the General Committee. It was also proposed that Ordinary Committee members could be re-elected on an annual basis for up to five years. The proposal was approved unanimously. Following the AGM, in outlining his objectives for the year, the incoming Captain, Peter McCulloch, highlighted the club's desire to continue the excellent progress made in course conditioning and to implement report and control systems, ensuring that the 5-year plan was dealt with positively by SPAC. Year by year the club has moved from reactive management to proactive management.

Given the success of the Open Championship Regional Qualifying competitions at Stockport, it was decided to approach the Royal & Ancient Championship Committee to seek further prestigious tournaments to replace them when they came to an end. The Royal & Ancient responded positively, confirming that consideration would be given to Stockport when allocating future events. Important tournaments raise the club's profile, attracting a greater number of visiting parties, which contribute substantially to the club's income and are particularly valuable in maintaining the catering service. A



**2002**  
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**THE PGA OFFERED THE CLUB A CENTENARY OAK, IN RECOGNITION OF TG RENOUF'S PRESIDENCY IN THE 1920S**

suggestion was therefore made to form a Promotion Sub-Committee with a particular focus on corporate packages. It was at this time, too, that the idea of a club website was raised.

Unfortunately, winter in Cheshire these days seems wetter and duller than ever. Golf courses are becoming increasingly busy all year round. A balance has to be struck between making the course available to members who pay substantial annual fees and would like to play golf twelve months of the year and the damage done to the course by heavy winter traffic. As with all golf clubs, Stockport has had to consider its policy. What should the winter course be? The feeling over the winter of 2001/2 was that the club did not want to go back to the old system of playing holes 1 to 10, then 15 and 14, 11 to 13 and, finally 16 to 18.

However, it was recognised that course conditions should determine whether 14 or 15 holes would be played in winter. It would be the course manager who should have the final decision on whether or not the course should be closed. Almost every winter programme of course repairs has involved drainage, and that was certainly true of the 2001/2 programme. £8,500 plus VAT was set aside for drainage on 'The Hollows' across the 1st. It was recognised that the condition of the course was critical to ensure future

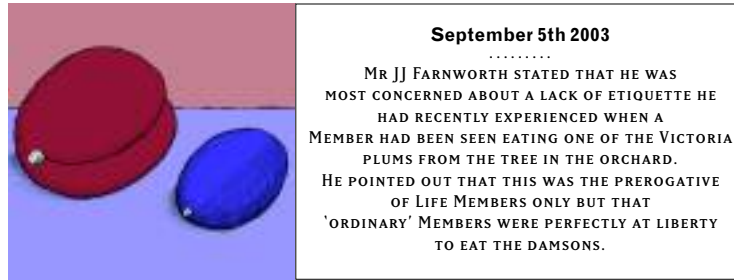
bookings from visiting parties, and areas where cross bunkers had been removed on the 6th and 8th holes were cited as cases in point. No detail was left unattended.

Although the Hazel Grove by-pass had apparently disappeared from the agenda, there was relief in November 2001 when it was officially announced that the by-pass plan had been 'downsized' and was therefore unlikely to affect the club. So after all the years of threat and concern for many Committees the by-pass problem took, at last, a less significant focus in club affairs: but, defending its position had cost the club a considerable sum of money which could have been better applied elsewhere.

But the club is not complacent. Plans can change. Stockport Golf Club has long recognised the value of trying to acquire land beyond its boundaries. In December 2001 it was learned that Mr Jeff Sutton of

**Sept 2001**  
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**SKY TELEVISION HAD BEEN REINSTALLED IN 1997 BUT THE SUBSCRIPTION HAD RISEN BY £40 A MONTH TO £202 AND IT WAS DECIDED TO TERMINATE THE AGREEMENT YET AGAIN.**

Yew Tree Farm was likely to emigrate to Australia. It was thought that he might be prepared to consider an offer from the club for the sunken field beyond the practice area adjacent to the 12th tee. When Yew Tree Farm came onto the market it was at a price of over £500,000. The club was serious about purchasing some of this in order to ensure its security, the



**September 5th 2003**

MR JJ FARNWORTH STATED THAT HE WAS MOST CONCERNED ABOUT A LACK OF ETIQUETTE HE HAD RECENTLY EXPERIENCED WHEN A MEMBER HAD BEEN SEEN EATING ONE OF THE VICTORIA PLUMS FROM THE TREE IN THE ORCHARD. HE POINTED OUT THAT THIS WAS THE PREROGATIVE OF LIFE MEMBERS ONLY BUT THAT 'ORDINARY' MEMBERS WERE PERFECTLY AT LIBERTY TO EAT THE DAMSONS.

lower field at the end of the practice ground being considered particularly valuable. At this point, consideration was also given to establishing a driving range beyond the 1st green. Individual land parcels were not immediately decided, but sealed bids would be expected in May 2002. The club was certainly keen to purchase the field beyond the practice area which, ideally, would be brought up to the level of the practice range to add an extra 6 acres for a relatively flat practice area. With planning permission for landfill also on the lower field area, the club could expect to make a £50,000 profit by allowing the areas to be used for landfill after paying £50,000 for the lower field and £10,000 for the area below the practice field. All this, as it happens, came to nothing as it was later decided to re-market the whole of Yew Tree Farm.

In September 2002 a new offer was made for the farm from an external source. However, it was learned that the club would be able to purchase the fields it wanted for £75,000, subject to Stockport MBC giving an outline planning approval. The initial reaction of Stockport MBC was negative, but the agent suggested that all arguments put forward against planning permission could be countered successfully. So the club was required to confirm its intention to purchase by October 18th. By November the land purchase was now in the hands of the solicitor. A 30m by 10m plot behind the 12th tee was not now to be sold. The club would, however, have a 999 year agreement for access into the barley field, with an option to buy this plot in 40 years' time. But problems persisted over the purchase of plot 4 and the strip of land adjacent to the

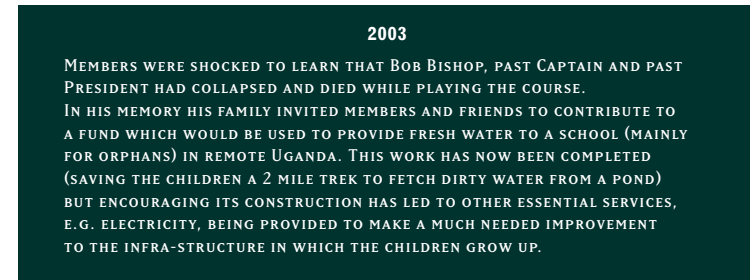


THE CENTENARY FLAG

(ONE HUNDRED & SIXTEEN)

12th tee. In fact the sale of Yew Tree Farm remained uncertain and consideration was now given to the club's making an offer to purchase the whole farm. During the course of these deliberations the proposed by-pass reappeared on the agenda, with the club being required to inform Stockport MBC of its exact land holdings. Eventually, in May 2003, Yew Tree Farm was now to be sold en bloc to Glen Jakes Riding School. Once again the club was required to approach a new purchaser with a view to acquiring the desired fields.

By now the business of running the club had become enormously complicated. While exciting new land deals were in the air, day to day management had to focus on issues as diverse as mobile phone masts and ageism. Each concern had to be addressed responsibly. It was, therefore, agreed that the club, as far as application for membership



**2003**

MEMBERS WERE SHOCKED TO LEARN THAT BOB BISHOP, PAST CAPTAIN AND PAST PRESIDENT HAD COLLAPSED AND DIED WHILE PLAYING THE COURSE. IN HIS MEMORY HIS FAMILY INVITED MEMBERS AND FRIENDS TO CONTRIBUTE TO A FUND WHICH WOULD BE USED TO PROVIDE FRESH WATER TO A SCHOOL (MAINLY FOR ORPHANS) IN REMOTE UGANDA. THIS WORK HAS NOW BEEN COMPLETED (SAVING THE CHILDREN A 2 MILE TREK TO FETCH DIRTY WATER FROM A POND) BUT ENCOURAGING ITS CONSTRUCTION HAS LED TO OTHER ESSENTIAL SERVICES, E.G. ELECTRICITY, BEING PROVIDED TO MAKE A MUCH NEEDED IMPROVEMENT TO THE INFRA-STRUCTURE IN WHICH THE CHILDREN GROW UP.

was concerned, would not hold a candidate's age against him or her. Meanwhile an application was received from the Access Group for the erection of a wooden pole mast and small cabin on land adjacent to the 1st hole by the lay-by. It was agreed that a rapid agreement would be sought by the club if they would agree to £5,000 per annum rent plus an additional £500 for quick conclusion and a cheque for £1,000 towards the solicitor's fees. Unfortunately, planning permission for this was not given immediately and the matter went to appeal. The Vodafone mast, however, was finally erected in February 2003 after much debate over the routing of the power supply. Then in September 2003 interest was resurrected in the Hutchinson 3G mast by the lay-by. In November it was reported that Poplar trees in the area of this lay-by were dead or dying. It was thought that the cost to fell them would be of the order of £3,500. Thoughts turned to ways of incorporating these costs in any deal with Hutchinson. In July 2004, Orange and Hutchinson 3G both approached the club again about erecting masts on the course, and by October heads of

agreement had been signed with both telephone mast operators.

On the course, the bunkers were still of some concern. It had become clear that many were neither well drained nor perfectly sited. An approach to Hawtrees was made. The company's representative visited the club in the summer of 2002, taking on board the points made about the redesign and construction faults with the bunkers. Martin Hawtree, the head of the company, also visited, the following summer. By the early months of 2004 reconstruction of the bunkers had again become an issue of concern related to the materials used, the location of drains and outfalls, and the workmanship of the construction company. The cost of remedial work at the 6th and 7th holes alone was thought to be £8,000 and further costs would be incurred if all the remaining bunkers were to be improved. This has not been a happy story. Indeed, each winter programme includes remedial work on the bunkers and it will be necessary for a number of years yet, with the need to sort out the drainage, reshape and resize the bunkers and replace the sand being the main elements. Bunker maintenance will, of course, always be a permanent item in the course maintenance plan. In general, however, the course was getting better and better, year by year. When the Royal & Ancient and STRI visited the course in June 2002 both noted a considerable improvement in its condition, and following a similar visit prior to the 2003 Open Qualifying, both parties expressed their satisfaction with the state of the course.

It was suggested that the 6th hole might be redesigned by removing the middle bunker on the approach to the green and the introduction of grass mounds where the original bunkers were, half way along the fairway. With the club currently hosting Open Championship Qualifying these amendments had to be run past the Royal & Ancient. Agreement was given to this, the bunker was removed, but grass mounds have not been constructed. Major projects to be considered beyond the course itself included renovation of the car park, improvements to the greens store and provision of a proper wash-down area. In July the Course Manager produced his annual written report. It illustrated the depth of thinking going into the entire greens operation, the success of which could be judged not only by the



QUAICH  
PRESENTED BY R&A IN 2003 AFTER  
OPEN QUALIFYING EVENTS SUCCESS

(ONE HUNDRED & SEVENTEEN)

comments of the Royal & Ancient and STRI but also, most importantly, by the appreciative remarks made by members and visitors. The work completed produced visible results. Visitors have remained a key element in club finances. Following the considerable success of the Winter Warmers special packages, consideration turned to Spring and Autumn packages of tea and coffee on arrival, 18 holes of golf, followed by a meal.

Throughout its existence the club has had to deal with financial problems, which it has done successfully by not being afraid to take unpleasant decisions. Pressure on the budget rose once again to prominence in the summer of 2003. It was caused by not having a full quota of 370 male members and no waiting list. A proposal to increase male membership to 375 was thought to be impracticable. Budgeting would have to be done on an assumption of 350 or 360 members. The Committee wished to refurbish the car park, and had succeeded in

persuading SPAC of the need to do so. But in the light of the current financial situation, it looked simply too expensive. Ways of reducing the cost had to be found. A Sub-Committee to look at cost cutting in general around the club was set up. A new telephone system had been ordered, with savings on 4 line rentals per quarter and all internal calls would now be free. Even so, in January 2004 estimated budgets suggested that expenditure would increase at 7.35% per year, yet income at only 0.7%. The club would run out of money by 2008! Budgets had to be revisited.

It was realised that considerable sums would be required for refurbishment of the male and female showers, new lockers, attention to fire escapes, new kitchen equipment and flooring, and the provision of a disabled lavatory on the ground floor. Additional expense was also being incurred in maintaining club security. In order to ensure a Level One

response from the police, a confirmed alarm system had to be installed for both house and greens, at a cost of £1,760 and £1,224 respectively, plus VAT, of course. On a positive note, in March 2004 the club website was now up and running with a web address of [www.stockportgolf.co.uk](http://www.stockportgolf.co.uk)

The guest speaker at the Annual Dinner in January

THE RYDER CUP IN THE  
SAFE HANDS OF SOME OF THE  
'YOUNGER' MEMBERS



2004 was Sandy Jones Chief Executive of the PGA European Tour. Members were delighted when he produced The Ryder Cup won the previous autumn at the Belfry was passed round the tables to allow Stockport members once again to renew their association with the Trophy.

With Prestbury Golf Club taking over hosting of Open Championship Regional Qualifying in 2003 when Stockport's allocation finished, the suggestion was made to invite the organisers from Prestbury as guests, to view Stockport's management of the event. Wilmslow had previously offered this courtesy to Stockport and it had proved most useful. At the lesser level of club competitions, marshals had been used during Saturday competitions in the spring of 2003, to speed up pace of play. It proved to be a successful measure. The Course Manager, Warren Bevan, made a visit to San Diego to study greenkeeping techniques in a very different climate and with greatly differing demands. On his return he presented a seminar at the club for other BIGGA course managers in the area and any members who wished to attend, sharing his findings and experiences. It must have seemed a world away, for on February 29th 2004 Stockport's greens had to be closed because of hard frost. The Greens Chairman rang 17 local clubs and only 3, Tytherington, Mottram Hall and Hazel Grove were playing their greens. Theirs were built to USGA specifications. The STRI, however, advises not playing greens in frost.

In May 2004 Warren Bevan announced that he was to leave the club to join Lancaster GC. He was succeeded by Mike Goodhind, who joined the club from Tytherington. Those who marvelled at the magnificent condition of the course in Centenary Year will know that the course remains in good hands.

While nothing has yet happened to the 11th hole, it has long been a target for alteration. As we have in 2004 the Royal and Ancient offered an interest-free loan of £20,000 repayable over 5 years if the club wished to rebuild or remodel this hole. The original offer was open for one year only. For the moment the hole remains unaltered, but the loan offer has been renewed.

A matter of concern for the future of the club, as it is for many golf clubs, is the age profile of its membership. In May 2004 during a general

discussion on the subject, it was revealed that only 37 members out of over 500 were in the 16 to 35 age bracket. Could it be that joining fees and annual subscriptions were too high for this age group? A proposal was made that male, and female, in the 16-21 age group should pay a £100 subscription and £100 joining fee; 22-30 males £400 and £400, females £200 and £200; 31-35 males £910 and £910, females £500 and £500; 36 and over males £910 and £1750, females £500 and £850. This was implemented in 2005 and has attracted many new Junior members

Costs continued to rise. By July 2004 the estimate for resurfacing the car park had risen to £48,750, while the estimate for external painting of the clubhouse was £7,350 plus VAT. In January 2005 revenue was again in deficit, thought to be because green fees and bar sales had fallen. Both seemed to be very much dependent on the weather. Permission was given for the purchase of new tills which enabled greater efficiency to be achieved in the catering and bar services and also were able to give members discount on their cards. However, cash tipping of staff immediately dropped when the system became operational on March 1st 2005. Soon after, it was decided that an automatic bar levy of £50 would be added to each male member's subscription at the time of renewal and the tipping problem was also resolved.

Yet again slow play on the course was a problem. Again, the solution was thought to be the provision of a starter on all competition days and also marshals for major competitions. The Greens Committee was advised to purchase a good quality klaxon so that players might be brought off the course in inclement or dangerous weather conditions. A proper wash-off area, identified long ago as an important need, and a means of storing and transporting petrol were urgently required. Security of the greens sheds and their expensive contents remained an issue.

At last, in March 2005, agreement was reached to refurbish the shower area at an estimated cost of £45,000. However there was still a lack of water pressure. Although it had been reported to United Utilities it was still not rectified. Indeed, it remains a problem to this day. Once again, in June 2005, the Committee stressed the need to tighten belts. Happily, it was able to compliment the green staff on presenting the

course in such good condition despite budget and staff restraints. Confirmation of the excellence of their work came in July 2005 when the club was awarded accreditation under the English Golf Environmental Certification Scheme. The Course Manager, Mike Goodhind, and his team were congratulated for the part they played in getting this acknowledgement.

George Orme and his co-founders would undoubtedly recognise and approved of Stockport Golf Club at 100 years of age. Its golf course remains largely that constructed so ably by Peter Barrie. The founders would be delighted with its condition. True, the clubhouse has grown in size and drink-driving laws have probably moderated the intake of alcohol somewhat, but the standard of food and drink served would clearly meet their expectations. They would appreciate the enthusiastic

support given by members to club events, competitive and social, and the very particular friendly atmosphere that is a hallmark of the club. Financial pressures and the need for restraint are nothing new. Orme and each of his successors have had to battle with them throughout the club's history. But Orme and his friends were not founding a social club, they were founding a golf club, and from those earliest days the club has seen high standard play from its gifted members and from those professionals who have graced the links. Perhaps their greatest delight would have been that Stockport was chosen as a host course for regional qualifying for the Open Championship. Orme is probably even now looking down from on high, commenting, *'You know, I think we got it just about right.'*



THE CLUBHOUSE IN 2006