

Course Feature

One of a Kind

Sunningdale Ladies' Golf Club is considered the second oldest ladies' club in England. It's unique in that the Captain and Ladies' Committee are responsible for the running of the club. The Committee also appoint the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary, and members are expected to assist in the routine tasks of the day to day running of the club. Melissa Toombs spoke to Head Greenkeeper, Peter Tedder to explore further why Sunningdale Ladies' is one of a kind.



Left to right – Head Greenkeeper Peter Tedder and Assistants Phil Bovington and Dave Barnes

"The ladies used to play on the main Sunningdale course but neither them or the men liked it very much so it was decided a nine hole golf course should be designed, just for the ladies, to keep them out of each others' hair," explained Head Greenkeeper, Peter Tedder.

Over 104 years old, founder Mr Edward Ernest Villiers – a member of Sunningdale GC, started the ladies' club in 1902 – he is thought to have been approached by Mr T A Roberts to form the club, ensuring the ladies would have a course independent of Sunningdale.

"The course was originally a nine hole and went to an 18 hole in the mid 30s," continued Peter, who heads the greenstaff of three.

In 1972 the course underwent a reconfiguration due to the lady members having to move out of their clubhouse and build a new one.



The Queen Mother was Patron of Sunningdale Ladies

The club, which allows men to join, has 60 artisan members, 40 associates, around 40 juniors and 260 ladies. Wednesday is Associates day at Sunningdale Ladies' just as Tuesday is ladies day at traditional golf clubs.

The club also boasts Royal connections as HM Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother was originally Patron of the club. After her sad death her grandson, Prince Andrew (The Duke of York, Earl of Inverness and Baron Killyleagh) took on the role.

20-10-02

Dear Stanley

I have been asked by the Secty of the S'dale Golf Club, if I would act as Hon. Sec. in organising a committee of Ladies residing in this neighbourhood to start a Ladies Golf Club in connection with the S'dale Club. The following have agreed to serve

Hon Mrs Erskine

Lady Barclay

Lady Dyer

Mrs Edward Villiers

I wonder if you would ask Lady Alice if she would consent to join this committee. I would have written to her myself, but as I have not the honour of her acquaintance I thought I had better write to you. The subs of the club is to be £1-1 a year with no other liability. This will include the use of the new ladies links just laid out the use of the Club house and the Dormy House for luncheon or tea if required. As it is most necessary to have an influential committee to start the Club. I hope Lady Alice will consent to let her name appear with the others I have mentioned.

The Dormy House Club will manage all finance and the committee is really only to elect members and to make suggestions for the convenience of members. I understand that Lady Alice and yourself are shortly starting for India but I hope that will not prevent Lady Alice joining the committee at once, as her advice will be most useful to the Club when she returns.

Please forgive me for troubling you with this letter

Yours sincerely

Edward E Villiers

This letter was written to Lord Stanley at the suggestion of Mr Harry Colt, the Secretary of Sunningdale GC

Despite its location, the club is a poor relation to Sunningdale GC. The lushous, expensive houses that you pass on your way to Sunningdale Ladies' and the name Sunningdale itself, would imply wealth and security at the club, however, on the other side of the fence money doesn't flow quite so easily.

"We are the poor relation without a doubt but we are completely separate golf clubs, we are nothing to do with Sunningdale whatsoever, we are an individual golf club but everyone thinks, because of the area and the name, that we are up there side by side with Sunningdale GC. I mean, because we are pretty much on the same soil structure as them, we can achieve at times of the year the same qualities in certain areas, for instance the greens, but the big problem is that everyone sees us as one," explained Peter.

Phil Bovington and Dave Barnes assist HG Peter with the upkeep of the beautiful heathland course, and it's hard work at times. The club doesn't have an irrigation system. The greenkeepers use hosepipes and sprinklers from taps located around the golf course, which run off the mains.

"It takes about six hours to water the greens properly and about the same time to water the tees. They all have to be done in stages and there's

a certain routine we have to go through to water them, you can't just go out and put all 18 greens on at once because we have meters around the course – so we are looking at three moves just to get the greens watered and similar for the tees," continued Peter, who is regularly out on the course at midnight in the summer months ensuring his greens receive a little water.

SUNNINGDALE LADIES' GOLF CLUB **S.S.S. 60** Handicap

HEALTH AND SAFETY (SEE OVER) Strokes Received.....

Name Competition.....

Marker's Score	Hole	Yards	Par	Stroke Index	Player's Score	Won+Lost-Halved 0	Marker's Score	Hole	Yards	Par	Stroke Index	Player's Score	Won+Lost-Halved 0
	1	194	3	7			10	157	3	14			
	2	172	3	9			11	236	3	6			
	3	167	3	17			12	236	4	12			
	4	321	4	3			13	256	4	2			
	5	154	3	11			14	155	3	8			
	6	212	3	5			15	133	3	18			
	7	235	4	13			16	285	4	4			
	8	273	4	1			17	139	3	16			
	9	142	3	15			18	149	3	10			
	OUT	1870	30				IN	1746	30				
							OUT	1870	30				
							TOTAL	3616	60				

Marker's Signature

Player's Signature

Date

GS165

HANDICAP

NET SCORE

As soon as Peter took up his post at the club, he pushed for an irrigation system but unfortunately there just wasn't the means to purchase one. "The Committee changed, the Captain changed, so we tried again a couple of years later but there was still no money in the pot, so at this moment in time we can't really see it ever happening but who knows, we'll keep trying. There are a lot of people to go through – not only the Greens Committee but also the Finance Committee and Main Committee."

The greenstaff do most of their watering from 5/6 pm until 10.30/11 pm – sometimes 12.

The Club approached the National Lottery Fund for a grant and unfortunately got turned down, "I think they thought we were having a laugh," said Peter. "They saw the name and immediately assumed we were a wealthy club."

The course hasn't undergone any dramatic changes during Peter's 19 years at Sunningdale Ladies,

"We've changed many bunker banks, lots of pathways and a few tee extensions but basically the course is pretty much how it was designed all those years ago. We haven't really made too many changes, we've just altered a few banks here and there," said a dedicated Peter.

"We have tried for many changes, some of them have happened. The club has come quite a long way though in the last 20 years and I think before that the club had stood still for a long, long time."

Peter's dad was actually Head Greenkeeper at Sunningdale Ladies for nine years prior to him taking on the position.

"There's only ever been three full time greenkeeping staff here. One of the changes we were after and have been after for many years actually happened about two years ago, and we were able to get a fourth man. Unfortunately just over a year after that we had one greenkeeper leave and move on, and we were back down to three. We then needed a new piece of equipment so the fourth greenkeeper never got re-employed."



The smaller building to the left used to be the clubhouse before the club underwent its reconfiguration



Course Feature



The greenstaff have named their fourth member of staff - the Procore – Bob

From time to time we have had people come and help over the summer – part time summer help, but not for the whole summer, a few weeks between their university studies and things.”

It's unfortunate that Sunningdale Ladies' seems to have acquired a reputation for being a rich, problem-free club, that's well kitted out - The greenkeepers have a piece of equipment for every job they do but their kit is quite old - and therefore they are unable to get the help they really need. I wondered if HG Peter found himself envious of the copious amounts of kit Sunningdale GC have.

“Without a doubt we do and it would certainly make our lives a lot easier if we had some of that. We do feel that they've got what they've got and we've got what we've got and at the end of the day, unfortunately, that's how it is – there's no malice at all between the two but it would be nice to have that little bit more. We do feel that we're chasing around everyday and there's no time for rest. Certain jobs have to be done at the club and they're done, but with the levels of staff that we've got it's very difficult to get it done,” explained Peter.

Last summer proved to be hard a season for Peter and his team - although they were lucky enough not to have restrictions put on their water usage during the drought.

“It was a slightly harder year for us because of the weather but it was a god send that we still had water so we could still carry on and use it the same as we ever did – I mean we don't use colossal amounts of water anyway, because



Two air raid shelters lie under this beautiful heathland course.

we are only on the mains,” said a grateful Peter.

“This winter we're doing a lot of repairs around bunkers, a tee extension on the 10th tee – doubling the size, the tee at the moment is only about 80 square metres and we've looking at having around 160-180 there by the time we've finished the extension. We have also got an 180sqm tee that needs re-levelling as it's at a downward angle to the hole because it used to be played in the opposite direction. We'll do these jobs in house – we are going to get some help on the second tee by some of the Associates because it is a slightly larger area.”

The club were faced with more problems early last year, when someone broke into the maintenance sheds and stole a lot of the equipment.

“Everything now has to be locked up and alarmed every time we leave – even if we go to the back of the property and we're doing something in the back garage, then we've still got to lock up and alarm the front just in case someone decides to come up the drive and walk away with all of our handheld tools, as they did before.”

Peter worries that the club doesn't always spend the money it should be spending on equipment and jokes, “Women definitely come from the domestic point of view, viewing that a couple of hundred pounds is a lot of money but of course to a golf club, a couple of hundred pounds is nothing to spend!”

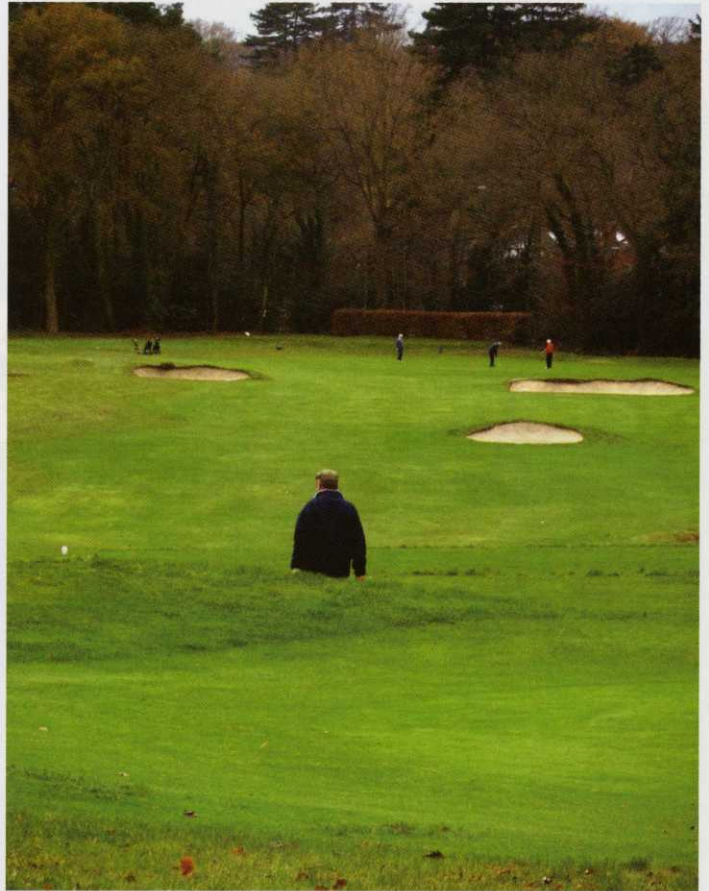
“The club itself is a very bubbly place and societies come here year in year out, as they love the course so much,” smiled Peter.



Despite the problems the club has had and obstacles Peter has been up against, he obviously enjoys his job,

"If I didn't enjoy it then I wouldn't keep coming back for more, of course there's been times when I've questioned if it's really worth it but when things dry out and summer is on its way and the course is looking good – that's what keeps me here."

Memberships are available for Ladies', Associates and Juniors. Please ring the Club Secretary, Robin Mitchell on: 01344 620507 for details.



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