

Gone but not forgotten

The Second Annual Eric and Avril Friendship Cup took place on Thursday 4th June 2009 at Rothbury Golf Club, Rothbury Northumberland.

At the end of last year's inaugural event, one of the players came up to us on the veranda at the golf club where we were having a post competition "Vino Collapso" and a group sigh of relief, and said "These must have been two very special people for you to have done this for them."

To us they were, still are and always will be. So in memory of Eric, Avril, and sadly two more of our members, Jack James and Terry Appleby who we lost in the last twelve months, here we were back again at Rothbury Golf Club trying to raise some money for Cancer Research UK and MacMillan Nurses.

Although not with us on the day, that honorary "Geordie" Ken Laidler, of Merseyside Branch, deserves more than a passing mention for all his help and financial support.

The easy part was getting the players', we were supported yet again with most of the competitors from last year, and at least a dozen new faces so the starting line up had fifty players.

It was a truly international affair with players from Cincinnati USA, Melbourne Australia, Dublin Ireland and Hartlepool!

Shaun Turnbull from Datastor had provided £100 sponsorship and that together with £25 from Chris Green, our local butcher, made life so much easier.

Prizes came in from the famous House of Hardy fishing tackle manufacturers, Cromwell Tools, Fox Road, No 3 Region, No34 Region USA, NE Tyres, our own members and a personal cash donation from Ken McDowell USA Region 34.



Team Wilkinson receiving the Datastor Team Cup

There were two no shows on the day from Team Northumbria. One due to a "Minor" leg injury that Jon Griffiths sustained when some hairy Italian felled him with a sliding tackle that resulted in a certain lack of skin and flesh from knee to ankle. On close examination astro turf could be seen in amongst the "Grungy" bits. I blame that fellow Steve Connor (His photo will be in this magazine somewhere) as it was he who sent out our gallant lads to play in Italy. So in future Steve, keep your hands off our members!

Ian Athey was suffering from jet lag, having just returned from somewhere exotic the night before. Everyone was relieved when during the course of the day he recovered enough to find the bar.

Both Jon and Ian kindly refused to have their cheques returned. Judi Pyle AKA the tombolla Queen had set up her stall at the entrance to the bar, and lured any unsuspecting passer by, daft enough to go near her, into buying tickets. The drayman must have had a heck of a job explaining to his wife why he had a No 7 make up set in his cab. Mike Chambers, Keith Laidler and Shauna Taylor had their Box Brownies out to record the event.



Mrs Jelly keeps her eye on the ball



Andrew Toes winner of the Friendship Cup 2009 in action on the first tee



Sheila Jelly, winner of the ladies competition, with her "Minders."

MacMillan Nurses Newcastle had provided us with banners, stickers, badges and a couple of hundred balloons. Last year we had branch members staggering about seeing double and struggling for breath after blowing them up. Just to prove that it is not only Baldrick that can have a cunning plan we put balloons in everyone welcome pack and asked them to blow them up themselves and tie them to the outside balcony.

It has to be said that there seemed to be more competitiveness in the golf, resulting in several sorties back to the balcony to untie and reinflate some of the more feeble efforts. Our branches could be picked out as they all seemed to be full of bacon buttie crumbs', it just goes to show that we can multi task.

With our intrepid spotter, Frank MacAlroy standing in the middle of the blind first fairway (probably the safest place on the course) the first group, full of coffee and bacon rolls, teed off on time. The threatened rain did not appear and by the end of the afternoon the sun that had been ordered for a little earlier turned up.

In the true spirit of Northumbria, our depleted team did not try too hard to win. At least that's what the score card suggested.

Back at the club house everyone enjoyed one of Chris, the chef's, famous Sunday lunches, followed by belt slackening puddings, before the presentations took place.

Anne-Marie Wilkinson handed out the prizes, helped by some overweight bloke in a yellow jumper!

On a more poignant note, one of the players, Ian Stewart with whom I now work asked to speak. Ian told us of his experience over the last three years with MacMillan Nurses and of the help and strength they gave to him and his family. Ian's son, Morgan, was diagnosed with leukaemia back in 2005, and his wife with cancer a few weeks later.

Morgan is coming to the end of his treatment and will be fine. His beautiful wife, Julia died in April 2009.

For anyone interested the winner Andrew Toes came in with 43 points as did second place, on count back, Steven Brady. BOTH, playing off 24! (The handicap committee is already out for next year guys.) The first lady was Sheila Jelly, and the team cup was won by Eric's son-in-law's band of bandits, Team Wilkinson.

Lastly with everyone's help we made a staggering £1,875 to donate to the two charities. Many thanks to Mike Chambers for taking the photographs.

Keith Laidler