WAGS AGM meeting 3rd October 2024

New Malden Golf Club

Committee: Mike Wells (MW), Richard Trinick (RT), Bob Hill (RH), John Stembridge (JS), Richard Latham (RL), Gerry McGuffie (GM), Tom Fawcett (TF)

Apologies: Pete Middleton, George Dunsire, Martin Sumpton, Nigel Field

Attendees: Mike Gardner, Pete Mitchener, Pete Berring, Fred Berring (Captain), Mark Adams, Dave Middleton, Anthony Shutes, Vip Patel, Steve Shaw, Chris Bunning, Rhod James, Rob Faulkner

Following an elongated shower for Bob Hill our esteemed Chairman MW got the AGM underway at 6pm despite hoping for an earlier start!

Before the Chairman's speech, MW made the main award of the evening: The Chairman's Cup! This was first won by Richard Latham a few years ago. This is a trophy for good deeds done for the Society thus MW once again awarded it to Richard Latham for his sterling and tireless work in operating the fixtures for WAGS. Well done Richardo and congratulations with a big thank you from all the membership. That's two trophies for you this season (so far!), the other being The Big Swing which was awarded to you at the Richmond event after a fine effort at Pine Ridge in Autumn 2023.

<u>Chairman's Report</u>

The Chairman MW presented his Chairman's statement as follows:

"This is my first year of my Chairmanship and I hope that you have all enjoyed my Missives to the Membership.

These aren't intended to be dictatorial and my aim is to keep Members advised of current events and of my intention to ensure that Member's accounts are kept in the black.

The Society is in excellent shape after 32 years since its inception. Membership is at capacity although we have recently increased the insurance cap from 50 to 75 so that there is scope for new Members in the future. We have had a couple of new Members this year but their attendance at events has been poor. Perhaps their sponsors can encourage them to attend more. There is a WAGS rule requiring a minimum of 3 number of events to be played each season.

Richard has done a sterling job again with fixtures this year with two excellent tours to Bournemouth and Cadiz, both of which were well supported and great fun was had by all. Generally, all events have been well attended and thanks to all event organisers.

Finances are in good order but I would remind all Members to pay for events as they come up and to keep their accounts in the black. Going forwards, we will require annual subscriptions to be paid before Members can start playing events. Everything is on the WAGSite so it's not difficult to keep an eye on your account status.

Congratulations to Bob Hill (whose handicap at the beginning of 2023 was 20.9 now reduced to a more reasonable 17.8) for winning the Victor Ludorum and to Richard Latham for winning the Beament Big Swing.

The choice of Chairman's Prize is always difficult, with all of the Committee working very hard to run your Society so efficiently.

However, after a lot of thought, I have decided it should go to Richard Latham for his tireless work in organizing the individual events and tours. A huge amount of unseen work goes on behind the scenes and few of us truly appreciate Richard's contribution. Thank you Richard.

Finally, can I ask that Members pay more attention to accurately recording their scores. Some of the scorecards are a mystery and can make for an impossible task for organisers to decifer, most recently resulting in the Salver being re-awarded following scrutiny of the supposed winning card.

Hopefully, we will enjoy the final two events of the year culminating in the James Jug and presentation of the VL at Pine Ridge in November.

Thank you."

Thank you Mr Chairman for a cracking first year in the job!

1. **Website. (JS)**

JS explained that although the majority of maintenance on the site is available to organisers and committee members, more technical matters such as hosting the web site and managing the wags.org domain name are currently managed by him, He has asked Lee Davies to be back up for this as he has suitable technical experience and Lee has agreed provided that JS can supply all the relevant information.

The WAGS website is quite old and JS has also been in contact with Steve Stoner to see if it can be modernised and easier to use on all devices including mobiles. Mobiles and tablets these days are much better than they used to be and the scribe of these minutes has never had a problem looking anything up on his iphone/ipad using the website! However others may beg to differ.

Pete Mitchener made the point that we could seek to have a link put on the website that could provide access to a closed Facebook page where members could put photos so that we can view history (a fine example might be Mark Adams on a tee box at the Kernow one year in Cornwall….I shall not go into detail!!)…..or Rhod James walking the plank in Majorca!

2. Handicaps & Communications. (GM)

We now have 3.5 years of WHS records for handicaps and the system has settled in nicely. 70% of members have a WHS handicap. This helps as it can be viewed easily by GM and helps him and his two aides to judge who may need adjusting from time to time. Normally we adopt the rule that one cannot have a handicap more than two shots above one's WHS handicap.

Any adjustment outside of the above comes from "there's something that appears to be amiss" so WAGS records are regularly reviewed in case a trend starts to develop such as a hot streak. We are trying to protect the Society from anyone who regularly scores 40 plus points for example. Pete Middleton, GM and Fred Berring (Captain) are in regular communication on this issue.

GM also discussed the number of games a WAG should complete to compete for the VL. Initially the room seemed in favour of 8 games rather than the current 6 games however the Secretary pointed out that on looking at the last 5 years the difference in the number of WAGS completing 6 rounds versus 8 was quite large. Here is the evidence:

Year	Played 6	Played 8	Difference
2024	23	15	8
2023	33	30	3
2022	35	28	7
2021	36	30	6
2020	28	21	7

The Chairman MW put it to a vote and it was unanimously voted that a new number of 7 games needs to be completed which hopefully will encourage a greater turnout for every WAGS quest to be the next VL winner! JS to update the rules on the website accordingly.

From the floor, Anthony Shutes raised the point that we could also consider going back in time when a winner of a VL event with 30 points or more would get cut one shot or two shots if they won the VL. Mark Adams said he would prefer it if this was only applicable if a WAG won a VL event by scoring 36 points of more. The committee agreed to review this measure.

Again, from the floor, Pete Mitchener asked if the system is fair as some WAGS are club members whilst some are not.

However, overall, the system GM uses is working well and we have plenty of different winners.

On the communication front, Bob Hill has set up the Wags Official Whatsapp Group which he will continue to maintain for certain communications. Please keep any political (etc!) stuff off this site.

3. **Finance. (RH)**

The Society is in good financial health with some £9,587 on deposit. The Hole in One fund is still in rude health with 3K across three funds.

Most members are fully paid up with only one or two a game behind. Please make sure that you keep your accounts up to date. A simple look on the website will tell you the position. Try not to be in the red!

RH nudges individuals if they get behind even though this should not be necessary. We all have the ability to look at our accounts on the WAGS website and it only takes a minute to look it up.

4. **Membership. (NF)**

With Nigel Field absent MW made the point that two new members have joined this year but neither has played much.

5. **Fixtures. (RL)**

We have two remaining games at Farnham and Pine Ridge and then the Burhill Christmas Cracker for all those who want to raise a team. In previous years WAGS has always been well represented. WAGS has already got The Sultans of Swing prepared for this year. Vip Patel will try and engineer a team for The Wild Geese so hopefully we can get three or four teams out.

Overall attendance at events is little changed from 2023. The most popular being The Bunning Birdie with 34 players and the least popular being 18 at The Wells Wineglass. This may have something to do with summer holidays etc.

The Sussex tour was not well attended this year. The most that played one day was 15 and the least was 10. One idea is to make more space between the tours (ie make a longer gap between the June tour and the Sussex tour) and consider moving the Sussex tour to the end of July/beginning of August so long as it doesn't clash with any major Brighton event such as Gay Pride for example. RL will liaise with Steve Shaw on this.

From the floor, Mark Adams made the point “why not have the foreign tour in June and then use September for the UK tour?”

From the floor, Anthony Shutes asked “should we have three tours per annum? Two should be the maximum”.

RL, and from the floor, Rhod James pointed out that Sussex has the ability for members to "jump in and jump out" of the specific fixtures so it had not really been set up as a Tour, and, although it was being perceived as one, there are important differences between it and the spring and late summer tours.

ML said we should leave it as it is.

Regarding Richmond, members have previously mentioned the high cost of the event despite the WAGS sub which this year was £26 pp meaning the gross cost of the event was £151 pp. When asked about pricing the club said every day of the week is the same cost and they never give forward pricing guidance until the season is upon us.

Both committee and members attending agreed that the indoor carvery at RGC is much better than the Braai outdoor food. This year the carvery was excellent. The event is, of course, subsidised by the Mike Beament legacy (currently standing at £1,878.85). This means we have three years of his legacy remaining approximately.

From the floor, Vip Patel asked if Mike would want his legacy to support a different event should members ever want to change the event venue.

From the floor, Chris Bunning and Rhod both said that Richmond is a key event on the WAGS calendar. The course was in excellent condition and nicely laid out. It’s all about the setting, the carvery, the putting competition and a full day of fun for all. It’s not just about the course itself.

This was put to a general vote and Richmond was voted unanimously to remain the key fixture in the WAGS calendar. For example, West Byfleet was around £50 pp some 4 years ago and is now around £80 pp. Farnham is similar. Of course, we could always reduce our after golf meal to sandwiches and take some £15 off the cost per member but this was thought by many to be unsatisfactory. We agreed to keep playing clubs like Farnham and West Byfleet in 2025 but possibly make some changes for 2026.

From the floor, Anthony Shutes said all clubs are raising prices as they upgrade their facilities and if we want to play on decent courses this is the price one will have to pay.

RL always tries to get the member subscription down to under £100 pp but we recognise that, across the board, clubs have increased their prices substantially since the Covid era.

For the June tour in 2025 we hope it will be organised by Mike Dearden to include North Foreland, Walmer & Kingsdown and Canterbury golf courses.

A discussion was opened up about an overseas tour perhaps to include Vienna in Austria (as proposed by the absent Nigel Field via MW). This would prove to be expensive however. Vip Patel mentioned Morocco as a possibility and was asked to come back to RL with more details. Pete Mitchener mentioned Waterloo and Le Touquet as a possible France/Belgian tour. He will liaise with RL on this. Rhod James mentioned the fact that Portugal and Spain is easily arranged and has better weather prospects compared to northern Europe. Indeed, Austria this September had snow!

Last but not least, a big thanks to Andy Burn and Richard Latham for organising the Cadiz tour! Fun was had by everyone and well played to the overall winner Mike Gardner who was heavily backed by the WAGS Secretary!

6. **Merchandise. (RT)**

The gilets RT presented earlier this season have gone down a treat. So much so that some felt it was entirely appropriate to wear them as evening wear for the AGM!

From the floor, Anthony Shutes asked for new sweaters to be made available as it was some years ago that we received the black ones.

RT promised there is more to come in 2025/26! He suggested it is best to have a decent bit of merchandise say every two years rather than cheaper kit every year.

If anyone has any merchandise ideas please send suggestions to Richard Trinick.

7. **Committee Elections.**

Five committee posts are up for the 2-year fixed term renewal. The incumbents of four of the positions were offering themselves for re-election:

Fixtures (RL) – re-elected
Merchandise (RT) – re-elected
Communications and Handicaps (GM) – re-elected
Captain (FB) – re-elected

8. **AOB**

Lee Davies (absent) had asked MW whether food could be optional after events to bring cost down for an individual. This cannot be done as when booking an event it is the total package that is paid for and one cannot have individual members choosing what they do and don't want apart from any dietary requirements. He also raised the point whether overseas tours should be 5 yearly. Again, we love out European tours and they will be available annually.

The £5 extra sub we and all guests pay was highlighted. Should guests be forced to pay the £5 when all they can win is a single prize for "Best Guest"? And if there is only one guest they are guaranteed a prize which no doubt is a bottle of wine costing more than £5! The committee will discuss further.

The meeting closed at 1930 and the members were ready for some excellent Malden cuisine.

Tom Fawcett

Secretary

3rd October 2024