

Never mind the quantity, check out the quality ...



North Hants GC: Where it all began

That was me standing behind you in the pro shop the other day when you complained you couldn't get on the course because a society was out there.

I tried to look nonchalant while studying the hybrid rescue clubs, but gave the game away when I bought a course guide and souvenir ball marker instead.

This is by way of thanks for letting us play at your club.

Rona Barford: She can play a bit...



SHELLEY HARRINGTON
has a message for those
who dislike the
presence of societies

Sure, we booked a year ago and gave your secretary a hefty deposit to play with in the meantime, but we did take two hours worth of tee times on a wet Wednesday afternoon (14 three-balls – a fair few green fees) and, considering how quiet it was, if we hadn't been there you'd have had the course to yourself. So sorry.

Anyway, we enjoyed our day out and the dinner afterwards – the carvery and apple crumble warmed us up nicely – and the amount we spent in the bar should keep your subs down for another year or so.

Despite what you think, we can play. We're the IBM Club UK Basingstoke Golf Society – usually just IBM on your notice board – and we boast the IBM Club national golf champion among our ranks. And can she play.

In searing June heat, on the beautiful but treacherous Frilford Heath courses, Rona Barford held her nerve through 36 holes to become only the second woman in 39 years to take home the Jim Hayes Cup as champion of the IBM Club National Golf Tournament.

This year's tournament got underway back in May with 166 golf enthusiasts playing 36 holes in six regional heats across

England and Scotland in courses as varied as Crail, Cuddington, Stoneham, Milford, Ilkley and Royal Winchester to win hard-fought qualifying rounds.

Places in the championships are coveted as finals are held at such venues as Royal Birkdale, Royal Lytham, Gleneagles, Turnberry, and Carnoustie.

Barford, who played off a handicap of 21 (since cut) beat 35 other finalists, including five members of her own golf society, to take the joint lead at lunchtime with nett 70 and had the best round of nett 68 in the afternoon, winning by four strokes on nett -7.

She was at your club the day we played there, but probably wasn't holding you up. Some of the rest of us can get 'round all right, too.

In its 20-year history, IBMBGS has sent five past winners to the National Championships.

Founded by Terry Wall, our first fixture was a 36-hole event at North Hants in March 1988, long before their recent refurbishments.

By noon horizontal rain had dissolved the cards along with the fairways and greens, which had turned into a swamp.

One determined member, Dave Tulloch, squelched around the sodden course in leaky shoes. He returned to his car to find it in a four-inch deep lake where the car park had been. No matter, his feet were already wet...



As newly appointed captain, Wall officially abandoned the afternoon competition after nine holes – just as the sun came out. This prompted complaints from the early starters for not abandoning sooner, and from the late starters that he had no authority to abandon at all. Despite that inauspicious beginning, we've gone from strength to strength.

Wall won the IBM National in 2001 and is now president of our society.

Tulloch is its IBM representative, playing in events whenever he can get a few hours off (rain or shine).

We returned to North Hants to celebrate our 20th anniversary in August this year, playing a pristine course in glorious sunshine and enjoying the beautiful new facilities.

The IBMBGS gives members an opportunity to participate in more than 22 events each season on a variety of courses, including old favourites such as Weybrook Park, Alresford, West Byfleet, The Army and Calcot Park, and is always on the lookout for new venues.

As well as yours, Chobham, Camberley Heath, and Rowlands Castle joined the rota this year.

Some of us are members of local clubs – and we get miffed if a society turns up

ahead of our regular fourball, too. But for others the IBMBGS is their only club. Members, who are IBM employees, retirees, and their families from all over the south east, have handicaps from single digits to the maximum.

We compete for 18 trophies including awards for high and low handicappers, lady golfers (Rona Barford's on track for that one at the moment), lowest gross score in an event, achievement in the spring, summer and autumn fixtures, best over the entire year, and four knockout competitions.

One knockout offered a bonus for member Rupert Tompkins, who scored a stunning hole-in-one on the 120-yard second at Hankley Common.

The ball won't be in his trophy case, however. He lost it on the next hole.

We also compete against other societies, and currently hold two of the three IBM challenge cups available each year. Captain Mike Bell helped to win one of them with his own hole-in-one on the 184-yard, par-three 12th at Basingstoke. He takes a team back to Frilford Heath next month to face IBM Warwick for the remaining prize.

As well as a full social diary, IBMBGS has raised more than £16,000 for charity. Last year's captain, Ken Crookes, raised

thousands of pounds for Action Medical Research through society events and a 500km sponsored bike ride from London to Paris that joined up with the Tour de France.

This year, captain Mike Bell has raised more than £2,000 so far for the Hampshire-based Rowans Hospice, including sponsorship for his 100-mile trek through the Pyrenees climbing more than 30,000 feet (without a buggy). Golf societies offer an excellent opportunity for members from different clubs and with different abilities to play on courses they might not otherwise try – like yours – usually on quiet days.

A friendly, supportive atmosphere encourages the beginner, while events such as the IBM National challenge the skilled amateur.

Certainly in this society, there is something for everyone. Thanks for letting us enjoy your club last Wednesday. By the way, that course guide came in handy ... I won.

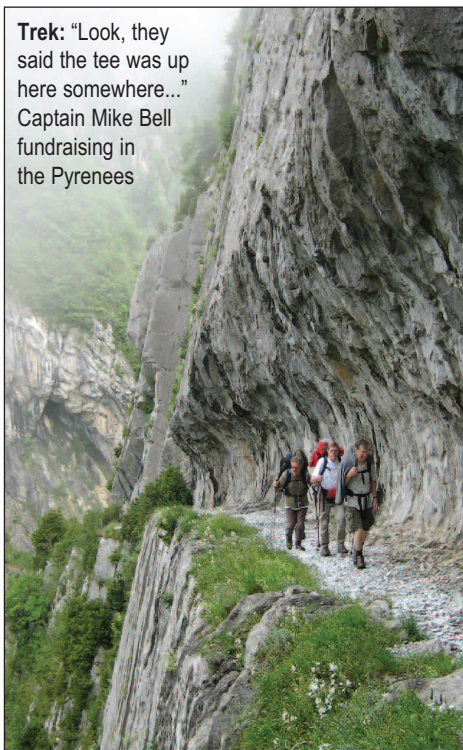


DO YOU WANT TO SEE YOUR SOCIETY FEATURED HERE?

We do. Follow Shelley's example and write about your society's exploits. You can even advertise here for new members.

Send your society reports and pictures to societies@fairwaytogreen.com

Trek: "Look, they said the tee was up here somewhere..." Captain Mike Bell fundraising in the Pyrenees



Computer says 'smile': IBM members enjoy the gala dinner during a recent trip to Deauville, France



If you wish to send your society reports and pictures by post, please send them to FTG Societies, Fairway to Green, Upper Cowgrove, Heath Farm, Heath Rd East, Petersfield, Hants GU31 4HT.