**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024**

The meeting was held at the In and Out Club on Monday, 4th November 2024 in the Astor Room. The Captain, Colin Peebles was in the chair and the President, Michael Thornhill, was in attendance.

**The following members were present:** David Amey, Nic Bentley, Dominic Boyle, Michael Brown, Alastair Bryce, Jim Conybeare, Chris Coulcher, Bob Couldrey, Jolyon Culbertson, Darryl Dawson, Nigel Denby, Stephen Drury, David Duncan, Nigel Howcutt, Duncan Howarth, Huw Jenkins, James Lawson, Chris Leek, John McAnally, Ian Menzies, John Naish, Colin Peebles, Alan Richards, Peter Sledmere, Mike Tibbatts, Michael Thornhill, Steve Troop, Jeff Turner, Michael Winarick and David Glennie.

**Attending via Zoom:** Richard Bennett, Peter Elliot, Scott Hutchinson, Nigel Lovett-Turner, Mark Rhys, Jim Thomas, John Warbey and Alan Wilkinson.

**Apologies for Absence:** Sandy Flockhart, Brian Robertson, Robert Bray, John Lang, John Bone, Andrew Williams, Guy Woodford, Bruce Walker, Nicolas Hurst, Walter Caldwell, David Hill and John Mungall.

**Chairman’s Opening Remarks**

The Chairman thanked Mike Tibbatts for managing the event and in particular, for his considerable efforts to ensure a full turnout in person as well as a good number participating on Zoom.

He explained that the reason for holding the AGM at a different time and place from previous years was due to unforeseen changes in the fixture list. Furthermore, there is a governance issue as currently the AGM is held before the end of the CGS Year and is not aligned with the CGS financial year. The Captain advised that this would be considered by the Management Committee before the end of 2024 and a venue and date for the 2025 AGM agreed. The Captain invited members to email him with any views on this issue by 30 Nov 24.

**Approval of the Minutes of the AGM held on Thursday 28th September 2023**

Approval of the Minutes of the 2023 AGM were proposed by Jim Conybeare and seconded by Steve Troop and unanimously agreed.

**Captain’s Review of the Year**

The Captain’s report had been circulated prior to the meeting and is attached to these Minutes. He added the following points:

* Only 88 out of a total of 282 members played in CGS fixtures this year. Whilst this is better than 2023, we still need to encourage greater participation.
* The membership is mainly male retirees largely located in the south of England and in Scotland. We should consider developing a strategy to identify and involve members from the Midlands and the North of England
* It is important to maintain high standards at all times to differentiate the Society from ordinary groups of golfers. CGS kit should be worn at all matches, meetings and ‘on tour’. Jackets and CGS ties should be the norm for dining.

The Captain thanked the office bearers, match managers and all members who had supported him during the year.

**Adoption of the Accounts for the Year ending 31 August 24**.

The Accounts had been circulated prior to the meeting and are attached to these Minutes.

The increase in prize expenditure was queried. David Duncan, the Auditor, advised it was a combination of expenses from the previous year not accounted for, plus new expenses from the Hadley Wood event.

It was also noted that the table presented to Royal St. George’s had not yet been invoiced. This would result in the £575 operating profit shown turning into a minimum of £175 operating loss for the year. This was accepted.   
  
The value of the clothing stock was queried. It was explained that this was because CGS has to buy in reasonable quantities when placing orders for new clothing. The stock is reducing as planned as sales are made.

The Accounts were adopted unanimously.

**Membership Secretary’s Report**

The Membership Secretary’s Report had been circulated prior to the meeting. The responsibility for Website management has been transferred to the Auditor / Yearbook editor for convenience as he has a source of website expertise in the family. The Report was approved.

**Fixture Secretary’s Report**

The Fixture Secretary’s Report had been circulated prior to the meeting. There were no comments or questions. The Report was approved.

**Election of the CGS Captain for 2025**

Vice-Captain Nigel Howcutt was proposed by the Captain, seconded by Jim Conybeare and accepted unanimously by members.

**Election of the CGS Vice-Captain for 2025**

David Amey was proposed by the Vice-Captain, seconded by the Captain and accepted unanimously by members.

**Subscription Proposal**

The paper and proposal to introduce a £25 annual subscription had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The proposal followed much consultation with Members and discussion in the Management Committee. A survey of 282 of CGS’s membership elicited 153 responses (54%) of which 126 (82% of those who had replied) supported the proposal to raise an annual subscription.

The minor differences in the expenditure figures shown in Paragraph 3 of the Paper and the Annual Accounts were due to timing differences and are not material.

The Captain highlighted the following views of the Management Committee:

* That the Society needs more financial resilience in order to develop and thrive. The present ad hoc arrangements prevent proper budgeting, planning and expansion.
* That costs are unfairly borne by active members, thus discouraging participation.
* That the proposal to raise an annual subscription does not constitute a breach of contract in respect of the one-off fee currently made to join the Society as all members will still have access to the website, which includes membership details, fixtures list, match reports with photographs as well as the Year Book.
* That the risk of accumulating unnecessary funds will be mitigated by the policy being reviewed annually at the AGM.

The Captain fielded a wide range of questions on the on the Proposal. It was suggested that retaining tour fees whilst dispensing with match and meeting fees might be seen as unfair. It was agreed that the Management Committee would have the discretion to adjust match, meeting and tour fees during the year.

The following Proposal was put to a vote:

* That an annual subscription of £25/member is levied on all active members from 2025. This subscription is to be paid by standing order by 31 January.
* That match and meeting fees will be discontinued but tour fees will remain subject to the discretion of the Management Committee.
* That Members opting not to pay the annual subscription will be designated ‘inactive’ and not be entitled to play in society golf events, vote at the AGM or receive a hard copy of the Year Book. They will continue to have access to the Members Section of the Society website (including the Year Book) and may change their status at any time by paying the annual subscription.
* Any surplus funds accumulated would be used for:
  + General administration including Yearbook production;
  + Prizes;
  + Improving the website for management, member recruitment and marketing;
  + Subsidising matches and meetings to encourage greater participation;
  + Contingencies, such as hosting special events and making presentations to reciprocating clubs.
* That the need for and amount of the annual subscription would be reviewed annually at the AGM

Fifty-one (51) members, including Proxy votes received by the Secretary before the meeting, were in favour. Seven members dissented. The proposal was approved.

The next AGM (date, time and venue to be decided by the Committee before the end of 2024) would also be asked to approve a budget for income and expenditure for the ensuing year,

**Election of the Membership Secretary**

David Hill was proposed as the new Membership Secretary. There was a unanimous vote in favour.

**Change of the President**

The Captain informed the meeting that the President, Michael Thornhill, had indicated his wish to stand down. On behalf of the Society and particularly the past Captains, he thanked President Mike for taking such an active role in CGS fixtures, and for his guidance and wise counsel since 2015. He also thanked him for his generosity in providing the wine for the AGM lunch.

The President explained that he wished to stand down as he is now finding it more difficult to attend meetings and spend nights away. He proposed Michael Winarick, Captain of CGS in 2008, as his successor. This proposal was unanimously approved and Michael Winarick was elected President of CGS with effect from 1 January 2025.

**Closing Remarks**

The Captain again thanked Mike Tibbatts for organising the event, and both members present and those Zooming for supporting it.

He reminded members to pass on their views on the AGM timing and venue by 30 Nov.

**CAPTAIN’S REPORT**

My year as Captain started with a fun meeting at Reigate Heath to welcome in the Chinese Year of the Dragon. Organised in absentia by John Warbey, we enjoyed a dry, sunny 9 holes followed by a Chinese ‘banquet’. Thanks to the donation of a very fine malt whisky retailing at £450, we raised an amazing £806 in the raffle for my nominated charity, Strathcarron Hospice. This wonderful organisation was supporting Michael Williams in his battle with terminal cancer and it was a great pleasure to accompany him to present the cheque.

The rest of the CGS season was busy, varied and successful. I missed only one of the 27 rounds played (as it clashed with the bicentenary celebrations of the Royal Perth Golfing Society) and can report that it has been a most enjoyable experience. In statistical terms, 88 different players participated compared with 85 in the previous year when 3 more rounds were played. This is a positive trend. Of the 9 matches we played against clubs and societies, we won 5, lost 3 and halved one. Of particular note was our 13th victory against Royal St Georges in 40 years of competition and our first victory since 2018. We also beat Malaya and Calcutta Golfing Societies in our matches at Piltdown and Blackmoor respectively and retained the Hodder Cup at Cuddington. We were less successful in the Quadrangular at Sandy Lodge, coming 3rd, but took some satisfaction in knowing that if all scores were counted (instead of the best 6) we would have won convincingly!

Our 4 tours (Suffolk, North–South, South Links and French) were all very sociable but not uneventful. In Suffolk, the Aldeburgh GC chef was taken ill at short notice so our tour dinner had to be cancelled but thanks to the swift actions of Nigel Howcutt, we had a worthy (and rather alcoholic) second evening at the Lighthouse Restaurant. In the South Links tour, we achieved our best ever result (2nd) in the Texas Scramble Open at Littlestone. The lunch and hospitality at Rye, as usual, were first class although having to play the Composite Course was disappointing and something Mike Winarick is trying to address for future years. It was a disappointment that only 12 members made it to the French tour and unfortunate that through illness and unscheduled board meetings, we were reduced to 10 players on the 2 days at the excellent Le Touquet courses. Stormy weather then caused the golf at Wimereux to be cancelled. Let’s hope for better luck next year on what is an excellent and very sociable outing.

The North-South Tour was held over the Dundonald, Glasgow Gailes and Western Gailes Links in Ayrshire, all superb courses. Competition among the 24 members for the Shanghai Jars and Kennedy Plates at Dundonald, and for the Nan Bei Jang Trophy was fierce but I am delighted to report that the North retained the bragging rights. One novel innovation was the hickory putting competition organised by Stephen Hagenbuch using Ken Forrest’s extensive hickory putter collection. This year, the Society commissioned a new silver trophy as a tribute to the late Michael Williams, who co-founded the North-South tour, and it was with great pleasure that I awarded it to Ken Forrest for his immense contribution to this event and his generosity over the past 6 years. John Mungall who has taken over the duties of the North Match Manager, has a very hard act to follow.

Aside from golf, much has been happening in the Society. The Management Committee has met 6 times and has been addressing various governance, financial and structural issues. Members were surveyed on the proposal to introduce an annual subscription which will be decided at the AGM. Shortcomings in the website have been identified but only partially resolved. Plans to thank host clubs, refine the membership and introduce recruitment policies have also been discussed. Adapting to changing circumstances has been the focus but evolution not revolution has been the strategy.

None of the above would have happened without a great deal of effort from many willing volunteers. Match and tour managers are indispensable and on behalf of all Society members, I thank them for their endeavours. I must also pay tribute to members of my Management Committee for their support, ideas and tolerance in what has been a busy year. I have been very ably supported by my Vice Captain, Nigel Howcutt, whom I am certain will make an excellent Captain. My sincere thanks must go to those leaving the Committee, Immediate Past Captain, Mike Tibbatts, for his wise counsel and infectious enthusiasm and to Membership Secretary, David Glennie, for his patience and dedication in dealing with so many diverse and tricky issues. I am delighted to report that David Hill has agreed to take on the role of Membership Secretary in addition to his Kit Master duties. Our President, Mike Thornhill, has also decided to stand down and, on behalf of the Society and recent Captains, I would like to thank him for his wisdom and guidance over the past 9 years.

I am pleased to report that we have recruited 7 new members but sadly, we have lost Desmond Prior, Robert Lo and Michael Williams, a gentleman whose cheerful and stoic attitude to his deteriorating condition exemplified the high standards he set during his life.

In conclusion, I believe that it has been a very good year for the Society, which is managing to retain its core values whilst adapting to some necessary changes. For me personally, it has been a memorable and fulfilling year and I thank you all for your support and friendship. I look forward to continuing my involvement in the coming years, albeit from the back benches.

**CHINA GOLFING SOCIETY - ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 AUGUST 2024**

**Income** **2024** **2023**

Match Fees 1725 880

New membership fees 310 180

Profit on sale of kit 325 548

Scottish Match Fees 775 595

Donations 619 133

**Totals** 3754 2336

**Expenditure**

Website Expenses 1368 386

Year Book 475 704

Prizes presented 973 568

Admin/Engraving etc 83 162

Whisky 80 n/a

MW Quaich 200 n/a

**Totals** 3179 1820

**Operating Surplus** 575 516

**Net Assets**

Stock of Clothing 4097 4845

Stock of Prizes 1185 1960

Bank Account 4782 3476

Debtors 1760 1572

Creditors 0 -604

**Totals** 11824 11249

**Represented by General Fund:**

Opening Balance b/fwd 11249

Operating Profit 575

Balance c/fwd 11824

Note from Hon. Auditor (DS Duncan)

I have reviewed the above accounts as prepared by the Treasurer and have verified where possible the key numbers in the accounts. I have not conducted a full audit but based on the checks that I have made, I believe that the accounts are an accurate reflection of the China Golfing Society’s financial position as at 31 Aug 2024.

**NOTES TO THE CHINA GOLFING SOCIETY ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR ENDING 31 AUGUST 24**

1. Match fees

Following the decision last year to increase Match Fees in events where prizes are awarded, our Match Fee receipts increased from £1,475 to £2500.

2. Membership Fees

Ten new members joined the Society during the year. Two paid £30, and 8 paid the increased Membership Fee of £50.

3. Profit on Sale of Kit

Less kit sold

4. Donations

Three items accounted for this figure: £150 from Peter Wintle as a contribution to the North South Tour; £150 similarly from Nigel Howcutt; £319 sent by Alastair Bryce in respect of a surplus from an event over-budgeted in Scotland a few years ago.

5. Website Expenses

These were up considerably this year following necessary enhancements.

6. Year Book

David Duncan has taken over responsibilities for producing the yearbook, and achieved some economies in doing so.

7. Prizes Presented

Considerable increases are noted. Partly as a result of the additional event at Hadley Wood (£110), and additional costs of prizes for the French Tour. If the figure shown for last year might possibly have been understated, the figure for this year is correct.

8. Admin Expenses

These were inflated last year mainly as a result of the cost of a meeting over lunch with our website service provider. The figure for this year is the norm and mainly represents engraving and postage costs.

9. Whisky

We donated bottles of our Year of the Dragon Malt Whisky to two of the Clubs against which we have matches.

10. MW Quaich

The Society decided to purchase a quaich in memory of Past Captain Michael Williams who did so much for the Society. In particular, with Ian Menzies, he established the annual North South Tour.

11. Debtors

Three items comprise this amount: £500 as a deposit for next year’s North South Tour; £540 as a deposit for this year’s AGM at the In and Out Club in November; £720 as a deposit for a Scottish event next year.