

# press release

8<sup>h</sup> July 2016



## News article

### Wychwood Park hosts NORTH OF ENGLAND DISABLED OPEN 2016

With players drawn from as far afield as Devon, West Sussex, Lancashire, Yorkshire and everywhere in between with a wide range of acquired and congenital disabilities. Whilst there was great banter out on the patio and chance to catch up with old friends, new friendships were made out on the course, but the golf was a deadly serious affair. In all 28 disabled and impaired golfers took part in this inaugural Open held on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2016. Wychwood Park only opened in 2002 and within a year it hosted a Europro Tour Event and has played host to the English Deaf Golfers Association – and now they can add the Disabled Golf Association to their string of accolades. It's a monster of a course where a buggy is perhaps recommended and with their club championships the next day the course was in tip-top condition with greens like grease-lightening.

It is particularly open on the back nine and the wind was up easily taking the ball 60yards off course. If you went in the rough (particularly just in front of the tee) that was another ball lost.

So it was a course that would pull our top players to the fore, a thinking man's course if you will. There are fond memories of the par-3s, the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup>, with the monster 7<sup>th</sup> par-5, and the even longer 12<sup>th</sup> perhaps best forgotten.

Our winners with their Stableford points were:

Mark Helm, Overall winner (Gloucs) 33points ocb - congenital birth defect

Sue Robertson, Ladies winner (Berks) 19points - hip fracture/arthritis

Ashley Harris, Category 1 winner (Surrey) 33points - rheumatoid arthritis

Derek Radcliffe, Category 2 winner (Lancs) 32points - fused ankle

George Ridley, Category 3 winner (Lancs) 28points - above knee amputee

Organiser Graeme Robertson said "We already help to organise The Golf Trust Open held annually at The Shire London but there was clearly appetite for a similar Open event further north. Through an event of this calibre of participation we are able to showcase

the incredible ABILITY of disabled and impaired golfers. It truly is amazing the power of sport for therapy and rehabilitation and generally for improving health and social life. It really makes a huge difference to people's lives."

DGA is a pan-disability, not-for-profit organization, membership is free. Planning is already underway for next year's Open and the Golf Trust Open is to be held at The Shire London on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2016. More information is at [disabledgolf.org.uk](http://disabledgolf.org.uk) with events scheduled all over the country.

### **About the Disabled Golf Association**

Our main aims are to promote the game of golf as a pathway to a healthier lifestyle and greater social inclusion for those who are disabled, irrespective of age, gender or disability. This includes providing the means to make it easier for the disabled player to access the facilities both on and off the course. We aim to provide information about equipment to permit that increased accessibility, this can be done by means of single-seater buggies specifically designed for the disabled player, bespoke club and prosthetic adaptation as well as supplying professional coaching at events from those who have been trained to teach the sport. We aim to attract not only those who have played in the past prior to an illness or injury, but also those who have never played the sport but are seeking the unique benefits of a sport which can be played by anyone either alone against the course, or in teams against each other.

We look to provide a playing environment where the clubs are disabled friendly and accessible and the courses are pre-vetted to ensure that they are capable of being played by those with limited mobility. We are helping to assist in the launching of coaching academies and training sessions throughout the UK. Also from our base in Berkshire we aim to provide information on courses, equipment and holiday resorts for the disabled golfer. We hope to offer all of these benefits for our members and others but also employment for those in the area who are disabled and can join us.

All our members are kept aware of the activities of the association by a comprehensive web site and active facebook site, which attract new audiences on a daily basis. We also actively seek and need the feedback from our members on such diverse subjects as new events, holiday resorts, new equipment, as well as opportunities to volunteer and assist in future direction.

### **Our history**

In our first year in 2010 we achieved over 200 members; we arranged or were involved with 12 events attracting a true cross section of disabilities and our members realise they can enjoy a friendly and enjoyable experience.

2011 we increased our membership to 500 and introduced a series of events for newcomers as well as those requesting competition plus a unique series of par-3 events for those with limited mobility. In July 2011 we were featured in a 4-page centre spread in Motability Lifestyle magazine which led to 100 new members in just one week! We held 24 events in 2011. In August 2011 DGS received notification of official registration as a shared-enterprise Community Interest Company.

By the close of the 2012 season (where we had 40 events) we had over 600 members, making us the largest pan-disabled not-for-profit golf organisation in the UK – and possibly the world! We took the opportunity to rebrand and change our name from Society to Association to reflect our national role in the UK.

2013 we held over 50 events throughout – England, Wales and Northern Ireland – and a whole series of taster sessions for those new to golf, supported by Sport England. We closed with over 700 members and

with BGL, Glenbrae and Titleist as supporters. We made the decision to cease trading 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013 as DGS and England/Wales split to form two separate organisations as much to aide with funding streams, still very much working together – DGA in England and WDGA in Wales.

2014 we scheduled events every week of the season in England – with 6 courses selected for the BGL Race to Burhill, 11 courses participating in the Order of Merit (OOM) and plenty more excellent independent courses providing DGA Local Events where we take golf to the places where people live; we also have a good number of charity events planned throughout the season having been chosen as Captain and Lady Captain charities in 2014. In Wales there were a further 8 OOM events planned. **Recognised officially by the Charities Aid Foundation as a charitable Community Interest Company (CIC) we have launched our new website disabledgolf.org.uk produced and maintained entirely in house by volunteers. In 2014, Mark James from the Seniors Tour agreed to become Patron for the DGA.**

2015 was an equally hectic schedule. We have in place a network of regional volunteers to help us grow the sport of disabled and impaired golf. **We are now formally recognised as a DPULO, which is a Disabled People's User-Led Organisation of which we couldn't be more proud; at a fundamental level, a DPULO is an organisation run by and for disabled people.** We repeated the OOM again this year and used this as means of selection for Team England to play Wales at The Vale in September. To help DGA to grow in a sustainable and manageable way we have formed a Handicap Committee and a Marketing Committee at the start of 2015, to run alongside and assist our team of events volunteers.

2016 we started the year with 820 members and the year ahead sees a continuation of our sterling efforts to date with each of the established regions becoming more established and self-sufficient in terms of operation of events. There are still areas with fewer members – west midlands, east of England, south west, north east. We hope to expand both our membership in these areas and our network of volunteers to each area to reach right across the country within the next two years. We are very excited to have been selected as charity of the year by the **FORE Business network** and to have sponsorship for Team England from **Bellway Homes**. 2016 will see the inaugural North of England Open at Wychwood Park, to run alongside the now established Golf Trust Open held at The Shire London annually. **At the beginning of May 2016 we appointed David Edwards of the European Tour as an Ambassador for the DGA; David has an internationally acclaimed Trick Shot Show and hopes to meet more of our members in 2016. This will be Graeme Robertson's sixth year as Team England Captain.**

We are continuing with support from BGL, Titleist, and Glenbrae. Realising the challenge of funding and with two home internationals in 2016, Graeme & Sue Robertson have spear-headed a fundraising campaign **DRIVE2DRIVE** to help offset the costs related to Team England and associated costs for the DGA.

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