

Holt Shield

2023 Annual Report

Special measures to accommodate Covid 19 were eased this year. The 3 x 3 home and away format remained in place for the group matches. However, for the last sixteen, quarter-finals, semi-finals, and final returned to the pre-Covid 19 format of a 5-man team home and away matches.

The 3 x 3 home and away format remained in place to facilitate an extremely busy period during April, May, and June mainly due to congestion created by Golf Ireland inter-club fixtures. However, as with last year, it continues to be a disappointment that a few clubs failed to complete their group matches. These clubs were contacted and informed that this practice is unacceptable as unplayed matches adversely affect the outcome of the groups.

The final was contested between Cairndhu and Carrickfergus. The first leg was played at Cairndhu in foul weather conditions. Lift, clean, and place through the green was in operation, and although the playing conditions were extremely difficult the standard of golf was impressive. Cairndhu won the first two matches and things looked a bit precarious for Carrick. However, they rallied to win two matches on the final green which was a great effort. This left the tie finely balanced going into the second leg at Carrick.

Although the weather was again grim both teams were well supported. Carrick looked favourite to win the first match but Cairndhu managed to turn the match eventually winning on the 17th green. This result seemed to swing the momentum towards Cairndhu and they eventually ran out comfortable winners. Cairndhu's victory recorded their third win in six years which is an impressive achievement.

Adhering to the ethos of the Holt Shield both teams played the final in a good and respectful spirit which is a credit to both clubs.

Cairndhu hosted a well-organized and memorable presentation dinner. It was no surprise that everything was well organized as they have hosted three champions' dinners in the past six years.

To celebrate the Holt Shield's 60th anniversary each medal had a '60th Anniversary' inscription on the presentation box and the pennants had an embroidered '60th Anniversary'.

The Bobby Conroy Award and silver medal were won by Cairndhu's Paul McKenna. Paul suffered a life-changing accident at work but he made a remarkable recovery and is currently playing golf to a very high level. He was the cornerstone of Cairndhu's victorious team. He won a crucial tie-hole match on the 20th at Carnalea and in the final, he won his home match and was still on the course when called in at Carrick. It is a testament to his ability and competitive spirit that he was chosen to play tie-holes in the final had they been required. His determination to play and compete in golf is to be admired.

The George Stuart Memorial was hosted by Ballyclare who were celebrating their centenary year. The competition was well-supported and the course was well presented. Ballyclare were excellent hosts providing great hospitality throughout the day. The George Stuart Memorial shield and silver medal were won by Ballyclare's team manager Stuart Gilmore with 37 points. At the meal, the chairman Robert Brown presented the captain of Ballyclare with a special framed centenary pennant on behalf of the Holt Shield committee. He genuinely appreciated the gesture and said the pennant would be displayed in a prominent place in the clubhouse.

Whitehead is due to host the 2024 George Stuart Memorial. When details of this event are confirmed, they will be posted on the Holt Shield website.

At the end of a busy two years as Chairman, the committee owes a great debt of gratitude to Robert Brown for his dedication to duty. He carried out his responsibilities with enthusiasm and passion and proudly promoted the Holt Shield at every club he attended. Robert's chosen charity for 2023 is Friends of the Cancer Centre. The committee wishes his successor Mervyn Perry, Knock a successful term of office.

May I personally thank all members of the Holt Shield committee for their continued hard work and dedication? They are responsible for the success and continued growth of the Holt Shield and their work has been recognised and praised by many of the participating clubs which is fully deserved.

Finally, may I wish all participating clubs and players a successful 2024 campaign and thank them for their continued support of the Holt Shield.

Tony Campbell

(Hon. Secretary)