The 2003 Inter-Services Golf Championships was kindly hosted by Saunton Golf Club, North Devon, held from 7 to 11 September 2003, the following personnel were selected to represent the RAF in the championships:

Team: Flt Lt Ros Ewer, RAF Brize Norton, 6 (Cabinet); Flt Lt Rachel McAlpine, RAF Honington, 14; FS Ruth Atkinson, DLO Andover, 15; Sgt Alex Mournian, RAF Aldergrove, 14; Cpl Michelle Burgess, RAF Brize Norton, 7; Cpl Justine Stringer, HQMS Uxbridge, 12; SAC Fiona Camm, RAF Aldergrove, 16; SAC Claire Pengelley, RAF Wittering, 12. Reserves: Flt Lt Jackie Trangmar, SAC Claire Pengelley, RAF Wittering, 12; Justine Stringer, HQMS Uxbridge, 12; Burgess, RAF Brize Norton, 7; Cpl Alex Mournian, RAF Honington, 14; FS Ruth Atkinson, HQMS Uxbridge, 12; SAC Fiona Camm, RAF Aldergrove, 16; SAC Claire Pengelley, RAF Wittering, 12. Reserve: Fliy Jackie Trangmar, Swanwick 19; FS Sue Cobb, RAF Brize Norton, 20.

The AA’s Guide to Golf Courses tells us that Saunton was founded in 1897, and offers two magnificent 18-hole championship-standard traditional links courses (the east and west), both of which are included in the top 100 courses in the UK. The east course (6729 yards, par 71) was redesigned in 1919 by the famous WH Fowler and has remained essentially unchanged, while the newer west course (6403 yards, par 71), having been lost as a battle training ground during World War II, was rebuilt in the early 1970s by Frank Pennick and is in many ways, although shorter, a more exacting test of golf than the famous east course.

Amalgamated for only the second year in succession, the RAF Men’s team would play the east course while the ladies’ were to do battle on the west. Traditionally the format for the championships has been three foursome matches followed by six singles matches, all played off scratch. However, a small change to the rules this year saw all team members required to play the singles matches thus adding a further degree of tension to an already charged atmosphere.

The Army: Rachel McAlpine and Alex Mournian were the first pair out against the Army and struggled to find form. The Army team (Sue Lambert and Chris James) played steady par golf and a late resurgence by the RAF was not enough to recoup the deficit, ultimately losing two and one. We had high hopes for the second pairing (Ros Ewer and Ruth Atkinson) after their heroics of last year but they quickly found themselves on the back foot, four down after six holes. Although back to all square by the 10th the Army (Denise Richards and Julie McCarten) reasserted their pressure and eked out a three-shot lead. With holes running out the RAF were unable to make any inroads and the Army took the honours on the 17th two and one. Michelle Burgess and Justine Stringer had a see-saw match against the Army (Mary Wooland and Fiona Gray) on the front nine, going from two down to one up to one down at the turn. However, on the back nine the RAF pair found their groove and by the 14th were in a commanding three-shot lead. Finding trouble on the par three 16th the Army conceded the hole and ultimately the match to the RAF pair three and two, an excellent victory. With the score after the foursomes two to one in the Army’s favour, things were finely poised for the afternoon singles.

First out was Fiona Camm who, after a steady start, began to exert the pressure and by the turn had established a two-shot lead. Her Army opponent (Max McKee) could do little in reply and par play on the back nine saw Fiona extend her lead and take a comfortable victory five and three. Ruth Atkinson, out in the second match, was noted for her steady game and her score over the front nine reiterated this fact. Winning only one hole, her opponent (Sarah Hickson) found herself on the wrong side of a three-shot deficit at the turn. Determined not to let the opposition off the hook, percentage golf saw Ruth take the 13th, 15th and 14th resulting in an excellent win five and four.

Chris James of the Army had little answer to Rachel McAlpine’s dominance in the next match. Although playing in her first inter-services, Rachel produced an assured performance and never looked in danger of relinquishing the lead. The Army’s token resistance came at the ninth and 10th but by the 13th Rachel had re-established a five-shot lead ultimately taking the match five and three.

Alex Mournian had a titanic battle against Sue Lambert in the fourth match. Off to a flying start the Army roared to a four-shot lead after five holes and Alex had the proverbial mountain to climb. Despite winning the sixth she was still four down going into the back nine. Another player might have capitulated at this point but, to her credit, Alex knuckled down and clawed back the deficit to all square by the 13th. At the 16th Alex was behind yet again and was still one down coming to the last. Determined to take a result from the match Alex played an excellent 18th hole to win it and thus come away with a well deserved half.

Also playing in her first inter-services, Claire Pengelley had a torrid time against the Army’s Denise Richards. Despite a nervous start Claire steadied the ship in the middle of the front nine but another two dropped holes in quick succession saw her three down at the turn. Finding it difficult to get the rhythm back in her game Claire struggled as Denise piled on the pressure. Another three dropped shots saw the Army take the honours on the 13th, a convincing six and five. Justine Stringer had a very steady game against her Army opponent (Julie McCarten) and three pars on the opening nine saw her take a two-shot lead at the turn. The Army could do little to stem the tide as Justine took three holes on the trot to stretch the lead to five. Defeat came on the 14th as Justine won the final hole necessary to take the match six and four.

On paper Michelle Burgess’s match against the Army’s Mary Wooland had all the makings of a classic. However, no-one told Michelle and, after two halved holes, took the next six in quick succession leaving the Army with a

RAF Golf focus

Ladies show the way!

Occasionally, the RAF Active team is inundated with material from one particular sport. RAF Golf appears to have a very efficient PRO! I trust you will enjoy this collection of reports from 2003 and encourage the men’s team to do similar. Ed.
virtually impossible deficit to make up. A revival looked possible as the Army took the 11th but with the bit between her teeth Michelle would not be denied as she closed out the match on the 13th and six and five.

Other than Alex’s halved match, Ros Ewer and Fiona Gray’s match was the closest of the day although the front nine gave little indication of this to come. With a steady stream of pars Ros established a commanding five-shot lead after nine holes. However, two pars and a birdie saw the Army pull back to two down and it looked odds on that the deficit would be wiped out completely. Not to be denied, Ros took the 15th to regain the three-shot lead and promptly lost the 16th and 17th. The Army had to win the 18th to salvage a half from the match but both ladies posted a score of three effectively halving the hole. After a nail-biting finish the RAF took the final three effectively halving the hole. After match one up. Both teams played some a nail-biting fi nal finish the RAF took the final three effectively halving the hole. After

The Royal Navy: Courtesy of their fi ne game to stay in contention, several a fairly straightforward affair. Although losing the first she immediately bounced back taking four of the remaining eight holes - three up at the turn. Although the Navy played some solid golf to recoup some of the deficit, Ruth never looked in trouble and took the match on the 15th four and three.

Rachel continued her impressive singles performance against the Navy’s Wally Dommershuizen. A very evenly played front nine by both players saw the match all square at the turn. After a stern talking to by her father who was caddying, Rachel moved into another gear and won the next five holes in succession. The Navy had no answer to this onslaught and Rachel won the match on the 14th five and four.

Alex was still behind at the turn, albeit by one shot. Clawing her way to a one-shot lead by the 12th she could not sustain the pressure and the lead see-sawed again in the Navy’s favour. At dormy two down coming to the 17th Alex needed an element of luck to take the match to the 18th. However, the Navy’s game remained rock steady and took the 17th and the match two and one.

Claire was next on the tee determined to produce a better performance against the Navy’s Pauline Last than in her

Golf Day at Lakeside Lodge

A novice’s perspective

by Cpl Jane Cocks

Although I have played golf while in the service, I had only read about RAF ladies golf in Station Routine Orders (SROs). I hesitated to make further enquiries because I was daunted by my vision of having to compete with a membership comprised of low handicap and far too serious golfers. However, I finally decided to respond to an invitation in SROs to attend an over-25 handicap coaching day. Throughout the journey to Lakeside Golf Club I was filled with trepidation, after all I had only played golf once in the last 18 months. Despite having legs like jelly I put on a brave face as I prepared to play 18 holes on the Lodge Course.

How could I have been so wrong! From the outset everyone made me feel welcome and was really friendly. I had a great time in the morning, not a stuffed shirt in sight and learnt so much from the other players as we progressed around the course. In the afternoon, we were coached on the driving range on our stance, grip and swing followed by chipping and putting techniques. This coaching was really beneficial and very easy to understand. The day ended in the clubhouse, in a friendly atmosphere with a meal, quiz and prize giving.

The following day I left wishing the day had been a week so that I could have made up for lost time! Far many years I have been bitten by the golf bug so why had I been so cautious in applying to learn more about the game? Quite honestly, the coaching day was an extremely worthwhile experience and I would recommend to anyone interested that RAF ladies’ golf is a sound method of meeting like minded new friends and is of course the road to becoming a more capable golfer.
previous singles match. Both players were steady through the opening holes with not much to choose between them. Gradually, however, the Navy pulled out a two-shot advantage, which was reduced to one by the turn. Neither player could make a decisive break on the back nine and the RAF was only one down coming to the last. However, the Navy held their nerve to win the hole and take the match two up.

Justine’s match against the Navy’s Carol McMurtry was another tense affair with play virtually at stalemate throughout the front nine. However, a superb tee shot on the par three ninth hole gave the Navy an opportunity for a birdie, which was duly taken. The stalemate resumed through the back nine with honours being shared. At one down on the 18th a half would have been a fair reflection of play but an excellent chip put the Navy in position to make par and again they made the most of the chance winning two up.

**Stalwart**

The match scores were now very close and a lot was riding on the remaining two games. Moira Hoath, in her last inter-services before retirement, has been a stalwart of the Navy team for many years and, no doubt keen to leave on a winning note, quickly took the opening three holes to go three up. Somewhat on the back foot Michelle took the next two holes but still went to the back nine three down. After halving the 10th Michelle suddenly found her game and took six of the next seven holes to win three and two - an excellent turn round. With the match now all square it was down to the captain to break the team home. Two halved holes followed by two RAF holes followed by two Navy holes saw the match even through six. However, a birdie by Fiona at the eighth saw the Ros one down coming into the back nine. Fiona’s game had been a little ragged during the foursomes but now both players were producing some excellent golf. A birdie on the 14th by Ros saw a two-shot lead cut to one but she could not find another to cancel out the last shot. Only able to halve the remaining four holes the Navy took the honours one up.

Ultimately the Royal Navy won the match six to five and this was by far the closest match the RAF Ladies have been involved in for some years. With the Army having beaten the Navy the previous day all three services had won one match and therefore the inter-services championships would be decided on count back. With the RAF on 12 1/2 points, the Army on 10 1/2 points and the Navy on 10 points the RAF Ladies were named as the Inter-Service Champions for 2003.

**Overall Result:** Royal Navy Won 6 - 5

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**The Times JP Morgan Fleming Corporate Golf Challenge**

by WO Sue Roberts

In recognition of the increasing number of women entering the boardroom as well as hitting the fairways, 2003 saw the launch of The Women’s Corporate Golf Challenge in association with The Times JP Morgan Fleming Corporate Golf Challenge. So how did I become involved? In early September each year the RAF Benevolent Fund hosts a corporate charity golf day, sponsored mainly by Servicetec International. The aim of the day is essentially to raise money for the Benevolent Fund by way of entrance fees, raffles and an auction. The RAF Men’s and Ladies’ golf teams are invited to enter a team and I was one of the four ladies selected.

The format for the day was a Stableford competition played off 3/4 handicap and I was fortunate to win the ladies prize with 33 points. At the prize-giving ceremony later that evening it was announced that, as well as receiving the best ladies’ prize, I would now be entered onto a national leader board together with the highest scoring ladies from registered corporate golf days around the country. The top 20 women would qualify for the women’s corporate final, which was to be held in conjunction with The Times, JP Morgan Fleming Corporate Golf Challenge National Final. I thought no more about it until I received a phone call in late October informing me that I had qualified as one of the top 20 ladies.

With over 140 companies entering and 400 women taking part across the UK I was obviously initially elated by the news and then nervous about what I’d got myself into. I desperately wanted to give a good account of myself and, in some small way repay Servicetec’s faith in entering the competition so it was straight off to my local golf professional for some much-needed lessons on my short game. La Manga is a stunning resort and we were treated like royalty from the time we stepped off the plane. A practise round had been organised for the first day of the competition itself with the women’s corporate final to be held the next two days, again a Stableford competition played off 3/4 handicap.

Needless to say there was plenty of nervous tension on the first tee and the attendance of Sky Sports cameras did nothing ease the butterflies. The North Course was not easy. There were some hellish greenside bunkers and the greens, while a delight to putt on, were virtually unreadable. The course was littered with ‘tempters’ (do I go for it or do I lay up?) and course management skills were tested to the full. Those who played ‘thinking golf’ were rewarded with some excellent scoring opportunities. As the round progressed and our nerves receded we relaxed into the game and really started to relish the competition. We even managed to forget about the cameras. After a very mediocre start my game suddenly took off on the back nine. I finished the first day’s play in 11th place with 23 points, nine shots off the lead, not exactly the start I’d hoped for. However, after several social sherbets and a stiff talking to, I was eager to begin the final round determined to do better. After a very mediocre start my game suddenly took off on the ninth and I scored 20 points on the back nine. At the end of play I eventually came in with 31 points, the best scoring round of the day, and an overall total of 54 points. There was a mighty battle for top honours and three ladies finished on 57 points. Only a count back over the final six holes could separate them and as far as the sponsors were concerned, the inaugural Ladies’ Corporate Final was a resounding success. I was placed fifth overall (which wasn’t bad out of 400) and was immensely proud to have taken part in the first event.

The winning men’s team will compete for the World Corporate Golf Challenge in Mauritius in June 2004. Undoubtedly, the Ladies’ Challenge will grow in stature and hopefully, in years to come, rival the men’s competition with the numbers taking part but, as the winning lady had nothing else to play for, Business Golf Corporation, the event organiser, invited her and her husband to Mauritius as their guests, all expenses paid! Now there’s a prize. Naturally, after having been involved in the whole thing and knowing what to expect, I am extremely keen to repeat the experience this year. I’m sure that once this word gets out competition for places at the RAF Benevolent Fund Charity Golf Day will be fiercely fought for. Any golfers out there who are interested in entering the Corporate Challenge for 2004 can find all the relevant details on the internet at www.businessgolfcorporation.com. See you there.