

THORNTON GOLF CLUB REWARDED FOR CLUBGOLF INITIATIVE



Children and coaches from Thornton GC's clubgolf programme

Thornton Golf Club, which last year began a **clubgolf** programme to attract juniors into the game has been rewarded with £980 from the Postcode Lottery to help bring more of the community's children into the game.

After watching its junior membership drop from 42 to 26 in recent years, Thornton took action last year by offering junior coaching through the national junior golf programme, **clubgolf**.

Its first step was to organise for five members to become trained coaches (one of them is Fife Ladies Champion of Champions). As soon as they were qualified they began working with the Sports Development Officer for Fife and the local Active Schools Co-ordinator to give golf taster sessions at nearby Thornton Primary School.

Generating interest amongst the schools P5s led them to arrange for two school classes to come to the club practice ground for coaching.

From that introduction, 10 children, including two relatives of club members, became regular coaching attendees through the summer.

"These children attended up to 13 lessons throughout the summer on Wednesday evenings and as coaches we were pleased that we had managed to retain their interest," said Thornton's Captain and volunteer coach, John Anderson, who is particularly pleased that eight of this number had been non-golfers from non-golfing families.

The result of that first year's coaching, which Mr Anderson describes modestly as 'reasonably successful', is the club's decision to intensify its efforts in 2011. Applying successfully for a Postcode Lottery award means it can afford to run two coaching courses this summer and double coaching numbers to 20. It will also pay for junior equipment, some professional coaching and transport to bring the children from the school to the club.

"The funding will allow us to go into two additional schools and attract hopefully a similar number of kids to add to our nucleus for next year," said a delighted Mr Anderson who, together with his team of volunteer coaches and helpers, has proved what can be achieved in a short space of time through innovation and resourcefulness.

For instance, Thornton doesn't have a resident pro, so last summer they enlisted the support of professionals from nearby Burntisland and Balbirnie Golf Clubs

"We felt we needed professional assistance to make sure that everything we were doing was relevant for the children as well as identifying improvements that each of the children could make," said Mr Anderson. "It was an enormous help having a professional to guide us and we are going to introduce this earlier in the coaching course in 2011.

In another example to clubs across Scotland, that to survive and grow, they should take a hard look to see if their constitutions and traditions are serving them or holding them back, Thornton is looking at restructuring its junior fees and offering free membership to under 13 year olds who have completed Level 1 Stage 1 **clubgolf** coaching.

In a year of junior changes, perhaps the biggest revelation for Thornton was

what happened on a September afternoon when six of the new youngsters received their end of course certificates.

“When the children came to be presented with their certificates they brought 25 adults with them,” said Mr Anderson.

“That completely overwhelmed us, to see the interest from the parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. And probably only one or two of them had ever set foot in our clubhouse before. From a club point of view that is really encouraging because, as we have social membership, we might get some of these interested adults to join as social members. And some will hopefully decide to try the game for themselves.”