

Letter to members from Richard Lomax, 2010 Club Captain

Dear Members

It is my pleasure to write to you as the incoming Club Captain.

Having served a year (and a bit!) as Vice Captain, I know how hard Geoff Kells, the outgoing captain, has worked during the past year and wish to express my thanks to him, on your behalf, for all his time and endeavours. He has, in my opinion, been an excellent captain, giving up a huge amount of his personal time to attend to club business. Thank you Geoff.

Also, many thanks to Lynn Turner, 2009 Ladies' Captain, who has worked tirelessly on behalf of the Ladies' Section, and John Rance, Seniors' Captain, who has singlehandedly built up a very strong Seniors' section and put in place over thirty fixtures for the year, including an overseas tour to the Isle of Wight!

Due to the collective efforts of Lynn, John and Geoff, 2009 was a very successful year for the club with great success in regional and inter-club competitions. Also, their respective charities have benefitted enormously, with over £7500 having been raised.

As for me and my plans, these are quite simple. I know how much members enjoy playing golf at Donnington Grove. Despite many issues which have arisen over the last couple of years I am optimistic that we now have the understanding and support of Sandtrend with a view to addressing these issues. You will have received a letter from Christopher Strong last November which accepted there were problems and set out a number of actions which, when implemented, we all hope will resolve or mitigate the issues. These involve: the recruitment of additional marshals for weekends and busy week days; restricting the number of societies and corporate bookings playing on any one day; raising green fees; and protecting reserved tee times for members at weekends.

Each of these measures is to be deployed from 1st April this year. However, it is fair to say that I, together with your committee, will be closely monitoring how these measures work and will be keen to see that they address the issues.

Beyond this, my single most important objective for the year, on your behalf, is to commit to ensuring that the golfing year provides you with every opportunity to play either friendly or competitive golf in as enjoyable way as is possible. What this means is that we will offer you a full calendar of golfing events, as normal, but with some additional fun events as well. Please keep an eye on the Events page on the members' website where all the golfing events will be listed. The popular Friday evening summer Champagne Roll-ups, comprising a nine hole stableford competition, will start again in April, as will the weekly cash draw for members. But, remember, you have to be in the clubhouse when the draw takes place to win the money!

We have started 2010, however, on a positive note with the appointment, by Sandtrend, of Dave Allen as Membership Secretary. Dave's biography was put on to the members' website in January and sets out his background and objectives. Simply put, Dave is tasked with increasing the membership. I wholeheartedly support this. An increased membership will enable less dependency on societies and golf breaks and thereby provide less potential for conflict with members' use of the course. Also, no-one will argue with having a stronger and more active membership to support club activities.

On this latter point, we have struggled on a number of occasions during 2009 to attract sufficient numbers to support either a club social function or, more importantly, a club fixture.

The social side to any club is important. We were lucky to have the energy and enthusiasm of Tim Brunson, Social Secretary, during 2009 and as a result we had some very successful events and some novel ones as well! One of the most successful was the introduction of informal dining get-togethers under the banner of the "Donnington Diners"! Once a month we offer members the opportunity of bringing along their partners (or not, as the case may be) and enjoying a very reasonably priced gourmet experience in the club Restaurant. Over the year we had an average of 20 attending these monthly gatherings but overall there were 35 different members who came along. It provides an excellent opportunity to meet other members and talk about things other than golf, if that is possible! If you are a new member, or haven't yet taken part, then look at the website Events page, or the Social Notice Board, for the next dates and come along. We promise you a great meal at the very least and you may also enjoy the company.

Regarding club fixtures we are once again going to offer a full range of golf competitions. These will encompass the usual inter-club fixtures for both men, ladies and mixed. All members are encouraged to play in these and we ask you to put your name forward if you wish to play. They are generally very convivial home and away matches with light refreshments. Whilst we aim to win, the main thing is that members get an enjoyable competitive game against some of our neighbouring clubs.

In addition there are the much more competitive Scratch Foursomes, Hillman Trophy and Concorde League matches. DG has had a very good record of competing in these competitions, having won each on different occasions. Notices are up on the notice board inviting members to put their names forward if they wish to be considered for selection. I would encourage as many as possible to take part. If we do this it gives the respective captains the most opportunity to field the best team.

I am particularly proud of having launched our own members' website last year. Through this we can ensure that every member has the opportunity of being fully informed on all the clubs activities. For those who have not yet taken the "online step", and logged on to our website, it offers much to inform and interest you. Amongst its' pages you will find the following:-

- Latest news column covering future or past events
- Local weather forecast
- Calendar of events for the year
- Competition Start sheets
- Competition Results
- Committee members and their biographies
- Seniors and Ladies pages focussing on their activities
- A survey box through which we can obtain your views
- Details and contact links for each of our reciprocal courses
- Latest Mens' and Ladies' handicap lists
- Email contact link to Committee

I would like to thank Dave Knight and his team for all the hard work which they have put into maintaining our course to a very high standard throughout last year and, of course, during the recent winter, when the course was covered in up to 10 inches of snow. During this time Dave organised the clearance of snow from the greens so that the course would be open at the earliest possible time. We often take these things for granted but this year I would like to sponsor a new golf competition in our calendar – The Greenkeepers' Revenge! This will be a team based competition, with prizes on the day, to be played on Saturday 8th May but with the majority of the proceeds

going to the green staff as a big “thank you” from the membership. I know you will join with me in supporting this new competition.

Just two more things I would like to mention: firstly, we have our AGM coming up shortly, on the 31st March. Last year the AGM attracted only a few members. If one takes the positive from this one might think that most members were very satisfied with how the club was being run and therefore didn't feel strongly enough about anything to encourage them to come along. However, I know that there were issues which were troubling members, as they spoke to either me or other committee members during the year. The AGM is an opportunity for you to both show your support to the committee as well as raise matters which concern you. Therefore, I would urge you to come along and support the evening. We will also be holding a Rules Quiz immediately after the AGM to test your knowledge of the R&A rule book.

My chosen charity for my year will be ***Help the Heroes***. As you may be aware, this charity is doing a fantastic and very worthwhile job aiding the rehabilitation of our wounded servicemen and women who are fighting to maintain our security. I trust that you can support me during the year and raise lots of money for this worthwhile charity.

Finally, please let me know if you have any issues, or ideas which you think might improve the experience for members. I am always available to listen.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you great golfing in 2010! I will be doing all that I can to ensure that it's a good year at Donnington Grove.

Richard Lomax

2010/11 Club Captain

March 2010