

Report of the Club Captain 2020, Stephen Parrett for the Annual General Meeting on Friday November 20th 2020

Well, that wasn't what I was expecting.

At the beginning of the year I had three lists, those events that I just had to attend, smile sweetly and hand out prizes, those things that I had to play in and the four things that required a good bit of organisation.

The first of these four is the Drive-In/Christmas Cup. Sue and I got that planned, roped in some helpers and struck lucky with the weather. We went green with the lolly sticks (used to predict where the drives would finish) and none of the Captains embarrassed themselves. In a somewhat lucky coincidence one of the drives ended up resting against the stick belonging to Vicki Dunlop, more of which later.

The second major event in the year is the St. George's Day Dinner. We had the menu and entertainment arranged, the posters were designed and displayed and then Covid struck and we had to cancel the event. Captain's Day and the Charity Dinner (3rd and 4th) were also casualties of the social distancing rules.

I don't want to dwell on the Coronavirus effect: things were normal from November 2019 to the 23rd March 2020. Then we had no golf until the middle of May followed by a relatively short period when we were restricted to two-balls (it was lovely to get round 18 holes in 3 hours) after which, the golf itself was almost normal though pre and post-round activities were and still are curtailed. From here on, I hope that we are not forced to take any backward steps but rather that we can slowly get back to something approaching normal.

Although Covid will be remembered as the year's defining issue and may yet define much of the upcoming year, I am conscious that, as golfers, we have been luckier than most.

Although many of the normal Captains duties fell away, others came to the fore. During the period when the first tentative steps back to golf were being taken, we had to arrange things such that as many people as wanted to play could do so; consequently, Societies were excluded as were other non-members and "reserved" mornings were suspended despite a slightly unseemly clamour for their early reinstatement.

Unfortunately, we have had several disciplinary issues to deal with. During the time that I have been a member of the club (over 10 years), I am only aware of two such incidents and we have had more than that in the last 6 months. In response we have developed a Disciplinary Procedure that will be published shortly. Golf is a game based on personal discipline and honesty, cheating is always wrong, there is no such thing as a "professional foul" in our game. Whilst investigating these events, it is somewhat worrying to hear players say things like "I've seen a few dubious acts by him/her in the past but I've never said anything". However awkward it may be, if you see something wrong, you should say something, often it's a genuine mistake.

Whilst dealing with the bad things that have occurred, I can't avoid mentioning the Rook Problem. Once again, this year the course has been spoiled by Chafer Grubs/Rooks. Many members, me included, accuse the Club of not taking the right measures to control the damage however I have come to realise that there is currently no obvious solution. The birds ignore canon and bird scarers, the only spray that works is licensed annually (too late this year) and we are only permitted to buy limited quantities (enough for tees and greens). As I write, the problem seems intractable though the Club continues to seek solutions. The Greenkeepers try to minimise the adverse effects by constant attention to the damaged areas.

To move to the more positive things.

Membership remains at a good level though there is a slight worry that the number of leavers (those that know the Club) is quite high; fortunately, there are enough new members to compensate.

The Ladies and Seniors Sections remain strong and very well organised. The Ladies Section is a particular strength of the Club, how long must we wait for a lady Club Captain. Try as I might it didn't happen this year. The Senior's year was potentially disrupted when their Captain was sidelined by illness. Fortunately, Francis recovered, is back in charge and has agreed to carry on through 2021, during his absence, David Clarke did a great job. The Junior Section could do with some more members, female as well as male but is still well managed and mentored by Roy Stanger.

It does no harm to remind the Membership of the work done by those that make up the Club Committees. I will not mention the members of the Seniors and Ladies Committees here, they will be recognised in the relevant Section Reports. In the Men's Section, Paul Kille and Kevan Walsh bring their skills to meetings, in particular they regularly carry out Course Inspections with Head Greenkeeper Andy. Nick Tout resigned his position as Communications Officer this year, my thanks for his years of service. David Cheyne also brings a welcome contribution whilst trying to wrestle our ramblings into a set of minutes.

These next three get regular mentions and thanks but you have to see, at close quarters, the time and skill that they bring to the Club to realise that, without their work the Club wouldn't function properly, if at all. Treasurer Jeremy Dolphin, Handicap Secretary Malcolm Berryman and Competitions Secretary Neal Apps are the people that make things work.

This year Malcolm (and Section Handicap Secretaries, Jane Parrett and Charles Bone) have had to manage the introduction of the World Handicap System. I know (first hand in one instance) the amount of work that this has entailed. I also know from conversations with other clubs that we are well ahead of the field. As I write implementation is one week away, they have done a great job.

With the majority of the "big" money-raising events scuppered by the distancing regulations, we expected our chosen charity to be hit hard. As you will know, our Club Member of the year, Vicki Dunlop, did her best to rectify this by getting a large amount of sponsorship for jumping out of a plane. Her efforts account for about half of the total we were hoping to raise (based on previous years). This, coupled with the events that we were able to run, generous contributions from the Past Captains' Day, the lads on the annual Dorset Trip and the Cheyne's raffle mean that we won't fall far short of our target. Thanks to all who contributed.

As far as club management is concerned, the IG system was introduced early in the year and, despite initial concerns, seems to have met with almost universal approval though we are still getting used to some of the finer details. Roger's Covid arrangements have worked well, he insured that the clubhouse was set up properly, whether the Members always followed the rules is another matter but we haven't been yet been censured.

Finally, a comment upon Crown both in general and in respect of our Club. The obvious difference between a Members Club and a Corporate Club is that the Corporate Club needs to make a profit. This, inevitably brings a potential conflict between the wishes of the Members and those of the Owners. The trick is to find an acceptable compromise, if such a thing exists. It is my opinion that, on occasions this year, we have drifted a bit too far away from the Members' point of view.

My best wishes to Ray for the forthcoming year and to Paul Bright (a great choice) his Vice Captain. I hope that things get better but even if restrictions persist, enjoy yourselves. The vast majority of the members are lovely, helpful people.

S.J. Parrett 25th October 2020