

**HASSRA LONDON GOLF SOCIETY
NATIONAL HASSRA SINGLE ACTIVITY CLUB OF THE YEAR 2019
CAPTAIN'S REPORT FOR THE 2020 SEASON**

Well, what a year it's been, unlike no other, and with Covid 19 still rampant, all golf courses closed until at least 3 December 2020, and time of writing, we're about to see The Augusta Master's being played in November without spectators. What next - The Open on Ice?

For me the highlight of our restricted year was that we managed to raise well over £1,000 for two brilliant causes. Our Workers versus Retired match raised over £300 for the Rennie Grove Hospice which has been providing terrific support to Graham Try, our former captain and stalwart member of over 20 years, to enable him to stay at home whilst bravely coping with the debilitating effects of Motor Neurone Disease. Linked to that, the Motor Neurone Disease Association Just Giving page set up on behalf of my Champagne Draws currently has donations of £643 plus gift aid for a total in excess of £750 - a magnificent sum.

The society's first three planned events - Royal Ascot on 27 March, Brentwood (Workers versus Retired) on 14 April and Addington Palace on 18 May were all cancelled as the whole country struggled in the first lockdown.

The committee also agreed that the society's individual championship (best 4 results from 7 events) and the Jubilee Cup knockout singles and doubles competitions could not go ahead in the restricted environment.

Subsequently, our matches against West Midlands HASSRA and the three-cornered match against South and East of England (the Trew Trophy) were also cancelled.

Then, completely out of the blue, we heard that our society had won the National HASSRA Single Activity Club of the Year for 2019. Our award letter contained the following:

"The Awards Committee was impressed by your ongoing commitment to recruit new members and diversify your membership, and to encourage more women golfers in particular. Your members enjoy a full and interesting calendar of events, providing opportunities to play at a variety of venues and in matches against other HASSRA societies. Effective communication with your members and charity fundraising also mark you out as very worthy winners of this year's award".

This was in a year when the average attendance at our 7 main society days was a staggering 31 players - up from 29 in 2018, also an increase on previous years.

The award is testament not only to all the hard work the officers and committee put into the society, but to ALL OF YOU for enthusiastically supporting our events time after time.

Lockdown was eased from 10 May and slowly, but with many restrictions, 2 player golf was reintroduced but was very much, turn up, play, go home and no drink or food socialising in the 19th Hole.

Detailed reports of the events we were able to run have been previously sent to all members and are on the society's website. Brief details are:

Abridge Golf Club Society Event - 26 June 2020

What should have been our 4th event, was our first "new restrictions test day" when 23 members and guests took part. The course was in great condition and definitely one to consider for future events. There was no meal provided after the round of golf due to a decision made by the golf club as they slowly moved back to some kind of normality.

Congratulations went to Raj Mohindra for top scoring with 35 points in trying (hot and very windy) conditions and to Rob Leach, Anna Maria Loughman and Andy French for winning the nearest the pins competitions. The event also welcomed new members Claire Vittery, James Rowe and John McCue.

West Kent Golf Club Society Event - 24 July 2020

Following the very successful Abridge "test event", the society launched its second event of 2020 at the West Kent golf club in the shadow of the famous Biggin Hill airfield. 21 members and 7 guests took part. Membership and handicap secretary, Andy French, birdied the fifth hole and was rewarded with an immediate spectacular low flypast by a 2 seater Spitfire. There were at least half a dozen sightings of the iconic plane during the day - presumably as other players had birdies in what turned out to be some exceptional scoring. Apparently, Gary Arnold had earlier birdied the first hole but he'd clearly gone too early as they were only warming up the oil in the Spitfire at that stage.

Nearest the pin winners were Rob Leach, John McCue and Paul Lees.

Runner up on the day with a remarkable 41 points was Allen Manning (handicap 21). He was pipped to the Chairman's Cup by John McCue (23) in only his second society event with a spectacular 42 points - John is definitely one to watch at future society events.

The captain's champagne charity draw was won by Neil Townley.

Society President's Day - 14 August 2020 at the Horton Park Golf Club

Society President, Brian Skinner hosted his annual day. Despite tales from some players of horrendous thunderstorms the night before and a few shaky car journeys around the M25 in treacherous conditions, the rain held off at Horton Park all day. We were even able to have our post game meal and presentation outside on the patio.

A full complement of 28 (golf club limit) members and guests turned out including Trevor Dunnion making the long trip down from Chester to support Brian's day. We were ably shepherded around Horton by the non-playing Brian driving his course buggy like Sevy Ballesteros at Valderama in the Ryder Cup, passing on news of players' highs and lows and what a high there was. Our treasurer Leon Ranson aced out with a hole in 1 at the difficult 4th hole! His first ace and the first hole in one in the society's history that goes back well over 50 years - Leon bought all players a drink, at a cost of over £135.

At the socially distanced presentation, and before handing over to Brian to present the prizes, Shaun announced that Gary Arnold had managed to procure over 30 HASSRA sponsored Titlest golfers caps. It had been decided to award these to the winner of each of our events and to players representing the society in future inter regional matches. However, the officers had decided that no one deserved one of the caps more than our President Brian, in recognition of all he had done for the society over many many years and Shaun duly presented the first cap to Brian. Winner of the Brian Skinner Cup - Leon Ranson - 41 points (including the hole in one on the 4th for 5 points).

Winner of the Watson Tankard (for members with a handicap of 21 or more) - Paul Lupton 37 points. (successfully defended from 2019).

Nearest the pins - Gary Arnold, David Shepherd and John McCue.

The captain's champagne charity draw for those scoring less than 30 points - Gary Arnold.

Workers versus Retired - Brentwood Golf Club - 14 September 2020

This much anticipated 12 aside match, postponed in April, finally took place on Monday 14 September.

24 players took part in 6 four ball, better ball, match play.

At the post match meal there were a number of positive comments about the Brentwood course and its many scenic drives and holes. Certainly, a course worth considering for a future society day.

There were a number of close matches and the Workers led 3 - 2 with just one match remaining. Luckily for the retirees, they had left their best, and secret weapon, until last, as Ann-Maria Loughman and Paul Lupton triumphed in a 7 & 5 victory. So, an honourable 3 - 3 draw. Each winning pair from the 6 matches received a sleeve of three golf balls with the HASSRA London Health logo. Also receiving a sleeve of balls for "nearest the pin" was Rob Leach, Tom Younger and Steve James. The day raised over £300 for the Rennie Grove hospice. Ex-society captain and stalwart supporter, Graham Try, is bravely coping with the effects of Motor Neurone Disease. Graham is still managing to live at home with the aid of carers twice a day from Rennie Grove Hospice, which raises 90 per cent of its funding by its own efforts.

Captain's Day - Wednesday 14 October, Burnham Beeches golf club, Burnham, Buckinghamshire.

30 members and 2 guests turned out plus our society president, Brian Skinner and his wife, Linda.

The course was in excellent condition, albeit playing very long, especially some of the holes on the back 9 that were into the wind. Everyone stayed for the excellent meal of roast lamb and vegetables, apple crumble and custard plus coffee, that was served on a "rolling basis" at tables for 6.

Brian Skinner read out some words from Graham Try about how he was honoured that the new claret jug bearing his name meant that he would always have a part to play in every subsequent Captain's Day. Graham recalled how he had joined the society around 25 years earlier and had been captain for 2 years. He had made many friends along the way. His only regret was that whilst often scoring less than 30 points to gain entry into the Captain's Champagne draw, he had never managed to win it!

Brian also recalled that Mike Munnely had earlier this year raised over £1,000 for Motor Neurone Disease research through his sponsored run.

Brian presented the claret jug to the overall winner, Terry Fletcher, who scored 33 points.

Other winners were:

Team Winners - Ian Beecroft, Gary Mitchell and Arun Patel - 81 total combined stableford points.

Nearest the pin - Captain Shaun, Alan Donald (guest), Arun Patel (10th and 17 holes) and Leon Ranson.

The captain's champagne charity draw was won by a delighted Ann-Maria Loughman.

Final event 11 November 2020 Addington Palace

Sadly, the society's final event of 2020 at Addington Palace Golf Club on 11 November was cancelled due to the further Covid lockdown2 restrictions brought in by the government on 5 November 2020. We hope to go back to the course in the future.

Thank you for supporting the society during a very difficult year and for giving so generously to our charity fundraising efforts. I wish you all a very happy, family Christmas and a New Year for 2021 that will see us all back on the golf course at the earliest opportunity.

Shaun Bausor