



Vale Royal Abbey

THE DRIVER MEMBERS NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2022

PAST CAPTAIN'S REMARKS



Mark Patton
Mens Captain 2020/21

It was an honour and a pleasure to represent Vale Royal Abbey as Captain for 2 years, little did I know that in 2020 when I took office that I would still be Captain at the beginning of 2022!!.

Much has changed in the world, and we at the time of changing Captains took a moment to remember our absent friends at the AGM. After the unprecedented couple of years I remember also those family and friends away from my golfing circle who have also passed away.

Over this difficult time Vale Royal Abbey has seen a huge increase in new members, many of whom I have had the pleasure of enjoying a game with. I look forward to playing with many more of this influx of members in the coming months and years.

My best wishes to Captain Geoff Anderton and Lady Captain Andrea Broadhurst already nearly 4 months into their term of office. The same goes for their Vice-Captains, I hope they too will have a wonderful time and enjoy their year preparing for their Captaincies.

Thank you to all those who have served and continue to serve on the various committees, volunteer their time, edit newsletters and help make Vale Royal Abbey what it is for the membership.

Most of all thank you to all the members, on behalf of myself and Lady Captain Angela, for the generosity you have again shown in raising many, many thousands of pounds to help Macmillan and Cancer Research UK.

Happy golfing and thank you again for your support.

Mark Patton
Past Club Captain 2020/2021

PAST LADY CAPTAIN'S REMARKS



Angela Scragg
Ladies Captain 2020/21

Wow, what a two years it has been for us all. Covid taking over our lives in so many ways and making my Captaincy so very different. Thankfully, we still managed to play lots of golf and enjoy our social time together, maybe more outside than normal, but we got there.

It seems a long time ago now when I used to have my own divot parties in lock down, and also a

group of us used to marshal the course to warn off dog walkers and rogue players. I remember one day, I had just picked up the buggy to start my shift, when I saw "as bold as brass" two people walking right across the 18th fairway, so I put my foot down and went as fast as that buggy could take me, only to realise on approaching the couple that it was Steve & Ali Graham. That could have been very embarrassing, telling the owners of the club that they can't walk on their own course !!!



For me, the most memorable event was my Lady Captain's away day to the Vale of Llangollen, a lovely fun day, a very nice meal and the journey home on the coach will never be forgotten. I suffer terribly with travel sickness, and in previous years Monica Bate (who also suffers) and I sit at the front of the coach, not daring to move. But for my Lady Captain's away day, my very good friend Joan Threlkeld, insisted that I get up and dance with the other Ladies, and I did, and I really enjoyed it, and I wasn't ill. Just shows what lots of wine and Prosecco can do. Thank you to all the Ladies for a lovely and memorable day and for your gifts.

Since the start of my Captaincy, the Ladies section has welcomed 23 new Ladies, bringing the total to 58. I do hope all our Ladies are enjoying their time with us and have made lots of new friends.

I am absolutely overwhelmed at the amount we managed to raise for our chosen Charities, Cancer Research UK and Macmillan Cancer support. Thanks to you all, we raised the outstanding amount of £18,370. Please see the full breakdown of how the funds were raised and thank you all again.

I chose Cancer Research UK because as I'm sure most of you are aware, I lost my wonderful husband Bernie to cancer in 2015. I'm sure Bernie would have been very proud of me.

Now it's time for the thank you's – so many. Firstly, I would like to thank our Junior Captain Charlie Watts for all the help he has given to me over the last 12 months. One day you will make a great Captain Charlie. I would like to thank Lady Vice Captain, Andrea, and the Ladies committee members, who do an amazing job, and I really can't thank them enough.

Thank you so much to the VRA gardeners, Gordon Bradbury, Trevor Meech, Roger Dunn & Jo Nicholson, thanks to all your hard work, we have a lovely display next to the first tee.

I am honoured to be able to say that I was Lady Captain when Sue Wiseman and her West Cheshire Shield team won their final match at Heswall. Such an exciting match, well done everyone, and thank you Sue & team.

I would also like to thank Justin and his team, for working so hard to try and keep our course in wonderful condition. Unfortunately, the rain we received in February had been no help to them at all, but the weather has long since picked up and we are well into summer now and hopefully still have some nice weather to come.

Thank you also to Ben, Scott and Brendan and to the Club House staff. All very important in the day to day running of the club.

Thank you also to my very good friend of many years, Vicky Torlop, you're a little star, and so much help to me and everyone else.

Joan Threlkeld and Monica Foster, what would I have done without you, so much support, I am so very grateful. Thank you to Vale Royal Abbey for allowing me to be your Lady Captain for 24 months and for your gifts, and to the Ladies section for their lovely gift and flowers.

I would like to wish Andrea, Geoff & Charlie the very best of luck for their tenure as Captains of Vale Royal Abbey Golf Club. They are already doing an amazing job. Thank you to you all, for all your help and support.

Angie Scragg

Past Lady Captain 2020 & 2021



CAPTAINS CHARITIES FUND RAISING	2020 & 2021
Four Nations including Raffle, Auction & Donations	£7,043.00
Captains Day Event including Raffle	£3,020.00
Various Very Kind Donations	£2,292.00
Raffles excluding Captains Day, Captains Drive in & Four Nations	£1,750.00
Captains Drive including Raffle	£1,242.00
Lady Captains Charity Day including Raffle	£650.00
Lady Captains Away Break - Forest of Arden - 2 free places, sale of driver & donations	£570.00
Pro Captains Challenge	£438.00
Ladies Donations for clothes etc.	£332.00
Sale of clothes at Ladies Opens (Seal)	£270.00
Cake Sale	£261.00
Collection Boxes CRUK & Macmillan Cancer Support	£195.00
What the Dickens/Jewellery Event (Martyn Hall)	£152.00
CRUK 20p tubes	£65.00
Donation From Lady Captains Quiz Team	£60.00
Lady Captain vs Lady Vice Captains Match	£30.00
Total	£18,370.00



3





Debra & Cathy at the away day at Llangollen



Andrea and Angie at the away day at Llangollen



Cheers! VRA Ladies at the away day at Llangollen



A TRIBUTE

What a curious time we have lived through during the last 2 years. Who would have thought, that way back in January 2020 when we began to hear rumours of a 'flu-like epidemic coming our way, that it would turn into a worldwide pandemic altering our way of life almost overnight and still be with us more than 2 years later? I certainly didn't, I thought it would be a flash in the pan and over by Easter of that year!!!

Alison and Ian Brandon were wonderful hard working Captains in every way, but were unable to have the send off they earned or present their charity cheque in the normal way at the end of their Captaincy year.

Andrea Broadhurst and Geoff Anderton, our new Captains, whilst enjoying their Drive-In on a beautiful day were not able to have the customary welcome afforded to the incoming Captains.....and in between them came Angie and Mark who had neither hello or goodbye!!

Angie Scragg and Mark Patton, Lady Captain and Club Captain respectively, took office on March 27th 2020 and left office on March 25th 2022.

Having served stoically for 2 years in the fond hope that things would get betterthey did to a certain extent..... nothing has been normal. Uncertainty reigned at all times and a stop start life became the norm. However during all of that time the wheels never stopped turning. How easy it would have been to give up but they, the Committees and staff soldiered on in the background and now hopefully we can see the light at the end of the tunnel and our lovely Club will continue to thrive and we can really show our new members what we are about.

Charity, whilst never obtrusive has always been an integral part of the Club's ethos right from day one in 1998. The mantra being....let's do what we can for others whilst enjoying ourselves... Angie and Mark have carried that out to the letter over the past 2 years in the most difficult of circumstances, raising with the help of members almost £18,500, an astonishing amount of money, so I hope when I saythank you for all your hard work and dedication, I am echoing the thoughts in general of all of our members.

Now enjoy your golf, and the same goes for Andrea and Geoff at the beginning of their golfing journey.

Monica Foster





Geoff Anderton
Mens Captain 2022

CAPTAIN'S REMARKS

When I was originally asked to be Club Captain over two and a half years ago I was naturally pleased to accept and thought I had better start planning for some of the forthcoming activities. However at that point I don't think

anyone could have predicted the events that followed, pandemic was a word that most of us had only heard in a history lesson whilst at school, if they could remember that far back.

After a period of severe restrictions on our movements and mixing we were allowed to start playing golf again as long as we kept to the new guidelines of changing shoes on the car park, not handling the pins, the rakes in bunkers and your opponents ball (as if you would).

Whilst I appreciate the need for shielding for the more vulnerable amongst us I find it disappointing that some members are still keeping up with a number of the restrictions that were imposed over this difficult time

and are still refusing to use the changing rooms and bar facilities at the club. I hope in time and more vaccinations life can return to more normal conditions for everyone.

Under the general circumstances applying to the country it made sense for the club to ask the existing captains to extend their captaincy for a further year. In spite of the restrictions applying to many facets of normal life they managed to do a great job and supported by the club members managed to raise lots of money for their chosen charities.

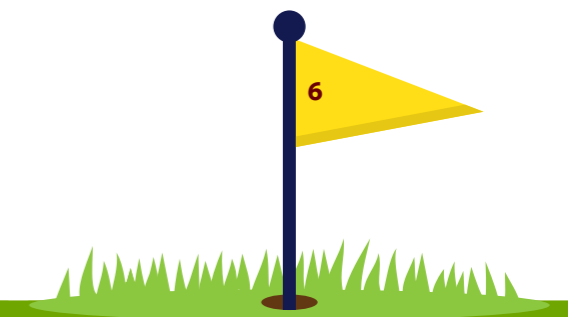
So after this period of restrictions began to ease and many of our normal activities and gatherings were once again allowed the Lady Captain, Andrea and I were looking forward to The Captains Drive In and evening Hail and Farewell Evening dinner arranged for the 26th March. However the latest wave of the virus affected so many of the club members that the evening meal had to be cancelled.

This followed cancellation of the clubs AGM which was rearranged as a zoom meeting. Unfortunately the AGM is also the occasion when the club captains officially present their cheques to the representatives of their chosen charities. It is proposed that a new date for the Hail and Farewell get together is arranged and that this will provide an opportunity for the retiring Captains to present their cheques.

The Captains Drive In however was a great day the weather behaved itself for a change ,the rain taking

a holiday and the temperature high enough to allow members to sit outside the clubhouse for a drink after their round of golf. Andrea and I would like to thank all those members who generously supported the competition and prize draw and remembered to bring cash on the day and all those members who volunteered to help to make the day a success.

I must also say a big thanks to the greens committee, Justin and the ground staff who did a great job in preparing the course for the day, the course has seen an increasing number of players since the increase in membership over the past year but in spite of this and the inclement weather the course is in good condition. I was pleased to announce at the AGM that the vice captain of the club for the forthcoming year is Mark Haynes who I am sure together with his lady vice captain wife Jane will give Andrea and I lots of support over the next year.



I had asked Scott Anderson to set out a difficult long putt competition and he informed me that he doubted anyone would manage to hole out, a total of eleven members actually sank the putt on the day, Scott believes it was testimony to the benefits of attending his putting classes! The winner was established by means of a draw. Andrea and I are hoping that the club members will continue to enjoy their golf, keep in good health and support the various activities planned to take place throughout the coming year.

Geoff
Club Captain 2021/2022

and I am very proud and honoured to have been chosen as your Lady Captain for the forthcoming year. I will do my best to fulfil this role to the best of my ability and maintain the previous high standards set by the past Captains.

Well it was not the start of my year that I had hoped for as unfortunately I could not attend our Ladies Annual Meeting due to Covid, also this year's main AGM had to be carried out via "Zoom". On the plus side I tested negative on the day of the "Drive-In" and was able to enjoy what was a most memorable day accompanied by Mr Captain Geoff and Junior Captain Charlie. The weather was glorious and we raised £1327 on the day for our charities, thank you all for your generosity and support.

I would also like to mention our Ladies Committee who do a fantastic job and spend a great deal of their own time ensuring that our section runs smoothly. Thank you also to those Ladies who have elected to stay on for an extra year It is now the start of the golfing season and our Ladies will be competing in the West Cheshire Shield, Percival Trophy and Business Ladies Matches. Good Luck to you all and let's hope for another successful year. Finally I would like to wish Vale Royal Abbey and all of its members, good health, good golf and success for the future.

Andrea Broadhurst
Lady Captain 2022

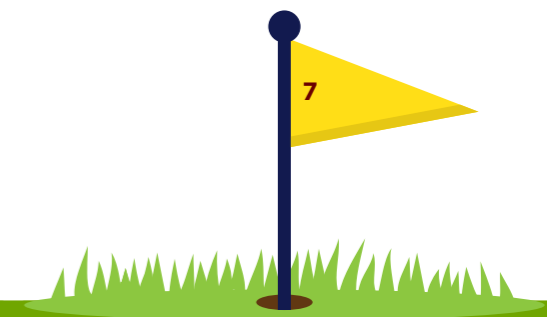
LADY CAPTAINS REMARKS

I would first like to thank our outgoing Captains Angie and Mark for all of their hard work and efforts during the past two years and having to cope with the most difficult of circumstances due to the COVID outbreak. I am sure you

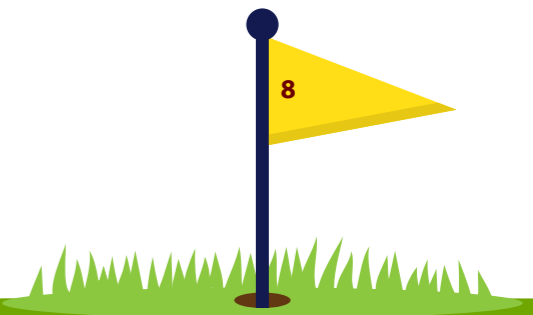
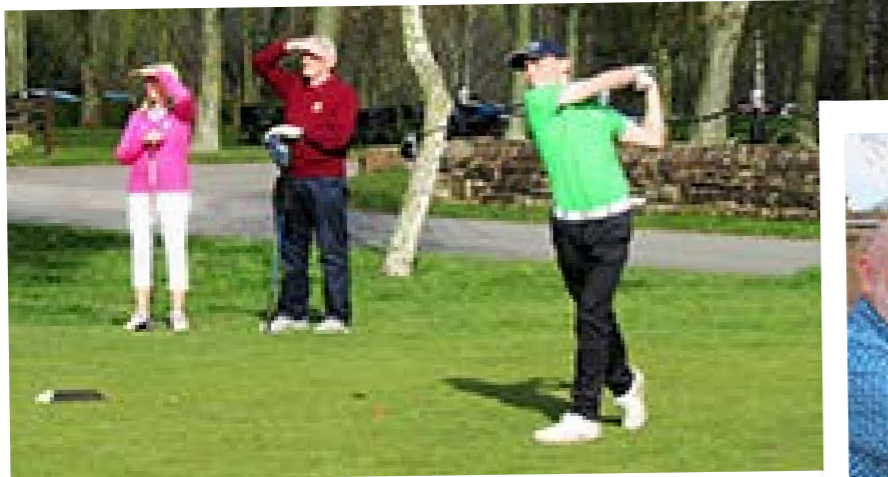
The charities both Mr Captain and myself have chosen for this year are The Christie and MacMillan Cancer Support. The Christie is very special to me as they have recently successfully treated members of my family and close friends. I hope you will continue to support us during the year to raise money for the great work that these charities do. If members have any raffle or auction prizes that they wish to donate we would be very grateful.

I am pleased to announce that the Lady Vice Captain for 2023 will be Jane Haynes. I would like to thank Jane for taking on this role and I look forward to working with her during the coming year.

will agree that they have done a great job.
I have been a member of Vale Royal Abbey for 21 years



CAPTAINS DRIVE IN



LADY CAPTAINS AWAY DAY AT TRENTHAM



INTRODUCING OUR NEW CHEF

Originally from Bala in North Wales, Ian Roberts has been in the Catering industry for 21 years. Ian first became Head Chef at the young age of 21 at the Bala Lake Hotel, in Wales. There came a time when he felt he needed a wider experience, so took several roles as Sous Chef and Pastry Chef gaining this experience at several establishments including Peckforton Castle; Oddfellows Restaurant, Chester; The Old Vicarage, Cranage; before taking the role of Head Chef at The Court House, Knutsford. After 9 months at The Court House, under Ian's management, they won the title of "Best Fine Dining in Cheshire" with Cheshire Life. He went on to re-open Church's Mansion in Nantwich, which took Runner-Up for "Best New Restaurant in Cheshire" with Cheshire Life.

COVID struck and hit the industry cruelly, however, Ian is now with us and wants to provide great food with variety and "something for everyone".

Take a look at the new Menu... whether you want something substantial or a small bite or sweet treat, there should be something for you. The menu will change over time so give the food a try. Provide Ian with your Feedback either directly, or by talking to Dave, our Front of House Manager.

GREENS REPORT

After a long and wet winter, we are seeing the course as it should be like a premier course. Definition on fairways and tees and especially the greens, which are continuing to improve.

To achieve this the greens were treated with a slow-release compound, fertiliser.

The height of cut on the collars of the greens is now reduced from 8mm to 6mm giving them a better definition.

All the tees were treated with a six-month slow-release fertiliser and mowed differently to aid the growth and improve the presentation.

Some of the sprinkler heads have now been replaced a new control panel installed and a variable speed controller for better efficiency.

All fairways continue to be divotted with sand as required. The course was sprayed to eliminate the dandelion plants after the flowers reached full bloom.

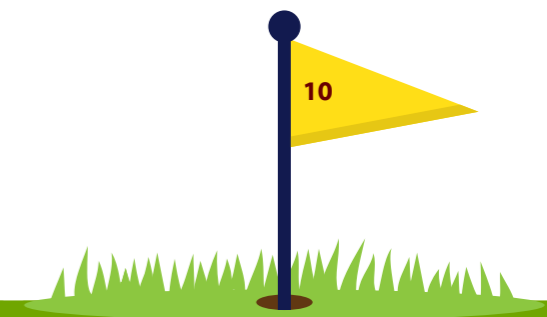
All the course markers and signs have been repainted by members of the greens committee, many thanks to those that participated.

All the benches will be having a complete refurbishment and new stain, thanks to our two handymen (Carl & Brian). Justin and his team are working flat out to give you the membership the best prepared golf course in the area. In this respect, please help by keeping trollies to paths don't leave them on the side of tees, take them around bunkers, rake bunkers, repair pitch marks, these little things, make a big difference.

The greens committee and the greens team under Justin will endeavour to make Vale Royal one of the best courses in Cheshire and hopefully make all members proud to be part of it.

Any member with any comments good or indifferent please pass them on to any one on the committee, we take all comments seriously and will respond.

Joe Nicholson
Greens Chairman



THREE RULES GOLFERS BREAK WITHOUT REALISING

1

Picking up golf ball to identify it without first marking its position

Yes, the Rules have been relaxed so you no longer have to have someone observe the lifting, but make sure you mark the ball's position first. If you don't first mark the ball's position when moving it or lifting it to identify it, you will be subject to a penalty.

Rule 7.3. One-stroke penalty.

2

Wiping away sand on fringe of Green

Sand and loose soil are only classed as loose impediments on the green.

This means that if you're on the fringe wanting to putt and, for example, there is sand from a greenside bunker on your line, you may wipe away the sand or loose soil from the putting green only but can't touch any that is lying on the fringe.

The only time you would be allowed to brush away sand on your line on the fringe is if it arrives there after your ball had come to rest, perhaps as a result of another player's bunker shot spraying sand all over your line before you get to play.

Rule 8.1a. Improving conditions affecting stroke (line of play), general penalty

3

Playing a second ball without announcing it's a provisional

Before the stroke is made, the player must announce that he or she is going to play a provisional ball:

- It is not enough for the player only to say that he or she is playing another ball or is playing again.
- The player must use the word "provisional" or otherwise clearly indicate that he or she is playing the ball provisionally under Rule 18.3.

If the player does not announce this (even if he or she intended to play a provisional ball) and plays a ball from where the previous stroke was made, that ball is the player's ball in play under penalty of stroke and distance (see Rule 18.1).

Brought to our attention by Chris Wells



The three R's of golf

- 1 Repair pitch marks (yours and others you may see)
- 2 Replace divots
- 3 Rake footprints and golf shot marks in bunkers

SENIORS SECTION

The Seniors Section currently has 107 members (entries for the summer season competitions) – the highest number ever for the summer season, with handicaps ranging from 6 to 34. As always, we warmly welcome any new members. We are sure you will enjoy the friendly camaraderie of the section and the wide range of competitions and events provided.

Our Summer League (best of series) competition started on 7th April with 50 entrants increasing to 58 entrants on 28th April. We are well on the way with some cracking results in the first 2 rounds. Current leaders are Tim Bird 73 pts, Alistair Macrae 72 pts and Stephen Bryce 70 pts. – All three gentlemen are relatively new members to the Seniors Section. Obviously, a lot to play for yet with 8 rounds to go.

Interclub Matches started with a comfortable win against Wallasey at home on 14th April 6 ½ to 1 ½ and a win against Wrexham 12th April 5 and 3. So - we are all looking forward to the return matches. We have a total of 10 home and 10 away matches to play throughout the season so if any members have not yet played, there is plenty of time to catch up. All paid up senior members are invited to put their names down for these matches. Teams are selected jointly by our Match Organiser Trevor Meech and the chosen Captain of the Day on a fair share basis.

Our first Exchange Day this year will be at Heswall Golf Club on Monday July 18th when we will be joined by our Captain Geoff Anderton and his guests - no doubt a good time will be had by all. Our second Exchange will be at Wilmslow Golf Club on 22nd August – so Seniors get your names down early when entry sheets are posted to avoid disappointment.

Our Rider Cup this year is scheduled to take place on 23rd June. This is an annual Matchplay event between the WRINKLIES and CRINKLIES of the section (and there are a lot). Our Rider Cup Captains this year are Wrinklies – David Cook and Crinklies - Joe Nicholson. Members will be invited to enter the event, normally for the team they have played for before, any newcomers can choose whichever team they fancy. Details will be circulated nearer the time – to be sure this will be another great day.

We have a wonderful course out there and our Senior members are certainly making the best of it and are doing their very best to protect all areas by always replacing divots, repairing pitch marks, not taking trollies onto fringes of the greens and not between the bunkers and greens in line with the advised course etiquette.

Finally – we hope all members are enjoying the welcoming flower bed as you approach the first tee. This bed was established in the first place by the immediate Past Captains Mark and Angie and is being maintained by VRA Seniors Section. We have also sown wild flower seeds on the bankside between the 2nd and 16th Greens – better than “Don't Mow in May” we think – let's hope they germinate.

Gordon Bradbury

Seniors Chair



HANDICAP AND COMPS COMMITTEE MEET THE TEAM

Ever wonder how Competitions are there for your enjoyment, when you turn up to play?

Well , we have to have a Handicaps and Comps Committee at the Club to be able to run Competitions and be allowed by England Golf to administer your Handicaps. All this starts with the annual fixture list which gets created for the following season (April -March) in November the previous year. This then gets added to the Club Diary which is made available in March.

Competitions are set up in BRS, which includes format, Tee intervals, start and finish times, opening times to register to play, eligibility to play etc. Majors Comps are also subject to a draw, which requires manual intervention of an additional 30 minutes work Comps are also set up in Masterscoreboard which allows you to register to play , obtain your up to date handicap and register your score when finished. The World Handicap System gets updated by Masterscoreboard automatically to take care of your handicap, but as far as the Comp is concerned, there is more work to be done. Closing the Comp requires someone to check all the cards for accuracy and completeness, hand out Disqualifications and carry out the Comp closure, followed by results being published. There is a check to pick up no-shows and hand out Bans. Your Comp fees require accounting and banking as well.

In addition to weekend and mid-week Comps, the knockouts are kept up to date and on track to complete by closing dates. Handicaps are monitored and subject to an annual review which is carried out by H&C.

Depending on the number of entries, creating , managing and closing a Comp will take 1-3 hours work. The Ladies and Seniors have members that manage their Comps in addition to the H&C team, notably Mick Clarke, Andrew Threlkeld, John Marsden , Trevor Meech, Steve Hornby, Mark Haynes, Sonya Bradbury and Sue Wiseman. Both Andrew and Trevor also close out week-day and weekend Comps.

The Handicaps and Competitions Committee is made up of the following and in case you don't know who they are I've included their photos, please feel free to ask any questions you may have we are here to ensure as members your Competition golfing experience is an enjoyable one.

P.S. Anyone who would like to get involved in H&C work please let me know.

Martyn Hall
H&CC Chairman



Gordon Bradbury



John Bebbington



Martyn Hall



Phil Bettley



Tony Dullahan



Wayne Pearce



MIXED CLUB COMPETITIONS

2022 National Inter-Clubs Mixed Championship

VRA entering a Team in its first year.

VRA won its first match away at Eaton on 6th May 3&2.

MDGA Archie Preston Mixed knockout

VRA entering the Competition for the first time this year.

VRA played at Home vs Stand winning 5&2 on 10th April.

VRA played Prestwich on 25th June.

Our run of mixed matches has come to an end, Hill Valley beating us at home after the deciding match went down the 20th.

Thanks Debra Locke for organising the Teams.

BUSINESS LADIES

Vale Royal Abbey Business Ladies team got off to a good start in the West Cheshire League on Sunday 1 May with a 3 – 0 home win against neighbours Sandiway. Maddie, Carolyn and Jenny were the players on the day.

The next match was played away on May 22 at Caldy. On a fairly calm day (for a coastal course) on a lovely course in super condition, Maddie, Ligia and Carolyn enjoyed

the competition even though the result was a 2-1 loss. The highlight of the day however was a hole in one being achieved by Carolyn on the 8th hole. Congratulations to Carolyn on her first hole in one.

On Sunday May 29 we had our second home game against Royal Liverpool in which Maddie, Debra and Angie played and again we won 2-1.

We got our revenge against Caldy in our home fixture on Sunday 3 July winning 2.5 - 0 .5.

On a beautiful day on Sunday 10 July Maddie, Jenny and Ligia had the honour of playing at next years Open venue Royal Liverpool. As you can imagine the course was in great condition, although we all found the rough and their pot bunkers very hard to cope with. Even though we lost 3-0 the experience was memorable.

Our final game was on Sunday 24 July away at Sandiway.

WEDDING

Steve Locke married Debra Perry on 7th February 22



Steve and Debra



Carolyn Patton 8th at Caldy



CONGRATULATIONS GORDON AND NIGEL

Many Congratulations to Gordon Spruce and Nigel Wells on being awarded Licentiate of the Royal Photographic Society (LRPS). This is an internationally recognised qualification promoting the highest standard of photography. They both submitted a panel of 10 images which were assessed by five members of the RPS, with a mixture of ARPS and FRPS distinctions behind them.



Gordon's Cross Country Eventer

Their images had to meet criteria set by the RPS showing variety, creativity, and technical quality. Below is an image from each of Gordon and Nigel's panels. Gordon and Nigel are both members of Knutsford Photographic Society, which has an active programme of events. If there are any budding photographers who would like to know more, please contact either Gordon or Nigel.

Chris Wells



Nigel's Frog in the Rain

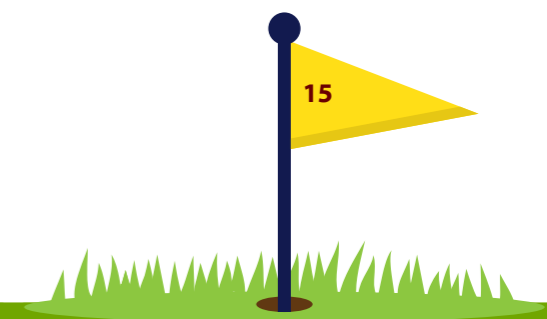
REFLECTIONS OF A NEW MEMBER

Having been a member of our last Club for 20 years, in Spring last year we decided the time was right to move to another Club. We had more time to play golf and we were looking for both a boost in our enthusiasm for golf and a change of course style.

Vale Royal Abbey had been one of our favourite courses for some time and we had played in Opens there over the years – never with any success, I might add!! In addition, several of our friends from our original Club had recently joined VRA and were full of praise about their new membership.

So we took the plunge and joined in July last year. What a great decision it has turned out to be. We both love the course although we don't find it easy, particularly the greens. But the challenge we wanted is certainly there.

I have found the Ladies Section to be very welcoming and I'm really enjoying playing with different ladies in both



Tuesday and Saturday competitions. The section is also extremely well organised and communication is excellent. Steve is also enjoying his membership of the Seniors' Section.

Would we change anything, apart from those speedy greens?? Only that we would appreciate being able to play in more mixed competitions together.

British Golfer Ted Ray said " Golf is a fascinating game. It's taken me nearly 40 years to discover I can't play." We're looking forward to our next 20 years of discovery at Vale Royal Abbey.

Cathy Fineran

SEVEN FRIENDS IN SEARCH OF GOLF IN THE SUN!

On a cold and misty morning in mid March a group of seven sunshine deprived golfing friends descended on Manchester Airport to catch an early flight to Malaga heading for an highly anticipated golf break in the sun. With reports of long delays gnawing away at the back of our minds we checked in, dropped bags and headed for security control. Although queues were building we all passed through with relative ease and even had time for a pre-flight drink before heading for the boarding gate.

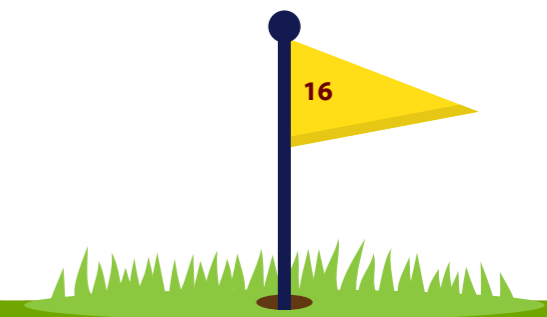
On arrival in Spain we were greeted with cloudy dark skies and the rain soon followed as we transferred to our accomodation in La Cala, Mijas.

A quick change into golf attire and we were off to our golfing base for the tour, The La Cala resort pitched amongst the mountain range above Marbella.. After some food and beverage, Europa was our first course.



A tough and tight undulating course on which some of our golfing talent limitations soon appeared and 18 holes later we were happy to get around without any of the forecasted rain reappearing.

A post round walk out on the promenade, a drink and a paddle in the sea for one of the group was followed by a very pleasant meal and evening drinks over which stories of the golf were recalled and then the happy and contented travellers headed off for some sleep and recovery.



Day two back at La Cala, this time the Asia course was our next opponent. A better day with the sun briefly poking its nose through the clouds but certainly not wearing his hat. Again the course was tight with undulating fairways, drop offs either side and greens with very well sculpted mounds and swales with challenging pin positions.

Day three was a scheduled rest day and started with a walk around the locality on a windy albeit dry and cloudy start to the day, some hot beverage and lunch taken with time to converse before some took advantage of rest and recuperation alongside some retail therapy.



The remainder heading off for an additional round of golf at Santa Clara Golf. Set in the lower slopes just above Marbella with a wide dry bed river that seemed to be in play on nearly every hole. An enjoyable round in gusting challenging winds followed and signage warning of wild boars being present was a surprising observation. Just as we started down the final hole, the heavens opened providing a spectacular thunder and lightning show.

Day four, our final day. Back at La Cala for a round on The Americas course. Again a challenging layout similar to the other two courses on the resort with elevated tees and sweeping tight fairways and undulating greens. Although a light cloudy start to the round greeted us after ten holes another storm of biblical proportions rolled in and we were all forced off the course as the greens and fairways quickly resembled lakes and tributaries. Our tour was now sadly cut short and complete.



Back at the hotel after drying out the sun finally graced us with its presence. A lovely afternoon and early evening enjoying company and the sunshine that was well overdue. An prize giving hosted by the outgoing Lady Captain with a roll call for the combatants followed with momentos gleefully received by the ladies and gentlemen tour winners.

A final evening meal, one more sleep with lovely memories made with friends stored, we were transferring back to Malaga airport for our return trip home.

During our short trip it became clear through contact with loved ones at home that the UK was enjoying an early Spring heatwave and was experiencing the weather that we had hoped and departed for in Spain. Best laid plans and all that came to mind!

