

# THE CAPTAIN'S FORTNIGHT

**Can I wish you all a happy, successful and, above all else, healthy New Year.**

The start of 2019 allows us all the opportunity to indulge in a little introspection. And I'm afraid I'm no exception. One of the reasons I started to produce a weekly Newsletter was to try to give everyone who took the trouble to read it some insight into what it's like being Captain of our Club (or at least my interpretation of what it's like to be Captain) and a view of the decision making process that effects the way the Club is managed.

I make no apologies for writing about my experiences. But equally, I have tried to include as much detail as I can about the people and events that makes MGC such an extraordinary club to be part of. There is rarely a dull moment!

The end of December marked one particular milestone in the 7 months since I was elected Captain last June. I have now received or sent 2,500 emails relating in one way or another to Club business. Over the 30 weeks up to the end of last year, that's an average of 12 a day, seven days a week. Chris Gems, who has now been the Chair of the Green Committee for 32 months, reckons he has dealt with or read (or occasionally ignored) well over 7,000 emails during his term of office. It's difficult to believe that being involved with the management of a golf club can generate so much correspondence. I don't recall ever having this many exchanges while working for a major international company or when running my own business. Clearly being part of MGC generates far more passion and dedication than any organisation I've ever been involved with before.

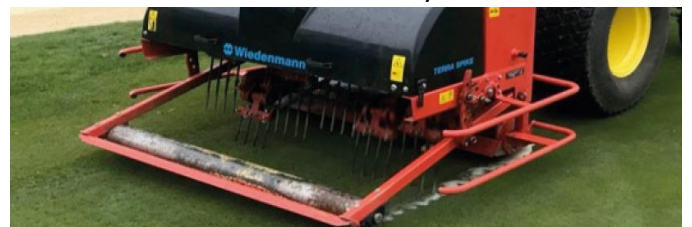
The one area that attracts particular passion is the golf course. That's probably not a huge surprise. Even I find myself walking around the course wishing we could do more immediately to enhance the look of the course, refurbish some of the main features and landscape the areas that are looking a little scruffy. I was at Royal Wimbledon before Christmas and they have been investing a huge amount of money in rebuilding greens, creating new bunkers and installing bonded rubber bark paths across a large part of the course. It all looked

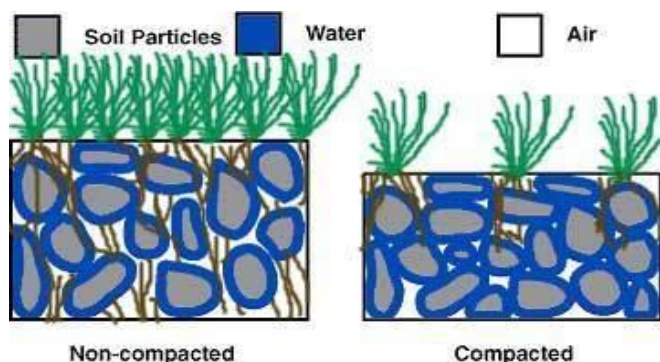
very impressive. But then I have to remind myself that RWGC's income is approximately twice that of our Club and they don't have to pay anywhere near as much as we do for the rent of their golf course (in fact, it's less than a quarter which equates to as many as 3 greenkeepers). The reality is that we must all acknowledge that Malden does a remarkable job in making limited resources go a long way. And this is down to the commitment and hard work of our small team of Green Staff supported by the Green Committee. If we feel that the state of the course, the condition of our bunkers and tees or the lushness of the fairways should be much better, then we should also accept that we would need to spend significantly more money and that would entail a substantial increase in annual subscriptions and a concerted effort to attract more golf societies and green fees. **And that isn't going to happen!**

So how do we try to make a little go even further?

Firstly, we must **understand** that the work that our Green Staff are doing is designed to sustain and improve the course.

**Let's talk greens.** The greens probably account for less than 1% of the total area of the golf course and yet nearly 50% of every round of golf is played on them, and almost every golfer will walk on all the greens during the course of their round. It is vital that we maintain the greens with great care – particularly over the winter months when they are more likely to be exposed to extreme changes in weather conditions. The regular **solid tining** of our greens over the winter and into the spring reduces the compaction of the soil (a particular issue at MGC where the soil is clay based) by puncturing small holes into the root zone. By creating space within the soil, the plant is better able to obtain the necessary water, air and nutrients that it requires to sustain healthy growth. This process of aeration also helps drainage – which ensures that the greens continue to be playable in most conditions other than the very wettest weather.





What does all this tell us? Many members (including me) felt that the greens over the summer were as good as they have ever been at MGC despite having to endure a prolonged period of heat and drought during late June and through much of July. If we want our greens to be equally good (or even better) during the peak playing months this year, then a slightly uneven putting surface over the winter is a small sacrifice to make.

Secondly, we need to **trust** our Green Staff. They work under the auspices of the Green Committee to safeguard what is in the best long-term interests of the golf course. Part of the process of protecting the course includes **roping off the wetter areas** around some greens to stop too much traffic (golf shoes and wheels) from damaging the playing surfaces, and in some places, to allow those parts that have been affected by the installation of the new irrigation system to recover. The use of ropes is nothing new. We've been doing it at MGC for many years. The areas that are cordoned off is reviewed regularly by the Green Staff and Committee. The decisions that are made are motivated by doing what's right for the golf course **AND NOT** what will cause the maximum inconvenience to our members.

It is also true that moving around the roped off areas when using a buggy or trolley may increase how long it takes to complete some holes. However, it shouldn't add a huge amount to the total playing time for all 18 holes particularly if we all continue to observe the basic guidelines for maintaining a reasonable pace of play. That is to say, keeping up with the group in front, playing ready golf (except for matchplay), preparing for your next shot while your partners are playing theirs and so on.

Having said all that, at some point over the Christmas period, someone thought it would be a

good idea to cut some of the ropes. What they thought they were going to achieve, I'm not quite sure. If it was an act of protest, what was the message? Clearly it had little to do with looking after the golf course for all members now and in the future. If it was simply an act of vandalism, it was about as mindless as snapping off one of the branches on our Rudolf tree near the 9<sup>th</sup> green – which also happened over Christmas. I just hope that both actions were perpetrated by people who have nothing to do with the Club.

Finally, we should be **confident** that though the golf course has suffered from the drought in the summer (and a watering system that was on its last legs) and the inevitable disturbance caused by the installation of the irrigation pipework and sprinkler heads, it will make a full recovery.

The new irrigation will cover more of the vital parts of the course (including greenside bunkers where the grass has suffered particularly badly), there is work planned for fairways and tees to aid further recovery from the dry summer, the new tee on 14 and the refurbished bunkers on 6 and 7 will come into play in the Spring, the Green Team will be back up to full strength following Kris's departure early in February and the Club's plans for additional improvements to the course will be implemented.



To allow members the opportunity to understand what the Club's long-term plan is for some parts of the golf course and be able to discuss the options with our new Head Greenkeeper, we will be organising a programme of course walks over the coming months. In addition to that, there will be a monthly section in the Newsletter to keep all members up-to-date with the programme of work that's being planned for the golf course and an explanation of why it's being done and what Scott and his team are aiming to achieve.



## SO WHAT ELSE HAS BEEN GOING ON?

It seems like a long time ago but the **New Year's Eve dinner dance** was a ball....literally. There was a great atmosphere with some 80 of us in all our finery (including someone who looked quite a lot like Harry Potter) enjoying the pre-dinner drinks reception before sitting down to an excellent meal.



*A bit of innocent pre-loading before dinner*

Then some others joined us downstairs as we danced our way through to midnight and the traditional countdown to the beginning of a New Year.



*Getting into the pre-midnight groove*

It was an excellent evening. My thanks to Ann for organising, Helen and the team for the impeccable drinks service and Adrian and his chefs and serving staff for looking after us so well in the restaurant.

The occasion also marked the end of our 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. With this special year spanning the last 6 months of Geoff Start's Captaincy and the first 6 months of mine, Chris

Gems presented us both with a special number plate as a reminder of what has been a momentous year! Many thanks Chris.



*Just in case you don't know who we are*



*And now above my desk back at home, just to remind me why I deal with so many e-mails!*

By way of a warm up for the New Year's Eve party, Geoff and I travelled down to East Sussex to play Rye with Chris and Alex Gems. Rye is a historic, very traditional golf club. But you can forgive it for being a little old fashioned. Rye offers a fantastic links golf course and the lunch afterwards wasn't bad either. Unfortunately, Geoff and I came up against a father and son combination that gave us a masterclass in links golf. We were so soundly beaten, we had time to stand back for 6 holes and admire the quality of Chris and Alex's golf.



*Yes, the Captain's got his arms around some golfers yet again!*



## THE JANUARY MEN'S STABLEFORD

It was a cold, breezy weekend when the men played the first two day stableford of the year, and the first competition to played under the new Rules of Golf introduced on the 1<sup>st</sup> January.

I joined up with the Vice President and the Chair of our Charity Committee John Driscoll. To be fair, none of us played that well (I think I was still in shock having just settled my drinks bill for the festive period) though after a poor start, John had the best round finishing with a score of 30 points.

Meanwhile, the rest of the field appeared to fair significantly better than we did. Alan Glenn won **Division 1** with a great score of 42 points. Alan told me afterwards that teeing off the 10<sup>th</sup>, he birdied the first 3 holes which was immediately 10 points in the bag. Not a bad start, and he kept up his good form throughout much of the round. Well played Alan. In second place was John Smith (it's time you featured on the leaderboard a bit more regularly John) just 1 point behind Alan with 41. And in third place was Philip Behm on 39 points.

In **Division 2**, Bryan Elliott once again took the top spot with an excellent score of 39 points beating David O'Leary (the senior model) who came in with 38 points. Third place went to Deepak Manghnani who scored a very respectable 36 points.

Good play everyone.

## WHAT'S COMING NEXT?

There's the **ROCKAOKE** evening on **Friday 18<sup>th</sup> January** (see the poster for more details).

On **Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> January** we are holding a **RULES EVENING** to talk about the changes to the Rules of Golf and maybe a bit of a quiz to make things interesting. The session kicks-off at 7.30 pm.

And then we'll be breaking out the tartan ready for the **BURNS NIGHT** dinner on **Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> January**. If you'd like to join us, please put your name up on the list in the entrance foyer.

Last but not least, I ran a **picture competition** in the last edition of my Newsletter. The winner of a bottle of Champagne is Veronica Drye who managed to reply within an hour of the newsletter coming out. Well done Veronica.



**Ever fancied singing with a live band?**

**MGC is hosting Rockaoke on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> January from 7.30pm**

**Head up on stage with your friends (or solo if you're brave enough) we'll provide the lyrics, conductors and backing singers to help you smash your performance!**

**If you would like to perform please contact [comms@maldengolfclub.com](mailto:comms@maldengolfclub.com).**

**The full set list is attached but if you would like to perform a song not on the list add that in your email and we will see if it's possible!**

**There will also be music from MGC members and friends bands**

Song	Artist
All Right Now	Free
Baggy Trousers	Madness
Band of gold	Freda Payne
Blame it on the boogie	The Jackson Five
Brown eyed girl	Van Morrison
Brown Sugar	The Rolling Stones
Can't take my eyes off of you	Andy Williams
Car Wash	Rose Royce
Crazy Little Thing Called Love	Queen
Crocodile Rock	Elton John
Dakota	Stereophonics
Dance With Me	Olly Murs
Dancing in the Street	David Bowie and Mick Jagger
Daydream Believer	The Monkeys
Disco Inferno	The Trampas
Don't Stop Believing	Journey
Everybody needs somebody	The Blues Brothers
Get Ready	The Temptations
Gimme Some Lovin	The blues Brothers
Gold on the ceiling	The Black Keys
Hard to handle	Otis Reading/The Black Crowes
Hi Ho Silver Lining	Jeff Beck
Hot Stuff	Donna Summer
Hound Dog	Elvis
House of Fun	Madness
I Feel Good	James Brown
I only want to be with you	Dusty Springfield
I Saw her Standing There	The Beatles
I wanna dance with somebody	Whitney Houston
I wish	Stevie Wonder
I'm gonna be (500 miles)	Proclaimers
In the Midnight Hour	Wilson Pickett
It's not unusual	Tom Jones
Johnny b Goode	Chuck Berry
Land of 1,000 Dances	Wilson Pickett
Let Me Entertain You	Robbie Williams
Let's have a Party	Elvis
Song	Artist
Living on a Prayer	Bon Jovi
Long Train Running	The Doobie Brothers
Love Train	The O'Jays
Master Blaster	Stevie Wonder
Mony Mony	Billy Idol
Moonance	Van Morrison
Mustang Sally	Wilson Pickett
Night Fever	The Bee Gees
Play that Funky music	Wild Cherry
Pretty Woman	Roy Orbison
Proud Mary	Tina Turner
Respect	Aretha Franklin
Rolling in the Deep	Adelle
Ruby	The Kaiser Chiefs
Satisfaction	The Rolling Stones
Saturdays Nights Alright for Fighting	Elton John
Sex on Fire	The Killers
Shake Your Tail Feather	Ray Charles
Shape of You	Ed Sheeran
She's a lady	Tom Jones
Simply the Best	Tina Turner
Stupid Cupid	Connie Frances
Suspicious Minds	Elvis
Town called malice	Paul Weller
Twist and shout	The Beatles
Unchain my heart	Joe Cocker
Uptown Funk	Bruno Mars
Valerie	Amy Winehouse
We are family	Sister Sledge
You Can't Hurry Love	The Supremes
You do something to me	Paul Weller