

Calcutta Golf Society

Captain's Address to AGM 13.1.23

In his report last year, Graham finished by saying that he felt the Society, despite indifferent playing results during the year, was in good health as he stepped down, which was rather a poisoned chalice to a new captains. Thankfully, I am pleased to report that the Society continues to be in rude good health, and that has been augmented this year by considerable playing success! I will leave Graham to tell you more about our 2022 playing successes, but suffice to say that the very nice silver trophies we won during the year that I get to hold as captain have meant that the very small trophy cabinet at home has had to be temporarily extended!

In playing terms, I personally contributed little to our team successes this year (apart, of course, from inspirational leadership!), but may I offer my thanks to all those who played for CGS this year; I hope you enjoyed the days as much as I did.

This past year has been the first for the new organising committee – Richard as Hon Sec, Graham as Match Sec and Andy as Treasurer. Having two lawyers on the committee is definitely a two edged sword, but I must say that they have all seemed to me to be immensely diligent and efficient in their duties, and I'd like to thank all of them for their hard work. Later in the meeting, you'll be asked to support their re-election to their roles, and I heartily recommend you to do that. May I also thank Rollo for his continuing excellent work as society webmaster.

Richard introduced one excellent new feature to make committee meetings more enjoyable, by holding them over lunch at an excellent restaurant in Chelsea! I hasten to add that this came without cost to the Society, as Rollo, who was invited to attend two meetings to advise on web matters, can testify.

It may be worth saying a word about the background to our activities this year. As you will be aware, most golf clubs had a very good pandemic! They saw a significant increase in membership, which has transformed their finances. Society fixtures, which were so important to them during leaner years, have become regarded as an unnecessary user of valuable playing time that they need for their larger memberships. Therefore they've been increasing their prices sharply and even turning societies away. We are lucky in having strong relationships with the clubs we use, but this is causing us to move one fixture from Liphook to a cheaper alternative.

We're also seeing that a number of our peer group societies (China, Malaya, LAGS etc) are struggling, both from losing fixtures as I explained, but also due to falling membership. We have the advantage that British companies continue to operate a lot in India, and so are seeing a stream of new members; they are not so lucky.

Despite that background, I'm pleased to report that we continue to thrive:

- We have a current membership of 83, including 3 new members this year. I'm pleased to welcome new members Malcolm Fullard, Damian Newton and Mike Cook, all of whom are here today.
- We played a lucky 13 fixtures, including the 2021 end of season fixture at West Sussex postponed by lockdowns.
- We had one new fixture, against East India Club, when we provided most of both teams, and have one more planned for next year, as Graham will explain.
- We even saw ladies playing in a couple of our matches, a first as far as I've seen!
- We've agreed to provide a new trophy for our annual match against Royal Lytham in memory of its inspiration from Lytham, Fred Fidler, who died last year. We are going to invite members who have enjoyed playing at Lytham to make a contribution to its cost, with the society funding the balance.

More generally, I'd like to thank all our match organisers for all their hard work in making the fixtures such a success. May I mention particularly Ross Logan, in his absence, who is standing down after a long period "nursing" our fixture at Rye, and also to thank Andrew Carr for agreeing to take on this, in addition to the Littlestone fixture he already oversees. But thanks also in this context to Graham, Richard, John Cartwright, Bob Wild and John Knightley. I should also include Ted Newton, even though he is organiser for Blackheath, rather than for CGS. Andy Fair and I have the dubious honour of joining this gang later this year, so we'll find out just how much work really goes into each fixture!

I'd also like to welcome our returning guest, Tim Grandage, who will update us on Future Hope a bit later in the meeting, providing the background to the charity day later this year.

I now step down after a most enjoyable year as captain, and I wish equal enjoyment and success to my successor, Martin Fish, and, in due course, to the proposed captain for 2024, Phil Cooper. Martin has the additional pleasure and workload of our Charity Day next September, of which he will doubtless say more, so particular good luck with that.

Thank you very much to everyone for all your support, and particular commiserations to those whom I partnered during the year!.