

## London Stationers trip to Enghiens-les-Bains, France

September 2018

Fabulous hotel, upgraded rooms for all guests overlooking the picturesque lake at Enghiens got our trip off to a great start, and even the little town of Enghiens threw up several pleasant surprises in the way of eating houses.

And so, we settled into the routine of hotel life with golfers building up their strength through vigorous routines in the gym ready for the tough three days golf ahead, and the ladies practiced their French ready to tackle the trials of shopping and a trip to the wonderful palace of Versailles.

So, to the first day at Golf de Bethemont which turned out to be somewhat of a tougher test than was anticipated. A drive through the outskirts of suburban Paris left many jibbering wrecks by the time they eventually arrived at the course some thirty minutes late!

The course whilst well laid out and greens that were slow but true, had suffered badly through the drought and although preferred lies were in force it was hard to find one!

However, the ladies of our group, Nicola Phillips, Julie Hall and Judith Smith proved that if you hit the ball straight and putt with confidence winning can become a matter of routine! There were several moans and groans from the male members of the group about forward tees but come on chaps' credit where credit is due. We were thrashed.

Day two started in glorious sunshine and after the previous day which had been warm but generally overcast, was a very welcome boost to all golfers.

This combined with a stress-free journey to Domont Montmorency and a course covered in a lush covering of well-manicured green stuff surely meant that we were in for some good scores and the men taking prizes including the much-coveted Captains Salver.

Oh dear!!!

Fabulous undulating course, fast greens, par three's only just reachable (out of five only three players managed to even get to the green!) meant that the field of runners were again fairly evenly balanced. It may seem that I am trying to soften the blow of reporting that yet again the ladies took all the plaudits. And of course, I am.

Nicola Phillips, who didn't really want to play (How many times did we hear that!!) unfortunately on thirty-five points could not take the Salver as she was a guest. Not that it mattered because the ladies in the form of Julie Hall took the trophy from a very frustrated David Stride and Richard Johns who both have been trying to win it for the last forty years and felt that with such a small field this was their year. Not so gentlemen.

The final day at Apremont, a flat parkland course, was again a glorious autumn day and set for a stress-free day's golf where all could show their true golfing abilities.

So, lets add a bit of stress to the proceedings and play a little yellow ball competition as well as the team game. Great fun.!!!

To my amazement all three teams kept their ball, but the sight of players determined not to lose the dreaded yellow peril, rummaging through thick bracken, nettles and the verges of the many water hazards made it all worthwhile.

Final winners of the team game Conway Hall, John Sear (we really must look at this man's handicap!) Nicola Phillips (Yes again!) and would you believe Karen Stride (who again didn't want to play) but graciously helped us out when a member, who shall be nameless, injured his heel and had to pull out (Alright. John Astrop)

Yellow ball was a great success with David Stride, Chris Phillips, Julie Hall and yours truly taking the first prize. Special mention to Mr. Stride who had to take the yellow ball tee shots over water twice. He rose magnificently to the challenge.

Apremont was also the final day of the total par three points competition and that reluctant lady Nicola took the prize. Can't complain about this one gentlemen! Consistency came through in the end.

The end to a very enjoyable trip? Not quite.

Returning to the clubhouse for lunch our secretary decides to have a nose bleed. Now without going into too much detail it was not the prettiest sight and mixed with omelettes, chips and baguettes was a little off-putting to say the least.

If I didn't know Richard better I would say it was a deliberate ploy to gain a little attention having won (just checking the list) just one nearest the pin!

On a more serious side my thanks to Martina and Liz for taking control, and although he will never see this report Monsieur Jean Christophe, a visitor who also happened to be a part time emergency medic who organised the local ambulance to eventually take Richard to hospital.

Although serious at the time and whilst laying flat out on a stretcher, Richard continued issuing instructions regarding the final presentation until the doors closed on the ambulance. This showed the true fighting spirit of all those involved with the London Stationers and sets an example to us all on how to respond when all about us is falling apart.

Which as it turned out gave those stuck at the Euro Tunnel a little later in the day the fortitude to endure a last horrendous test of endurance. Delayed between eight and twelve hours!

So, the end of my outing and one which despite the problems I hope all enjoyed.

I look forward to seeing as many as possible at my last meeting as Captain at Nevill Golf Club.

Kind regards

Your Captain

P.S. Richard, despite one relapse is I am pleased to report, fit and well.