

CHILTERN TOURERS BOWLS TOUR -23rd – 30th April 2019

HOTEL PLAYAS DE TORREVIEJA, SPAIN

Tuesday, 23rd April 2019

A bleary eyed crowd of folk emerged from Margaret and Tim's house in Widmer End to take the coach at 2 a.m. to Luton Airport. Some had stayed awake and others had snatched a little bit of sleep but the result was the same! Next stop was Aylesbury to pick up some more of our party and we met up with the Chalfont St. Giles contingency at the airport. There were no flight hold-ups and we arrived in lovely sunshine at Alicante Airport at about 9 a.m. Unfortunately there was quite a wait at our hotel for our rooms to be ready but it gave us time to have a drink and snack and explore our surroundings. The hotel was very clean and modern but the drawback was that there wasn't much around. There was an attractive seafront with rocks and rock-pools and if you walked on further in one direction there was a lovely bay with a couple of nice cafés and a sandy beach. The sea was a wonderful shade of turquoise and azure and was a real sight to behold. We were a little drive from the main town of Torrevieja although there were buses running there from the hotel. At 6.30 we had our welcome meeting to give us all the necessary information on the week to come. Unfortunately one member (not from Chalfont St Giles I hasten to add) missed it as he locked himself out of his room in his swimming trunks after a few drinks and when someone kindly went to reception to get him another key he came back to find this person asleep on his bed. I think we all went to bed pretty early that night after our evening meal.

Wednesday, 24th April

The coach left at 9.30 for our first match which was against Vistabella B.C. The weather was lovely and sunny again and we were constantly told how lucky we were not to have come over Easter as they had had the worst storm for 73 years and Torrevieja was completely under water. As the name suggests the club was in a beautiful location, set up high with mountains all around (not so great in winter apparently!). As expected due to our lack of experience on artificial greens we lost the match but one team had a deficit of only 8 (Mike Alderton, Linda James, Maggie Pipe and Tim Timberlake). After the game we had a lovely snack of fresh baguettes and crispy chips then we went on to have a look round Torrevieja. The seafront was very lively with a little market and a promenade with lots of cafés fronting a lovely sandy beach. Most of us ended up in 'The Casino' which is not, as suggested by the name, a gambling establishment, but a lovely old house with beautiful décor inside and a large terrace where we had drinks and coffees. We got back to our hotel about 5 p.m. so time to relax before dinner at 7.30 p.m.

Thursday, 25th April

Today we left at 9.40 wearing our club colours, to go to Quesada B.C. which is where our Tour Manager, Steve, is a member. He had warned us that it was probably the fastest rink in the area so we were a bit apprehensive but in actual fact I think most of us found it an easier green than the previous day and the scores were considerably improved with one team losing by only 4 and one team losing by only 3. The best team was Cyril Reed, Geraldine Blois, Hazel Baker and Val Roberts. We had lunch of soup and rolls and returned to the hotel at about 3 p.m., after which time we all went our own ways. Denise and I took a stroll towards La Mata and bumped into a few others from our party.

Friday, 26th April

The venue today was La Marina B.C. This club had a swimming pool and trampoline for children but was in a rather built up area. Things were rather chaotic after the match as communications weren't good and some of us were told to head for the terrace for drinks while others went into the clubhouse where the food was to be served. Geraldine and I were dispatched to the clubhouse to fetch the other members of our team to the terrace, where their drinks awaited them, and hopefully find the rest of our party, but shortly afterwards we were all ushered back to the clubhouse for the food. Although as usual there was no winning rink we only lost by single figures, two rinks losing by only 9 and one rink by only 6, the most successful team being Eleanor Paterson, Cyril Reed, Bob Jenkinson and Hazel Baker.

Saturday, 27th April

Today we headed for San Miguel B.C where we found the people and attitude friendlier than yesterday. Their bowling standard was high so again no winning rink for us but one rink only lost by 5 shots. (Cyril Reed, Beth McCunn, Val Roberts and Denise Williams). Again it was a bit disorganised after the meal and we had to fight for tables and chairs. We got back to the hotel about 3 p.m. as usual and some of our party sat round the pool in the lovely sunshine.

Sunday 28th April

We left the hotel at 9.40 p.m. today for our last match of the tour, versus Greenlands B.C. This was a very attractive setting with a golf course plus a mini golf terrain attached and a large club house with terrace. We had been advised that the green was fast but very true. At last we had a winning rink, albeit by only 1 point (Bill Pipe, Joan Catton, Denise Williams and Steve, the Tour Manager (standing in for Tim Timberlake). Also, one team drew and one team lost by only 4 so not a bad result (I have to confess my team result was disastrous but I will draw a veil over that!).

Monday 29th April

Today was a free day for all of us. Another English bowling club staying at our hotel had planned a coach trip to Benidorm and had some free seats so they kindly invited us to help fill their coach. Some of our party took up the offer and had a very nice day in Benidorm. Some went on long walks towards La Mata, the nearest village, and reported favourably on that. Tim, Denise and I took a taxi to Guardamor, 15 minutes up the coast, and had a wander along the promenade there with its sandy beach. We met up with John and Pam Anderson who had bravely taken the bus, with great success, via Torrevieja. We stayed together and all took to bus back to Torrevieja and from there managed to find a taxi to take the 5 of us back to the hotel. At 7 p.m. we had our Presentation Evening. Allan Rumble shocked us all with our abysmal record over the years, but we do have an excuse as it is so different playing on the artificial greens to our outside greens and it was very difficult to get the hang of the weight and the green. Having said that we did have a Best Man, which was Bill Pipe, and a Best Lady, which was Joan Catton (having been in a tie for this with Denise Williams, and winning it on shots). These were calculated by the Tour Manager but Allan Rumble has his own system using average of shots scored and by this system the Top Lady came out as Beth McCunn and the Top Man was Cyril Reed (which was no surprise as he played consistently well in every match). The Shield for the overall Top Player was taken by Beth McCunn.

Alec Patterson stood up to thank Allan Rumble on behalf of us all for his tireless organisation of the tour, this being the 34th year that he has done this thankless task. This year was even more difficult than usual as several people had to drop out at the last minute through ill health and Allan himself was not his usual hearty self and had to watch from the side-lines. We all join in the thanks and hope he will soon be back on form.

Thanks were also due to Steve our Tour Manager as there were no organisational hitches and he even had to step in to play a few times as due to our reduced numbers all leave was cancelled and reserves pulled in! Thanks should also go to Denise Williams for the typing of letters and team lists.

The members of the other clubs all gelled well as usual and we have all made firm friends with them now and look forward to meeting them again in future years.

As regard the dreaded 'fines', apparently we had the highest amount for 4 years, which created enough revenue to fund Allan's daily 'swindle' and allow us all to have a free drink on the last evening. Thanks again to Allan for a thoroughly enjoyable tour and in appreciation of all the hard work it entails.

Margaret Timberlake