

# LEATHERHEAD BOWLS CLUB DEVON TOUR 2018

## Day One - Sunday

Sunday morning sunshine filtered across the Leisure Centre Car Park as 23 members plus guest players Roger and Val Dodds and Barbara Smith along with supporter, Shirley Hemmett met to await the arrival of our coach. But "Hang on!" someone shouted, "We're only 22."

One was missing, and a quick phone call found our man expecting a Monday departure – panic, packing, a rush to join us and we're on the coach. Laura's our driver and her mellifluous voice, friendly nature and helpful attitude belied her rather imposing appearance.

A four-hour journey with a pitstop at Leigh Delamere saw us arrive at the Derwent Hotel in Torquay at about 2.30 when Bill and Wendy Wawman joined us having travelled down by car. We were left with plenty of time for a rest or walk around the bay before dinner. Not quite the meal many had expected based on previous experiences at this huge hotel (in fact three hotels in a complex) – inedible fish, processed beef, stodgy mashed potato, lukewarm soup ahead of bread and butter pudding without much butter or fruit for some. Still, the staff were sympathetic, and one lady member ended up with two additional desserts after complaining about her bread pudding.

After this disappointing opening meal, breakfasts and subsequent dinners met our demanding standards with the hotel offering comfortable rooms although one couple had a tour of a selection of rooms as they were not happy with the first one.

As time went on we settled in to all the hotel had to offer with indoor and outdoor pools, gym (not used!), bars with darts, games room (including pool and snooker tables), ten pin bowling (used by the fittest of us), bingo (Mavis was a regular) and quiet areas for cards (Wendy S, Alice, Bob, Shirley, Vic and Barbara, to name but a few who played for coppers).

## DAY TWO - Monday

After a morning sightseeing, a game of pitch and putt or crazy golf (Ron and Jo offered us a competition to participate in with our scorecards to be handed in by Thursday lunchtime) it was by coach to nearby Teignmouth where we played Bitterne Park. A loss on six rinks by more than 40 shots was not a great start but it was, after all, a rink more suited to crowned green bowls than what is the norm. Those on the end rinks had a slight

slope to right or left to contend with which counteracted any bias on your bowls and made lines interesting, with the bias actually being slightly reversed at times.

#### DAY TWO – Tuesday

More golf and walking in the morning – Chris excelled with a round of 45 at the interesting crazy golf to eventually take the ladies' prize but overall beaten by Bob with 45. A short trip followed to Torbay Country Bowls Club where we suffered an even greater thrashing than the day before by 50 shots. There were some rink victories but huge losses on two cost us dear although, to be fair, the opposition put out some county players. These opening two days were highlighted by what appeared to be a perpetual echo across the rinks of "Two Down" soon followed by "Three Down"!

#### DAY THREE – Wednesday

Hallelujah! A win. Marlton Bowls Club succumbed to our stirring performance and what a jolly crowd they were. Set in the countryside with only the shrill shouts of schoolchildren on their mid-afternoon playtime and, for a short while, the bark of a dog from its training course nearby breaking the quiet solitude of the Devon countryside. Laura had to drop us some way from the rinks, but the home club picked up our cases and the less mobile to drive them down and later up the hill to the clubhouse or coach.

In the evening Bob had kindly organised a trip to the theatre in Babbacombe for a Music Hall treat. Most took up the offer and enjoyed a super evening of singing, dancing and comedy. Others went to the cinema or joined Mavis for bingo.

#### DAY FOUR – Thursday

Kings Club on Torbay seafront. A real challenge. This club had just picked up a multitude of championships at Leamington and their "Honours" board showed county and national success every year, including Commonwealth Games gold medals. They were quick to point out to us before, during and after the match how good they were given their success which comes from a membership similar to ours of 110. One extended family seemed to provide most of the stars with Roger Tolchard, ex-England Test and One Day cricketer, at its head.

Of six rinks we lost on three but tied on the other three – so, not a bad effort although we probably played their sixth team!

DAY FIVE – Friday

Bills paid, cases loaded and Laura had us on our way to Amesbury, two hours back along the A303. The local club kindly provided a welcome lunch at moderate cost before battle commenced. Some rinks won, one drew but again heavy defeats on two rinks meant we lost the overall match.

By 6.45 we were home without much traffic delay.

## REFLECTIONS

- What fun we had – plenty of laughs with all the clubs friendly and welcoming
- Jo helped by Ron did a fantastic job of organising the whole event including the daily swindle (Jo won it twice), the crazy golf and dealing with problems as they arose
- Our thanks to Ron, David and Sue plus Desta who were our day captains
- It was great to have plenty to do at the hotel and an excellent choice
- Anything disappointing? Not really but a shame that unlike the clubs we played, all resplendent in their club shirts, we looked untidy with a third of our team not able to wear OUR club colours due to a lack of shirts

A great time, great company and let's look forward to next year.

Steve Little