



The Chairman's Letter

Glass half full or glass half empty? I am not sure what will be the final verdict on the British summer '09, but the glass was certainly half full of rainwater for a lot of the time. Nevertheless, even if it was BBQ days rather than a whole summer, I hope that you had a good time with family and friends.

Whatever the weather, the summer at Barnsdale has been busy, with the resort full or near full for entire season. This is always a testing time for us, as exchange guests come from far and near with their comments having a strong influence on our status with the exchange companies. Therefore, it is very pleasing to note that in every area we have met or exceeded the standards set for the highest level of awards. As a result, I am delighted to report that Marj Anderson of RCI has just confirmed to me that Barnsdale has retained its Gold Crown for another year. This has been a great team effort between our management company and our Lodge & Leisure Committee and I am sure you would want to join me in congratulating everyone on a job very well done.

In our last newsletter, we asked you to please settle your annual invoice by the due date of 1 September. My thanks go to you for the positive response to this plea. This year, many more Owners have paid on time than ever before and, as a result, we have a much earlier and clearer view of our finances than in past years. The whole process of chasing accounts, levying penalty charges and cancelling licences is not only time consuming but also costly. Again, my thanks to the majority of Owners who have paid on time.

With the resort in its middle years, quite a lot of our inventory is in need of replacement and so we need to know how much money we have. This enables us to plan our expenditure in the most cost effective way, such as calling forward kitchen and bathroom refurbishments to avoid the VAT increase next year. It also means that we are certain to be able to cope with most unforeseen events without too much wringing of hands. An example of this was the recent failure of the boiler that provides hot water for the leisure area changing rooms. The boiler failed one Saturday, having only days before passed its annual safety and functional test. From the flames coming out of its lower part, it was clear that it was beyond repair. The Management Company sourced a replacement, Dusty Miller, Chairman of Lodge & Leisure, was advised and gave initial approval, the Executive Committee swapped e-mails and the new boiler was up and running by the following Saturday. It was an unwelcome expense but one that we could manage because we have an accurate view of our finances. It was also a good example of the team working in harmony and here my additional thanks go to our Freeholder, Mr. Derek Penman, who readily agreed to reduce the normal uplift that is charged under



our management agreement and also offered to accept a deferred payment, should we need it. To anyone who was inconvenienced by the boiler failure, please accept my apologies, but I hope you can now see that everyone pulled together to solve the problem as quickly as possible.

Last time around, I renewed my plea for some volunteers to join us on the Board. Thanks to those of you who have already expressed an interest and we will be in touch. However, from past experience, not everyone who says that they are interested decides to carry it forward and join us. Therefore, we are still looking for volunteers, particularly if you are female. Currently, we only have two ladies on the Board and this does not give us the balanced representation we need.

I think we would all agree that good communication lies at the heart of success in nearly every field. This newsletter sets out to improve the communication between us, your elected Board, and you, the fee paying Owner. That said, it is something of a one way street with the Board doing the talking and the Owner doing the listening. Having discussed this with my colleagues, we would like to open up the debate by having an Owner's letter section in future newsletters. The idea would be to allow you to say how you feel we are doing, what we could do better, what improvements could be made to the resort etc. Unfortunately, we will not have space to publish every letter but we would give a written reply to those that were not printed. Letters for this forum should be addressed to: The Newsletter, Barnsdale Owners' Association, Barnsdale Hall, Nr Oakham, Rutland, LE15 8AB. Obviously, this would not be the best means of addressing specific, individual problems and these should still be addressed personally to me as Chairman. We are very conscious that we are spending your money and we would like you to have a greater say in how that money is spent.

Spending money leads me to think of Christmas. On the far horizon, I know, but our next newsletter will not be published until January. Although it is very early for such wishes, I really do hope that you have a most enjoyable festive season. Maybe Father Christmas will bring us an end to the recession?

Peter Lowe

RCI Gold Crown



As Peter mentions in his Chairman's letter, Barnsdale has had its RCI Gold Crown renewed for another year. Congratulations to all the staff whose hard work made this possible. The photo shows a few of those responsible for maintaining the excellent standard receiving the award. Because Barnsdale has an almost unbroken run of Gold Crowns, we may sometime forget what an achievement this is. When you look through the RCI resort guide or at the website, take a moment to notice how few resorts have a Gold Crown.

As I have mentioned before, the Gold Crown is largely determined by the scores on the returns from exchange customers, and to receive this award, the average has to be well over 4 (on the 1 to 5 scale) in each category. I suggest that you bear this in mind whenever you are scoring a resort. Scoring on a notional 2 to 4 scale, on the basis that a resort would have to be really exceptional to reach the extremes, will ensure that no Gold Crown is awarded.

Friends of Barnsdale

I have received a message from a past visitor to Barnsdale who would like to visit more often. Unfortunately, Paul Murphy finds the great demand for the resort means that he struggles to find and exchange.

Consequently, he is looking to exchange his unit permanently, not just a week. If you would be prepared to give up your week in exchange for a week at Club Praia D'Ora in Portugal, in a 1 bedroom unit.

Alternatively Paul is keen to exchange a single week, if that is of more interest to you.

If you are interested, please contact Paul directly on

01708 505 777

or

paul.b.murphy@openreach.co.uk

Would you find an area for similar announcements useful?

Let me know if so.

We would probably make a small charge for each advert.

A new sensation in dining awaits you . . .

the BRASSERIE at Barnsdale Hall Hotel



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COMMITTEE JOTTINGS

Here is a summary of the main points at Board Meetings since the last newsletter. Don't forget that the full minutes are on the owners' website (Barnsdaleowners.co.uk) and the two most recent are on the owners' notice board by leisure reception.

8th June 2009

BMC Budget 2001-2013. The BMC budget for 2010-2013 had been distributed to Board members and had passed scrutiny by BIROA Ltd Auditors, Messrs. Newby Castleman. In addition, it had been scrutinised by SB, PC, PM and LW and the Management Company had given positive responses to all queries raised. In that overall light, Mrs. Hodges gave a presentation covering all aspects of the budget with full explanation of the detailed figures. The Board was pleased to note that although some costs had inevitably increased over the past period, others had remained level or, in some cases, decreased. In particular, the Board noted that a careful analysis had been made of the insurance market to obtain the most competitive quotes. As a result of careful management, Mrs. Hodges reported there was a surplus of £72,704 carried over from the current period for repayment to Owners in accordance with the articles of association.

The Board unanimously accepted the proposed budget and agreed that the Sinking Fund contribution should be set at 20% across the next 3-year period with the proviso that the figure should be reviewed annually. It was also agreed that the surplus should be returned to Owners as a single payment in the form of a one-off discount on the next annual invoice.

The Board noted that next year any increase in fees might appear larger than anticipated because of the effect of the discount being given this year and the increase in VAT that will take effect in December 2009. To avoid any misunderstanding, it was agreed that LW should explain the background to any increase in the Newsletter.

Finally, the Board expressed its thanks to Mrs. Hodges for the thorough presentation that she had given and which

had made it possible for everyone to understand the complexities of the budget.

Company Secretary's Report: The Secretary reported that Messrs. Cox and Tompkins had settled their accounts with the result that as of 6th June 2009 he had cancelled the licences of 38 Owners and had informed Hutchinson. The Board expressed its thanks to Mr. Penman for buying these 38 units.

6th July 2009

Lodge & Leisure: Approval was given for the payment of the first instalment of the heating repair. Mr Penman has agreed to postpone the payment of the second part until next year.

The soft furnishings programme was extended, with curtains being agreed for lodges 8, 27, 28, 31 and 49. Settees were agreed for lodges 21, 22, 23 and 27.

The Lodge & Leisure committee agreed that members would inspect all Lodge patios, with a view to replacing or relaying slabs where necessary.

It was pointed out that the website is not up to date. This matter is to be addressed without delay.

The Board was again pleased to note the continued high scores recorded by RCI. The Chairman advised that he and RW would be meeting with Marj Anderson of RCI towards the end of July by when it was hoped that confirmation could be made of next year's Gold Crown award.

The Board noted that Dial an Exchange would be holding a residential conference "Timeshare Stripped" at Barnsdale on 29 & 30 September with the likely attendance of 150 delegates.

The Board confirmed its jointly agreed policy with the Management Company that aqua aerobics classes should not take place during the school holidays but undertook to keep that policy under

review, in the light of experience gained. The Board approved the response of the Chairman to a letter he had received on that subject.

1st September 2009

Executive Committee Report: In late August, the hot water boiler supplying the changing room showers had failed beyond repair. Urgent replacement action was authorised by the Executive Committee at an estimated cost of £6,000. The Management Company had advised that uplift would be reduced to 10% and that deferred payment could be made, if necessary. The full Board endorsed the decision of the Executive Committee and asked RW to thank Mr Penman for his considerate support.

Lodge & Leisure Report: The following replacement programmes were authorised:

Kitchens for Lodges 1,3,4,6 & 17

Bathrooms for Lodges 5,9,17,29 & 30

Curtains for Lodges 2,8,21,27,28,31, 44,45,49 & 77

Settees for Lodges 21,22,23 & 27

Communications: It was agreed that future newsletters should include space for letters from Owners with a reply from the Board. The idea of this was to improve the level of communication between the Board and the Owners. However, specific letters of complaint would still be addressed to the Chairman. PM undertook to include details of this in his contribution to the next newsletter.

Management Report: The Board pleased to note that RCI had indicated that the resort would retain its Gold Crown. On behalf of the Board, the Chairman thanked the Lodge and Leisure Committee for its contribution to this achievement and also asked that RW pass on its congratulations and thanks to all members of his team.

DIRECT DEBITS

The following note about direct debits missed the last newsletter.

I hope that owners will find it helpful to understand why a monthly direct debit scheme is not possible:

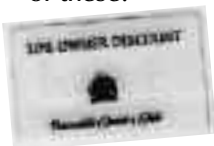
Unfortunately we are unable to accept Direct Debits on a monthly basis due to the additional administration, causing extra staffing costs. The high turnover of Owners cancelling direct debits would leave an outstanding liability. Direct Debits would have to be taken in advance when the total invoice fee would not be known. The constitution would have to be changed for the rules to be put in place to protect the Owner.

Get up to date!

If you still have one of these:



Or rely on one of these:



Then you are really quite out of date.

If you are not a regular user of the leisure facilities you may not have replaced your membership card. However those of us (including me until a couple of weeks ago) in that situation need to change things. The 10% card above is no longer valid for your owner's discount, and you need a leisure card like this.



To get your card, give membership services a couple of days notice, then you can collect your card from leisure reception. You have to attend in person, as they need to take a photograph. There is a downside – there is a small fee. Although this change is imposed on you by Barnsdale there is a £5 charge even for the first card.

Timeshare Re-sales

Just a couple of points for any Owner who might be thinking of selling their timeshare. First, the old problem of scams. Despite repeated warnings, Owners are still being conned by people who contact them with an offer to sell their timeshare. These people nearly always claim to have links with the Resort and an exchange company. They sound plausible and, in the latest example, offer to pay any outstanding management fees from within a selling fee that is charged in advance. The Owner forwards money, the fraudster disappears, the Resort still requires the management fees to be paid. Each of the major exchange companies has assured us that they would never make an unsolicited call to an Owner offering to broker a sale. Similarly, no-one from Barnsdale would ever make such a call. So, if you are contacted about selling your timeshare, be very suspicious and "Don't talk to strangers" or, more importantly, give them money.

The second point concerns sales of units where weeks have already been banked. Occasionally, Owners decide to sell their timeshare and they forget that they have already banked future weeks. This causes a problem for the new Owner, the exchange company and the Resort. The new Owner, rightly, expects to occupy his or her week, the exchange company has already sold that week to an exchange guest, the Resort has two people expecting to occupy the same property, both with equal claims. So, if you are selling and have banked weeks, please let the exchange company know. In the case of RCI, it would be possible for your banked weeks to be transferred to a new Owner who could also get an attractive joining rate.

Membership Referral Scheme

Our Membership Referral Scheme is simplicity in itself. Should a family member, friend or colleague purchase a unit here at Barnsdale on your recommendation, we will send you a cheque for £200 as a way of saying thank you. It couldn't be easier to earn a little extra cash just by word of mouth!

**For further details please call our
Timeshare Office on 01572 725148**

Lodge & Leisure Report

Committee: Dusty Miller (Chairman)
Sheila Bunten, John Wedgwood, Lisa Neale,

Firstly I hope you had a wonderful summer and for those of you with school age children that you are now getting back to normality after what I presume has been a busy summer.

As a new member to the Board and also the Lodge and Leisure team I wanted to share with you my experience of my first six months. I am a long term owner and before joining the team had often questioned and been disappointed with some of the decisions that have been made over the years. I now understand just how much effort and hard work is put in by everyone involved in the running of Barnsdale to make the resort a better place for us all, from timeshare owners to leisure members and hotel guests. None of the decisions are made lightly and will of course sometimes not suit everyone.

The Lodge and Leisure team are a small group and I feel we have a great working relationship, I would personally like to thank Sue Moore in Members Services and Russell Waters and his team for all the hard work they put in on the resort. Sue especially has

to deal with all of the moans and groans from exchange guests and some owners on a day to day basis. Many of the complaints are out of her responsibility and would be more appropriately put in writing to the Board. Perhaps we should all think a little harder before venting our frustrations, which are often unnecessary.

Moving on to more positive points, we continue to work on the upgrading of the units including Kitchens, Bathrooms and Soft Furnishings and continually carry out audits to assess which lodges should be targeted first. As you can imagine this is a very time consuming but important role. We also continue to monitor the leisure areas and I hope you are all getting the benefit of the new pool heating system.

Of course we all have areas of development or improvements that we would like to see at the resort but Rome wasn't built in a day, we cannot do everything at once and should focus and enjoy the wonderful facilities we already have.

Lisa Neale

Visit www.barnsdaleowners.co.uk to keep up to date