

# SHARETIME

The Magazine from the Timeshare Association



**Club la Costa  
celebrates 25 years**

**New timeshare software  
launching soon**

**Recession  
– is it affecting our resorts?**

## From the desk of the CEO



Harry Taylor

### Where has the year gone?

It only seems a few weeks ago that we were preparing to launch the first ever edition of Sharetime and now here is number three and we have already prepared the winter edition. As the saying goes 'not enough hours in the day!'

The accreditation programme goes from strength to strength with seven other resorts joining Las Calas and Villacana in achieving the prestigious award of TATOC Resort Accreditation. More details of those resorts in this edition. More applications have been received and these are being processed.

We have now eleven trained accreditors. All are timeshare owners with vast experience of the timeshare industry and the requirements of happy owners.

To spread the good news about timeshare and to dispel some of the myths and horror stories we have launched what I call our good news site, [www.timeshare-consumer-advice.co.uk](http://www.timeshare-consumer-advice.co.uk). It is not meant to replace our main site but to encourage all timeshare owners and prospective owners to learn more about timeshare and why many thousands enjoy their experience.

It is an ongoing concern for TATOC, and a source of much frustration for legitimate timeshare companies, that there are still scammers out there who are giving the industry a bad name and fraudulently parting the general public from their hard-earned cash. Again, more details of the 'cold callers' on the following pages.

The venue and advance details of our special 10th Conference have been announced. It will take place at The Nottingham Belfry, Friday March 26 – Sunday March 28, 2010. More details can be found on [www.timeshareassociation.org](http://www.timeshareassociation.org). Baring in mind the difficult times we are all experiencing the cost has been kept to a minimum.

This issue includes another new contributor. A lawyer based in Tenerife, Marta Maria Martín Saá will bring help and advice to our readers.

The board of directors have decided that membership fees for existing members of TATOC will once again be frozen for the year 2010 but a small increase will apply to new resorts seeking membership. Committee members please remember that it is budget time for most resorts so budget for the conference and TATOC fees for 2010/11.

In the summer edition of Sharetime I asked for more participation on content from members. Please contact us with any news of your resorts or on anything you feel might be of interest to your fellow readers.

- Harry Taylor

## Kicking out the crooks

### Letters to the editor

**Sharetime welcomes letters from readers. Topics can include any part of the holiday experience.**

**Sir:** I've been trying to sell some of my points for a long time now, and have recently been in touch with a company about this. I'm concerned about their requirement for €1300 up front, even though it is guaranteed to be returnable. Is there someone I can talk to about this?  
- Alan Oates, TATOC member, Kenmore Club committee, Braintree, Essex

**TATOC:** You should exercise the greatest caution in dealing with any company requiring a considerable up-front payment for services, or require you to purchase any other product to qualify you for their assistance. Please check them out very carefully and do some research on the internet.

**Sir:** I have been contacted by a supposed legal firm which says it will act on my behalf by engaging lawyers in Spain in an action against a company who fraudulently obtained a 'retainer' from me of 1300 Euros in a 'contract' to sell my timeshare weeks.

The Legal Company has asked for a payment of 680.00 Euros as a fee for services. I feel reluctant to once more send off a cheque to anyone who has approached me in this matter however bone fide they may be. Can you advise me about this? - Mrs Jessie Danter

**TATOC:** There is a growing problem whereby people who have lost money to fraudulent timeshare companies or other long-term holiday products are targeted by bogus solicitors and legal firms from European countries. They often claim to be acting in conjunction with local or national government agencies to recover 'lost' money.

*These companies target people who have been the subject of scams, failed holiday clubs, failed 'cash-back' schemes, reclaim certificates and so on. They claim to be able to recover the lost money and request an up-front payment from the consumer.*

*We recommend the greatest caution if you are approached by any such company – especially if you are contacted by telephone. You should verify their credentials very thoroughly before you give them any information or money.*

*If you are approached by any individual solicitor or legal company requesting any form of up-front payment we recommend you speak to an official government agency and the law society of the appropriate country. You can then verify their credentials, legitimate involvement and the requirement to pay any up-front money.*

*As an example, a consumer recently contacted TATOC regarding a legal company who had contacted them from Spain. On investigation it turned out to be a wholly bogus company who had cloned an internet website from a reputable legal firm, changing only the pictures and the contact details. Naturally they were not registered with the Spanish Law Society and the genuine legal firm was informed.*

*This is not just scaremongering – a consumer recently contacted TATOC after sending a bank transfer of £3,000 to a bogus company three times and losing close to £10,000. Another consumer*

*contacted us after losing £13,000 by this fraudulent method.*

*If any company says it has not received a payment you made by cheque, bank transfer, debit card, credit card and so on you should first contact your bank to establish whether payment has been taken, and that the original payment has been refunded or cancelled before paying again.*

*A considerable number of people have been prosecuted in Spain for fraudulently presenting themselves as legal companies and taking money from unfortunate people who have already lost money to other fraudulent practices or failed holiday schemes.*

*These companies are extremely convincing and persuasive in their approach. Don't become another victim yourself.*

*We recommend timeshare owners never give money to anybody who 'cold-calls' them, never make a payment up-front, and always check very thoroughly their credentials and authority to act in the particular case.*

*If you do decide to pay any company (having done your research very thoroughly) make sure you do so through a U.K. registered credit card company to ensure you have the protection of Section 75 of the 1974 Consumer Credit Act.*

**Sir:** We have owned timeshare in the U.K. for 25 years. We do not want to sell it! We are inundated by callers from timeshare companies who tell us we have won prizes, won holidays and want to sell our timeshare for us.

The information is not coming from the resort or from RCI. How can we stop it? We are getting calls nearly every day.  
- Mr A Clark, Cheshunts, Herts

**TATOC:** Timeshare owners are frequently pestered by unsolicited calls from companies who have considerable information about their timeshare ownership.

*Contrary to what these companies often say, there is no general database of timeshare owners to which they can have access. Every timeshare company, whether a resort, management company or exchange company, rigorously guards its members' data for commercial reasons as well as to comply with data protection regulations.*

*However, with modern technology the ownership/visitor records for an entire resort can be downloaded and carried on a device that fits into a shirt pocket, and the challenge of data security is an increasingly challenging one.*

*As you will have heard through recent media coverage even government agencies are having difficulty protecting the security of highly sensitive data.*

*We therefore recognise that details of time-share owners occasionally 'leak out' to businesses who then make unsolicited calls. It also seems that these companies pass details on to other companies who then do the same. Membership records for a resort or exchange company are a very saleable item, though the details that change hands are often very out of date.*

*The reality is that information on timeshare owners is not contained within a general database, nor is it made available to companies through any official or approved channels.*

...continued on page 3

## Meet the board **Jan Tilley explains all**



Jan Tilley

In this edition of Meet the Board, we catch up with TATOC director Jan Tilley who is responsible for the development of training and education modules for members.

### 1. What made you buy timeshare?

We went on an absolutely ghastly package holiday over Christmas in Athens with my mother. The tour company lied over everything. The hotel was switched before we left home with assurances that it was similar and would provide the same facilities. It was not. No lounges or comfy chairs just benches in the TV room.

We had meat balls for dinner almost every night and had to find our own lunch on Christmas Day after having paid for a proper one. Came back to find we were nearly all thrown out because the tour company had not paid the bill. Somebody came down with appendicitis but was diagnosed with constipation. We said never again.

### 2. How long have you been a member and at which resorts?

I have owned timeshare for over 20 years. Two weeks in the Lake District, two weeks in Portugal and 1 week's worth of points.

...continued from page 2

*Indeed, 'leak' problems are of considerable concern throughout the industry. The fact that it happens is against the best interests of timeshare owners, their resorts and all associated companies.*

*Because of this, and because giving owner's details is prohibited, the process is 'underground' and is therefore virtually impossible to prevent. It usually runs a course and then dies out.*

*If you are at all concerned contact your resort, owners committee or TATOC for information and guidance. Timeshare guides covering these areas are also available from TATOC.*

**Sir:** I have been contacted by a company telling me that they can help rent out my timeshare – is that correct? Can you offer any advice?

**- Mrs Kathleen Burrow, Overton, Lancashire**

**TATOC:** The company may offer to rent out the timeshare to cover the annual management fees and probably an extra profit for the consumer also. Unfortunately such companies often request a considerable advance payment.

**We recommend you are extremely cautious of companies who:**

- Are not your principal timeshare or exchange company;
- Contact you 'cold' without any invitation from yourself;
- Apply undue pressure, or urge you for a decision within a short time period.
- Invite you to a meeting (for example to sign documents etc) possibly with discounted travel

### 3. What is the greatest benefit that being a timeshare owner has given you?

Comfort and the freedom to do what we want and go where we want without worrying about poor quality. As you get older comfort becomes more and more important. Safety is another necessary aspect: a timeshare resort is usually a very safe place for all ages.

### 4. Committees are an integral part of any resort; what qualities do you feel a committee member should have?

A good committee member should be there to do the best they can for their members not themselves alone. They should not have their own agenda but work for the betterment of the resort and improving their owners' experience. They must be willing to learn what it means to be a committee member.

### 5. What are the advantages and the disadvantages of being a committee member?

**Advantages:** Being able to influence the developer/management company to improve things for the owners; being able to help people get the best out of their timeshare; and being in the know.

**Disadvantages:** Dealing with people who don't read what is sent them and complain when things do not go as they think they should. Also explaining why fees are going up.

### 6. If you won the lottery what would you do?

As I never do the lottery it would be a bit difficult but if I did I would probably buy a lodge at Pine

or accommodation;

- Request any form of up-front payment as a deposit, administration fee, bond of trust, surety against withdrawal, insurance cover, validity survey, land registry tax, certificate charge, VAT and so on, however reassuring the offer might sound;
- Assure you that your payment would be fully protected under laws governing the use of credit cards;
- Ask for your credit card, debit card or bank details, but assure you they will not take any payment, or say that without the three security digits on the card they can't take payment and
- Ask you to give or send your original ownership documents to them.

*Check out companies very carefully and if they imply they are from your timeshare company or a related company check this very carefully, too. Beware requests for advance payments. If you have any doubts, your timeshare company, resort owners' committee or TATOC will be a valuable source of information.*

*If you do decide to make payment to any company in this way you should ensure you have clear, precise and comprehensive details of the service you are purchasing in writing. Study documents very carefully before giving any payment.*

**Sir:** I am considering transferring from weeks to points with RCI. Could you please advise me of a reputable company with whom I can deal to transfer from weeks to points, I'm sure that

Lake to live in and also a villa in Florida, Spain or Portugal. I would still keep my timeshares.

### 7. Your favourite meal and favourite drink.?

My favourite meal is fried Haloumi cheese followed by Lobster served with a Greek salad, with a lovely crème brulee to follow.

I do not really have a specific favourite drink as I tend to switch between several - orange juice with lemonade, Metaxa brandy and lemonade, or rum and coke. Wine? I can take it or leave it.

### 8. Do you believe that legislation has been successful in removing the problems of sales techniques and if not what would you like legislators to introduce?

Yes, legislation has been a help but needs to go further. All sales people should be on a fixed salary with no component made up from a percentage of sales achieved.

All sales personnel should also go through an assessment procedure and the resorts should have a set list of what can be promised to a potential purchaser, against which the purchaser should initial that they understand. The purchaser should also be able to add to the contract any additional things that the salesman said and get it signed off before they leave.

### 9. If you could take only one object away with you on a timeshare holiday ( apart from essentials ) what would it be?

A bible and my beading. Sorry that's two but they go everywhere with me when I'm on holiday.

you won't let me down and can help me in this query. - **Mr Tony Goss**

**TATOC:** All you need do is contact RCI who will send you a list of credible vendors. You can then contact the companies on the list and make preparations for transferring your weeks into the RCI points system.

**Sir:** We have a timeshare week in Tenerife and can no longer afford the rising maintenance charges. Any advice would be greatly appreciated as this is causing me lots of worry.  
- **Mrs Anne Walker, Wakefield, Yorkshire**

**TATOC:** We are aware of the concern expressed by owners at the increases in annual fees and whether they are allowed to resign their ownership. Study the ownership documents from when you purchased your timeshare plus anything relevant you may have received or signed since that time to see what they say about resignation or becoming a maintenance fee defaulter.

*Most clubs and resorts have a voice through representatives elected from among the owners, and this is the best place to pursue your complaint. They be able to give you the fullest information about the reasons for the escalation in fees and any other information/options available.*

**If you have any queries or concerns relating to the activities of re-sale companies please contact our Helpline either by telephone on 0845 230 2430, email at [mark.caldicott@timeshare-association.org](mailto:mark.caldicott@timeshare-association.org) or on Skype at [Mark\\_Caldicott](https://www.skype.com/en/contacts/mark_caldicott).**

# Sometimes, leaving things 'til the last minute works out just fine



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ATOL protection covers RCI members for their travel plans and does not cover any Exchange or Extra Holidays fees paid.



# An inspector at work

It is 10.30 on Saturday, August 14, 2009 and I admit to a feeling of nervousness. Last night I stayed at Sunset Bay – a Diamond Resort International timeshare resort in Playa de La Americas, Tenerife. Today is my first official timeshare inspection as part of TATOC's Resort Accreditation Programme.

I spent most of yesterday walking round the resort as a 'secret shopper', speaking to reception, walking around the pools and all the public areas and speaking to people on holiday. My aim: to find out what they feel about their holiday, and specifically what they feel about the quality of their ownership or holiday experience at Sunset Bay.

My first impression of the resort is a good one and some things are already clear. My apartment is superb but they know why I'm staying at the resort and management would hardly put me in a bad one (I'll see what some other apartments look like later on today).

The resort is spotless - there is no litter anywhere. Early this morning I even saw someone mopping the paving slabs in the courtyard area known as "The Square" that runs up to reception.

I sit in reception for half-an-hour reading a paper while surreptitiously watching the reception desk go about its daily activities. The staff in reception are courteous and efficient – but they are also smiling and friendly. There's a good atmosphere around the resort and the people staying here are clearly enjoying their holiday experience.

All the pre-inspection checks on the resort have already been carried out back in the U.K. I attended the welcome meeting to see what information is given to visitors about the resort and the facilities it offers to provide and enrich the holiday experience.

This morning I will inspect a number of apartments including one of every size and one of the specially adapted apartments for the disabled. I will also spend several hours with Emelio Mendez, the resort manager, going through a considerable list of things about the resort and its procedures.

This is my first accreditation visit and I am keen to strike the right balance between discussion and 'interrogation', but I have experience of BS 5750 quality audits in my 'previous life' and I have no intention of going lightly on anyone.

Emelio arrived for our meeting spot on time – with a smile on his face and his hand held out in a warm welcome. He clearly felt confident and proud of his resort and what he was about to show me.

The accreditation visit went very well. It is possible I was a little 'over the top' on things but it was my first inspection and I had to be sure everything was done correctly. All the apart-

ments were excellent and the equipment and furnishings to a high standard.

The newly-adapted apartment for disabled visitors was 'state of the art' and several more are being prepared. We walked round all the public areas and Emelio proudly explained the recent work they had done and the programmes in hand

the procedures for reporting, analysing and following-up on visitors' comments.

The inspection went very well and I had no doubts that my visit to Sunset Bay would result in a successful Accreditation. It had been a thorough and at times quite intense experience for me and probably for the people at the resort.



Photographs showing swimming pool area and interiors at Sunset Bay

for on-going refurbishment and improvements. In addition to the thorough inspection of the resort, its facilities and its accommodation there was a lot of detailed work to be done back in the resort office. There are a wide range of checks that are part of the accreditation inspection.

## Just a few examples are:

- Discuss and check the wide range of the services provided to ensure owners and visitors enjoy their stay;
- Verify that the resort complies with all relevant legislation;
- Inspect carefully any on-site sales and marketing activities and ensure they meet the requirements of the current Timeshare Directive as a minimum standard (at Sunset Bay there is no on-site marketing activity to inspect);
- Discuss the resort's procedures for dealing with complaints; look at the number and nature of complaints, see how they are recorded and check for evidence of follow-up actions and resolutions;
- Verify that the owners committee is actively involved in the running of the resort and that there are detailed minutes and follow-up actions both of committee meetings and of meetings with the resort and its management structure;
- Check there is a visitor's book clearly placed in reception and to inspect and discuss the recent entries; and
- Check on the use of comment cards for guests to complete after their stay; to check on what the resort and management company do with individual responses and

I have a passionate belief that the future of timeshare lies in a closer relationship between the industry and its customers and in a stronger focus on anticipating, meeting and striving to exceed consumers' expectations of their timeshare experience.

It was a delight to find that Emelio at Sunset Bay, and indeed the atmosphere and culture of the resort and all its people, seemed very much along the same lines.

I left the resort feeling in good spirits and even more convinced that the Resort Accreditation Programme is a major step forward for timeshare resorts and their consumers.

To give a timeshare resort the award of 'TATOC Accredited' is a major accolade for the resort, and one that TATOC takes very seriously. Resort accreditation must be a rigorous and meaningful process or its potential value to resorts and owners will not be realised.

I'm looking forward to my next accreditation inspection and, with the knowledge gained from my first inspection, the resort and its management team will certainly remember the experience – as I will remember my first ... at Sunset Bay.

## Other TATOC-accredited resorts in 2009 are:

Fairways Club, Tenerife; Royal Sunset Beach Club, Tenerife; Pine Lake, Northern England; Club Las Calas, Lanzarote; Villacana Club, Malaga; Hollywood Mirage, Tenerife; Beverly Hills Club, Tenerife; Beverly Hills Heights, Tenerife; and Palm Beach Club, Tenerife.

## Life in the day of...



Steve Bryant

### Steve Bryant - sales manager, Macdonald Resorts

In this second article of the series we take a look at a life in the day of industry sales management.

As sales manager for Macdonald Resorts, I split my time between the U.K. and Spain. The company has four resorts on the Costa del Sol and five in the U.K., three of which are in Scotland, with one each in England and Wales.

My main responsibility is for the sales process and results of sales operations at each resort. This involves constant interaction with the sales teams, existing and potential new owners at our resorts and internally with various departments.

My working day normally starts at 8am with a visit to the sales team of the resort at which I'm staying to see what sales presentations are booked for the day.

This is also a good time to undertake additional sales and product training so that the team knows what is happening within Macdonald Resorts, is updated on any marketing initiatives that are underway and advised on the products we offer.

We currently sell fixed weeks at our resorts and also market Options, our points-based vacation club for those wanting additional flexibility. It enables members to use their ownership to stay at our company's 45 four- and five-star hotels in the U.K. in addition to our resorts.

The sales team will see a mixture of guests each day - including owners who may want to upgrade their apartments or buy additional weeks. They will also meet new guests who are on short inspection visits as well as rental and exchange guests.

Once the sales representatives have met with their morning appointments, I can spend some time dealing with a variety of tasks from correspondence with owners to planning sales budgets. The list is endless.

During the morning I will be on hand to help with any enquiries from the sales representatives that have come from their morning appointments. These might include providing clarification on products as well as questions on contractual requirements that guests may have.

Macdonald Hotels & Resorts has very strict guidelines that sales staff must observe. These include providing all new purchasers with full disclosure documents with their sales contracts and answering fully and correctly any major queries.

We also have a team of administration staff who are independent of the resort's sales staff who ensure that purchasers are given the very best service. Sales staff are also continually trained on the product and best sales practices. Our company mission statement is to exceed

our guests' expectations and we strive hard to achieve this in the timeshare sales arena as well. We are all very proud of both our Hotels & Resorts together with our Vacation Club.

*Our aim is for owners and members to enjoy their holiday experience with us so much that they want to return to our properties again and again.*

I always make a point of sitting with our owners at least once a week so that I keep in the loop with what members are thinking. This provides important feedback which I am able to pass on to head office and also identify those areas that we as the sales team can improve.

Later in the day, I will spend time with the sales staff on a one-to-one basis so that I can keep in touch with their concerns and hear their ideas on how to improve our products. I have been in the industry for eleven years, starting as a sales representative, so I understand the demands placed upon the sales team.

I regularly speak with the elected members of the Macdonald Resorts owners club committees. They are contacted by owners with questions about ownership and re-sales and I try to help them with any queries. We operate an owner re-sale service which I believe is a great benefit for members should their personal circumstances change.

I speak with Simon Jackson, managing director of Macdonald Resorts, at least once a day when I report sales figures and raise issues that need addressing.

My parents owned timeshare so I knew a little bit about the product when I responded to an advertisement for salesmen for one of our Spanish resorts. I am passionate about timeshare holidays and I know I share this with you as readers of Sharetime.

## Langdale upgrades accommodation

The Langdale Estate, which began life as a small woollen mill in the 17th Century, is now home to one of the Lake District's most sought-after and contemporary hotel destinations, thanks to continuing support from Barclays Commercial Bank in Manchester.

The award-winning 35-acre Langdale Estate, set in the heart of the English Lake District, is a natural woodland haven with streams, tarns, and moorland dotted with massive millstones.

It offers an impressive choice of Lake District hotel, self-catering and timeshare accommodation, together with two distinctly-styled restaurants and bars, a traditional pub plus extensive leisure and spa facilities

During the last two winter periods, substantial backing from Barclays Commercial has enabled the Langdale Hotel and Spa to complete two phases of bedroom refurbishment. The third



phase is now set to take place. This which will see all 57 bedrooms completed to a very high standard including some feature rooms which break from those normally found in the Lake District.

"In the current economic climate it is important to still be making the correct long-term decisions and Barclays is supporting us in this," says sales and marketing director Dan Visser. "The support from our bankers has been invaluable in making the bedroom refurbishment happen at an uncertain economic time.



"The results so far are encouraging and the response in terms of occupancy and rate increase is where we would like it to be - which is encouraging".

Hotel sales were based on market share, he said. The company had always to offer value for money. By having high quality bedroom stock to match the extensive leisure and spa facilities the estate could provide a combination of high-quality rooms and facilities to compete with the best in this area.

Steve Bentley, relationship director for Barclays Commercial Bank in Manchester said: "It's been great that we've been able to support Langdale during these difficult economic times."

It showed that Barclays "is committed to the Cumbrian leisure and tourism industry".

# TV widens the market for timeshare buyers

by Phil Watson, managing director,  
Worldwide Timeshare Hypermarket



Phil Watson

a unique style of 'off the page' marketing.

We have always openly promoted the concept of timeshare and our style of honest, open-book advertising has worked extremely well, giving customers and the general public an honest view of the product. Over the years we have successfully used many methods of advertising - newspapers, magazines, billboards, advertising screens, sponsorship, competitions and radio.

However, we recently embarked on the untested waters of television advertising and are the first European re-sales company to use this media.

We created a 40-second advert portraying the excellence of timeshare. When customers watch the commercial they learn of the fantastic destinations and price ranges available to them, comforted by the knowledge that they are protected by conducting business through a TATOC-regulated company.

## Why television?

Our unique style of advertising has worked well for us in the past but we felt it was time to look at new avenues to reach a wider market place. We wanted to attract a new audience and there is no other advertising medium as powerful as television, so we saw this as a way forward to achieving this.

Cost is the one factor discouraging the use of television and much consideration was needed for this campaign. (It's no secret that TV advertising requires a big investment).

The time of day when the ad is screened is another factor to consider. Unlike other advertising media we had used in the past, the cost of TV advertising is calculated by determining the number of viewers - the more you want the more it costs. So we went ahead and produced a 40-second advert for digital television and took the decision that, as we were marketing to the general public, we should use TATOC as the UK's consumer association.

We knew it would take a while to produce a new dependable lead source but anticipated a better overall response due to the high impact of television. As expected, television enhanced our brand awareness, making people more responsive to our newspaper and internet advertising.

Worldwide Timeshare Hypermarket is recognised throughout Europe as the leader in the secondary timeshare re-sales market and for successfully employing a unique style of 'off the page' marketing.

Continuously experimenting with channels such as Meridian, Scottish, and Granada and so on, we were able to work out which was best for us. We found that certain channels were gradually over-taking others. One which stood out was The Travel Channel!

At the same point in time as our TV ads started we became aware that, with the current economic climate, people were now buying and selling timeshare for different reasons. The market place was evolving.

We had often thought that one of the main reasons that people sold their timeshare weeks was because they misunderstood the unique opportunities available to them through timeshare. We had been aware for a long time that most sales pitches are based purely on exchange possibilities and not five star products.

*By the same token the public's ignorance of timeshare also stopped them from buying, especially with all the negative press that has surrounded the industry for many years.*

With the need to put a positive spin on timeshare an old dream came to the forefront. For many years we had always considered the idea of producing a timeshare television programme based upon one of the UK's finest travel shows: "Wish you Were Here."

As we were already successfully advertising with The Travel Channel the first stage was fairly simple: we approached them to see if they would produce a programme about timeshare that would educate the general public. After many lengthy discussions it was decided that we would initially sponsor The Travel Channel for 12 months on the understanding that we would take the discussions further provided the sponsorship worked out.

The thought process behind the sponsorship was simple: we would put up a timeshare prize each month and obviously continue to advertise with them on a regular basis. This would give us maximum exposure for minimum investment which, in turn, gave us a higher profile with the general public, win - win all round.

We trailed our first competition in May, offering one week's accommodation for up to six people at the superb Moness House Hotel & Country Club resort in Perthshire, Scotland, and were pleasantly surprised by the response. We had an end result of over 4,500 entries to the competition which proved to us that there is still a very popular interest in people wanting timeshare.

This prompted us to discuss the possibility with other developers for them to follow in our footsteps by sponsoring the competition. The first developer to sign up was Seasons PLC, who did a similar exercise but with one of their own high-profile U.K. resorts. This proved to be so successful that they have already agreed to sponsor another monthly competition. DeVere Resorts & Hotels also joined the scheme and put up a week's stay at Cameron House.

These results encouraged us to take our relationship with The Travel Channel to the next stage and it was suggested that we should experiment on their new channel called Travel Deals Direct.

This channel, launched specifically to sell holidays directly 'off' the screen, suggested that we create a 60-second advert purely for this channel. If we received a similar response from this style of channel and advert they would produce the programme we had been talking about. Not only that. When it proved successful we could also start promoting various timeshare resorts on this channel as well.

For us this was a win - win situation, all that I had to do was to produce an advert that discussed all the main points regarding timeshare and give the general public the confidence to call in to find out more.

With the help of Paul and Sharon at Perspective Magazine I was able to supply the Travel Channel with some high-resolution images and footage from my archives. I wrote a script that I felt was not too imposing and passed this by the directors of TATOC who were more than happy to assist us in promoting Timeshare in a positive light...

## A new television advertorial was born

The new advert was launched in August and the response was far greater than anticipated. The next step for us is to discuss with various developers how we could involve them in making a programme to educate the general public in a positive manner.

The idea was to make a 30-minute educational/sales programme which would be aired several times each day, whereby the public would become more positively aware of timeshare and how it could all work to their favour.

The way forward for us was to take sections of timeshare and discuss them in the programme. For example we'd look at the basic history and principles of timeshare, how the exchange programmes work and, obviously, how to obtain better quality holidays through the use of timeshare.

In the first programme, shown on Travel Deals Direct in early November, resorts in Cyprus, the Costa del Sol and Tenerife were shown. More importantly, we interviewed TATOC chief executive Mr Harry Taylor who had the opportunity to show exactly what TATOC represents to the Timeshare Industry.

What we have achieved to date has been very satisfying. The positive response from television has increased public awareness of our company and better still it has made the public more aware of the positive side of timeshare. This was one of our main objectives as, unfortunately, very few developers actually promote their product through the media.

With the use of the TATOC and Perspective Magazine logos more people are accepting that Timeshare is a secure leisure product they can safely invest in for their future.

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## New Spanish lawyer for TATOC

I am delighted to be writing for the first time from Spain to introduce and present my current and future work with TATOC.

My name is Marta Maria Martin Saa and I am a practicing lawyer in the firm Alliance & Alliance Law SL, dedicated to the tourism industry and specialising in timeshare.

I have been elected Legal Adviser TATOC in Spain for both the association and for its partners.

I will be very pleased to support any TATOC members on questions related to the Spanish territories. Please feel free to contact me via e-mail. Given my experience in Spanish law, I will try to answer in the most precise and extensive way, providing any useful suggestions on existing cases.

My contact address is:  
[mmartin@aallawspain.com](mailto:mmartin@aallawspain.com).

On top of my current interests I can list contracts formalisation, management of irregularities of award, the nature of acquired rights, the duties of information, the right of withdrawal or actions of invalidity ... I will pay particular attention to vendor activities, specifically on actions of resolution for non-payment of assessed contributions.

I hope that this brief introduction has been useful to provide an overview of my future work within TATOC. Feel free to request any additional details at the given address.

## 50 YEARS OF TIMESHARE

The year 1960 saw the appearance of the first systems of timeshare property, Ten years later, in 1970, the first regulations on these systems were born.

Nearly 50 years have passed and timeshare has grown steadily, substantially governed by regulation, and become one of the most relevant practices in the leisure properties market.

Some of the effort during these years has been to collect and regulate existing products. There have been many instances of companies inventing and developing new products to meet the changing needs of the leisure market.

Protection policies have become, in recent years, a key issue to the customer, and represent one of the fundamental and requested section of any contract.

...continued on page 10

Andrew Horton



Andrew started his working career as an Insurance underwriter and operated in the finance industry for eight years. He then joined Continental Trustees and was introduced to the world of timeshare. He held several positions with the company, which gave him an insight into the industry.

After seven years he decided to leave - but could not get away from the industry, He sold resort management software for an American firm for a short while before starting Resort Fiduciary Services, with Mike Horton.

Aged 42 and married with two children. He likes: rugby and scale modelling ("I never grew up."); he dislikes: bad manners, negative attitudes.

I feel that the industry has been complacent in its attitude to members. Originally, developers appeared to believe their owners complained about everything. In some cases they had justification. This attitude is now beginning to change with emphasis now being focused on the members, especially with the growth of dedicated internet chat rooms and forums. TATOC is also now growing in stature and influence.

### Where do I see the future of the industry?

I feel that there will be bespoke resorts designed around offering members courses in such subjects as painting, pottery and cooking. We are already seeing spa and well-being resorts. In some, treatments are paid for within the points values purchased.

Another possibility is offering ecological holidays at certain resorts, which practice "green" methodologies of generating their power through wind turbines and solar panels.

Green issues should be considered by resorts to try and reduce long-term costs, as grants may be available from local government.

Timeshare legislation is here to stay, and everyone needs to be aware of its impact both on their resorts as well as on the industry in general. The new EU directive is only strengthening the current legislation and closing some loopholes that previously 'allowed' certain products and practices.

What I would like to see is more co-operation between the industry and the various governmental bodies throughout Europe so that a better understanding of the industry is developed within government departments. Training sessions and open forums would help facilitate this requirement.

The strengthened legislation should be seen as a positive when selling or talking about timeshare. The regulations are there to protect consumers (There is now more information provided to consumers at the point of timeshare purchase than for any other product).

If all parties involved in the industry took a more pro-active approach regarding the sharing of information and the handling of consumer complaints, maybe the bad sales practices we read about would be reduced and eventually stamped out

But there has to be a collective will on all sides.

# Owners winning bigger say

In my view by Andrew Horton, co-founder of Resort Fiduciary Services

Currently the timeshare/fractional industry is facing difficult challenges. Some had been maturing for a considerable time but have now been exacerbated because of the current economic climate.

However there are of course a number of opportunities in any recession for the forward-looking businessman.

Timeshare has always been part of the solution for property developers to try and realise their investment. Many banks are desperate to off-load repossessed property developments, many of which would be suitable for timeshare or fractional resorts. These banks are willing to offer attractive loan deals which, in a buoyant property market, would not be available.

Developers, owners committees and management companies need to become pro-active not re-active to the current situations they face. Let's take a closer look at these problems.

First, timeshare has an ageing membership base which no longer wants to visit its home resort due to the cost of flying and difficulty in obtaining travel insurance. The current exchange rate is another downside. Members can exchange their time for a homeland resort at an additional cost.

But this means a subsequent loss of additional income spent by the members in the home resorts' bars, restaurants and shops.

Secondly, there has for some time been a chicken and egg situation concerning management fees. As members fail to pay their dues or hand back their weeks, the resulting financial burden is passed on to the remaining members through increased fees.

It all becomes cyclical and can lead to a feeling of dissatisfaction among remaining members which is directed at management companies and owners' committee, especially where resorts have no active sales programmes.

*Many resorts are still collecting membership fees in 'one sum' single payments – again a deterrent to continuing membership. A solution is to allow the spread of payments over a period of say four or six months using direct debit.*

This could be implemented once budgets have been set and go some way to reducing the levels of repossessions or returns of weeks.



Jan Tilley

# Training modules for members

by Jan Tilley, TATOC board director, development of training and education modules for members

Three years ago TATOC agreed to update its training programme for members and examine how best to deliver it.

Previously, training courses were face-to-face and interactive but these required members to travel and incur considerable cost to their resorts. With improved technology now available it was felt that there were several ways in which the information could be presented.

One possibility was via the TATOC website; another was by CD/DVD; and there remained the person-to-person courses. A survey of members at the 2007 conference indicated that the website was the preferred method. However, if a resort requested it TATOC would willingly operate person-to-person course on a subject.

There are now three training modules available on the web and more will be operating soon.

## Now ready for members are:

- **Improved decision making:** this is a modified version of the lecture given by Adam Jackson at the TATOC conference. Aimed at new committees/chairmen, it gives guidance on preparing for meetings and a guide to good practice.
- **Health and safety:** divided in two parts, the first provides information and guidance on legislation and where to find it and what can happen if things go wrong. The second explains about a procedure to help ensure a resort meets its legal requirements; and
- **Refurbishment:** this module gives some guidance on what to look for when thinking about refurbishing a resort - and how to do it.

*All the above are on the TATOC website in the members' only section. The following are ready and will soon be available:*

- **Committee responsibilities:** the module advises committee members on what their duties are and the relevant penalties if they are not carried out with reference to legal requirements and members' needs.
- **Disability access:** the new DDA act makes it a requirement that resorts look at what facilities can be provided for disabled members and guests. Various forms of disability are discussed and the assistance that has to be provided is fully explained. The course also outlines what new and existing resorts are required to provide.
- **Exchanges:** this module is in two parts: the first is aimed at committees and gives guidance on what can be done to make exchanging easier for members. The second, aimed at individual owners, explains the exchange process and gives hints on preparations to make before requesting an exchange.

## Other modules under preparation are:

- **Role of the resort committee:** this will examine what is expected of a committee and can be considered an introduction to the committee responsibilities module.
- **Role of the management company:** informs the committee on what should be expected from a management company.
- **Re-sales:** looks at the whole problem and suggests why resorts should consider in-house re-sales.
- **Finance - accounting detail:** U.K. VAT - what companies/committees need to do and when.
- **And for owners:** how to read and understand accounts.
- **Finance - summary:** a shortened version of the above two for those committees that only need a Refresher course.

All of the finance modules are taking longer to produce as the law keeps changing. Also, it is difficult to ensure they can be understood by committees. We are nearly there...

These regulations pass to the respective domestic legal systems with the aim of providing more protection for customers.

I will not bore you with this, my first article for the Journal of the partnership, with citing specific rules or articles

I will settle in drawing your attention to the fact that customers, today, have rights as consumers and users, and therefore have laws to enforce them.

I intend to speak extensively of such rights and such actions. We will devote the time and space they deserve, along with answering any queries you may have.

continued from page 10

## Significant turning points have been:

- Directive 94/47/EC of the European Parliament and Council of October 26, 1994, protecting purchasers of right-to-use immovable properties in timeshare; and
- The more recent Directive 2008/122/EC of the European Parliament and Council of January 14, 2009 concerning the protection of consumers in respect of certain timeshare contracts, the purchase of long-term holiday products, re-sales and exchange.

## NEWS

### TATOC website grows in strength

The TATOC website was re-launched at the beginning of 2009 and is proving to be of great interest to owners and non-owners alike.

The site provides the latest industry and TATOC news, a resort directory of members, information about membership and a range of consumer guides which are regularly updated.

Statistical analysis shows that the TATOC site is receiving on average over 2,250 'visitors' a month with over 1,600 of these unique.

The average length of time spent on the site is over 2.19 minutes searching for information on TATOC. The average browser looks at 2.39 pages per visit. Most visitors (43.4 per cent) come from referral sites but 14.4 per cent visit the site directly. These 'visitors' spend longer browsing the site.

Those who use search engines to find TATOC (42.1 per cent) are searching directly for the TATOC name (TATOC; TATOC.co.uk). This shows that the TATOC name is becoming increasingly well known by the general public.

TATOC is now working on new optimisation strategies to improve the rankings of the site on search engines such as Google.

### New canal boat affiliation for RCI

With the growing demand for holidays in Britain, United ABC Boat Management, which operates timeshare canal boat holidays along English waterways, has affiliated to RCI.

As part of this relationship, Anderton Marina, near Northwich, Cheshire, and Hilpertown Marina, near Trowbridge, Wiltshire, join the RCI exchange programme.

"We are very pleased to welcome the Anderton and Hilpertown Marinas into the RCI network," said Geoff Ballotti, president and CEO, Group RCI.

"These new affiliates will soon offer our more than 3.8 million members the chance to enjoy canal boat holidays on the scenic and picturesque waterways of the United Kingdom all year round," he said. "They are tremendous additions to our collection of top quality holiday options."

Both affiliates provide opportunities for members to take charge of their own canal boat, which sleep up to six, and come complete with full kitchens including a microwave, as well as central heating, television and other facilities.

### Norma Hartshorn

TATOC was saddened to hear of the death of Norma Hartshorn on October 19. Norma was a great supporter of TATOC and was actively involved as a director, then treasurer and finally as secretary-general.

Our condolences go to her husband, Dan, and her family.

# RE-SALES: THE GOOD THE BAD AND THE UGLY

**T**ATOC members know that the timeshare industry is dynamic, productive and offers an enhanced holiday experience. However, it's also accepted that the public's attitude is not positive and that these days the perception of re-sale companies is even worse.

Following on from the very successful forum at the 2009 TATOC conference, we asked Phil Watson, of Worldwide Timeshare Hypermarket, and Jason Tremblay, CEO of Sell My Timeshare Now, to review the resale business and spotlight the differences between the U.S. and Europe.

*In this issue we talk to Phil Watson*



**TATOC:** While we know that the U.S. timeshare product is 'real estate-based', as opposed to Europe's 'right to use', what is the situation of re-sale companies? Has there been growth over the years and has this been positive or negative?

**WATSON:** *There has been growth in re-sales with new companies springing up on a regular basis. The downside is that the majority of new companies within Europe are not reputable. They try to con the members out of their resort ownership and sell them a worthless holiday pack.*

*The new TATOC affinity programme could help eliminate the problem provided that the owners*

*listen to TATOC and are advised to deal only with TATOC or RDO (Resort Development Organisation) registered companies.*

**TATOC:** What are the major differences between the U.S. and E.U. markets?

**WATSON:** *As you've said, in the U.S. it's more a 'real estate' product whereas in Europe it tends to be 'right to use'. The other major difference is that, in the U.S., developers tend to work with recognised re-sale companies by allowing them to sell their products on a commission basis.*

*Developers also attempt to work with rather than against the re-sale firms. This helps create a better/fairer outlook on pricing. This in turn eliminates the problem we have in Europe where developers want two bites or more at the cherry and are not content with making money the first time around.*

**TATOC:** It is accepted that the industry worldwide is facing an increase in re-sales due to the aging problem of owners and resorts. Has the present economic environment increased this flow and what do you see as a result of that?

**WATSON:** *The current economic climate has indeed had an effect on the re-sale market. Clients are now more discerning when purchasing on the secondary market. On top of that the resorts are now a lot less likely to re-possess weeks, which in turn increases pressure on the members.*

*Therefore, owners are now prepared to accept less for their weeks which, in turn, affects the developer's pricing model. We also see many smaller re-sale companies prepared to sell at ridiculously low prices as they do not have the high overheads experienced by the bigger firms. A never-ending circle.*

**TATOC:** Will this increase in the 'second hand' market have an impact on the prime timeshare market? Have the scales tipped?

**WATSON:** *I would like to say "yes", but within Europe it's going to take a long time for the developers to come away from the Stone Age. We as a company are beginning to see some changes within the major groups but not with all of them.*

**TATOC:** Yet again the authorities have sought to control the re-sale rogues by introducing legislation. Do you believe that U.S. and E.U. legislation will be successful? What should be done to ensure the best practice?

**WATSON:** *Sad to say but I do not believe that the legislation coming into place will worry the rogues in the market place. Depending on how the various authorities read the new legislation, it will probably be detrimental to the better type of re-sale company.*

**TATOC:** Our organisation issues Timeshare Guides to assist those trying to re-sell. What are your tips or recommendations?

**WATSON:** *Deal only with TATOC or RDO recognised companies. And not take any cold calls. It's my personal opinion but I feel that clients should only deal with re-sale companies who have a trustee or fiduciary system in place. Using a company's solicitors is not beneficial as they are not independent; they work on behalf of their client who is not the purchaser or the vendor but the Resale Company.*

**TATOC:** Every market has to move forward: what innovations do you see in the resale market in the future?

**WATSON:** *I would like to see a price guide for timeshare similar to the Glasses Guide, which is used in the second hand car market. I'd also like to see more European developers working alongside rather than against the re-sale companies and I believe there should be set ownership transfer fees as some resorts charge astronomical rates.*

*I could go on and on but I know that I would be wasting my time!*

**Next Issue: Jason Tremblay**

## NEWS

### New Thai resorts join RCI

Three new private residence club resorts in Thailand have been added to RCI's world-wide Registry Collection.

"We are extremely excited by the expansion of the IFA Collection into Asia and by the addition of the Raimon Land developed resorts to the network," said Geoff Ballotti, president and CEO, Group RCI.

The Registry Collection is the world's largest luxury exchange programme and one of the Wyndham Worldwide family of brands

Each of the three private residence clubs provides members with full access to the IFA exchange network as well as to The Registry Collection programme.

The new Private Residence Club resorts include The Heights, in Phuket; The River, in Bangkok; and the Northpoint, in Pattaya.

The IFA Collection comprises a luxury portfolio of international properties developed by IFA Hotels &

Resorts, a major shareholder in Raimon Land and an international specialist in the development of mixed-use resorts.

Geoff Ballotti said that Raimon Land was synonymous with quality. "These three extraordinary properties offer the level of luxury vacation experience we aim to deliver to our members," he said.

Added Piaras Moriarty, VP client management at IFA Hotels & Resorts, "We are very proud to see the continued growth of the IFA Collection and to add these unique properties to our growing portfolio of luxury destinations."

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# The three-legged stool



Timeshare stalwart **FRED ELLIOTT** takes a look at resort harmony.

In real life many things are promised us or we are instructed that certain dealings and items will make life easier for us. But one thing I can promise is 100 per cent correct.

*A three - legged stool will NEVER EVER ROCK.*

You say to yourself, "What on earth has that statement got to do with timeshare?"

Allow me a little of your time to explain.

Earlier this year I received an e-mail from TATOC asking if I would write an article about the relationship in timeshare of the following three groups:

1. Owners committees;
2. Management companies; and
3. Communications

My mind went straight to the "the three legged stool".

Having been in timeshare for over 25 years as an owner in four resorts and having been on owners committees as secretary for 21 years of that time, somebody at TATOC thought that I should be able to write an article on the subject.

The above three subjects, in one form or another, are the essential part of any timeshare organisation.

We all have a management company either big or small to handle the daily tasks of operating our resort on behalf of owners. This is the same both in England and worldwide.

There may slight deviations in terminology regarding correct terms but basically there is always a management company.

Some management companies sit on the boards of the resorts' owners committee. In some cases this can be a good idea provided there are certain restraints such as not being able to vote on any matters relating to the management company or the renewal of their contracts and so on.

The committee is and always has been the best contact with owners and this relationship is most essential for the well-being of the resort.

Committees receive ideas from owners, dissect them in a proper manner and then inform the management company of their findings along with requests for instructions to be carried out.

If this direct link between the three 'legs' is broken in any way then the result will most certainly be disaster in one form or another.

If you ever look back at some of the problems with our industry you will always find that one of these 'legs' had broke down in some form or other.



Regular committee meetings held at a given time each year allow future planning to take place with the management company. Owners must be made aware of when these regular meetings are scheduled so that representations, if any, can be put forward.

Decisions reached at these meeting must always be made available to the owners.

Any management company worth its salt should always have forward planning in place for the well-being of the resort so that there are no sudden surprises for the Committee or, more importantly for the owners themselves.

The management company should prepare a draft budget by a set date each year, communicate this to the committee and then, at an annual budget meeting, go through the draft budget line by line. The management company should be in a position to answer any questions on this budget.

There has to be a two-way partnership between the owners committee and the management company so that ideas and recommendations can be supported.

It is then that the 'third' leg of the stool comes into place: communication. The owners committee must pass on information to owners by whichever means they prefer.

There are many different management companies around and it is not my remit to recommend one against the other. All I would say is that there are many ways of checking out a company prior to entering into any agreement with them. The same applies to the management company seeking information on a resort.

## The role of resort management firms

by Linda Freer, MD Resort Solutions

Successful relationships between management companies and resorts have to be based on recognising that each resort is different – with individual needs and requirements. A 'one size fits all' solution does not work.

Both management company and the resort owners committee need to work together to determine exactly what is required for the successful operation of the resort.

Some resort committees want to take control and be in charge while others are happy to take a more passive role and hand over total responsibility.

Communication between management company and committee is vitally important. Within our organisation we have a dedicated account manager to look after and handle each specific resort.

Each committee member has regular and direct contact with the dedicated team members who are on hand whenever the committee needs help or assistance.

In this way, the management company can develop professionalism within the committee so that members understand how a resort should be run and what their own responsibilities are.

The committee is made up of people who probably have little or no experience in the areas of management, sales and marketing and a professional management company will help them develop these skills

For example, a management company can explain the importance of new sales to a resort's success and help the committee decide the best way for these to be handled.

### *Sycophantic relationships do not work*

The management company must not operate in fear that its contract might be cancelled or that it has riled the committee. It must be strong

enough to explain its viewpoint and encourage the committee to take the right direction.

If the management company or the resort owners are not happy with something, both parties must be able to express their concerns.

This relationship is assisted with the provision of rigid key performance indicators to monitor the performance of the management company. This would include statistics on occupation, re-sales, rentals, stock availability, cancellations and RCI results.

Management companies are able to bring a wealth of benefits when they work with a resort.

These include expertise from the wider industry that the committee will not have, economies of scale and the opportunity to tap into the specialities and services of the management company.

In Resort Solutions' case this is a range of services such as rentals, re-sales, credit control, credit card payments and advice on finance and legislation.



# Club La Costa celebrates 25 years

## Silver Jubilee – celebrating success and ‘pure gold’ holidays

In the year that Apple introduced its Mackintosh PC, Virgin Atlantic Airways made its inaugural flight and ice skaters Torvill and Dean scored 12 perfect sixes at the Winter Olympics, the seeds of a small timeshare company were sown in southern Spain.

And this year, Club La Costa Resorts & Hotels celebrates its Silver Jubilee in business, having in the intervening period grown to a size that chairman and founder Roy Peires never imagined possible back in 1984.

From 77 original members and a handful of apartments in the Las Farolas resort on the Costa del Sol, Club La Costa took root and blossomed extraordinarily; these days it has more than 50,000 members, 23 owned resorts, a resort management operation, travel business and a freehold properties arm. More shoots can be expected as the company continues to widen its net.

## Innovation and diversity

Club La Costa's reputation as a market leader in Europe has been cultivated through innovation, bringing a flexible points system of holidays into the mix and introducing a private yacht club to its continually evolving product range.

Club La Costa Yacht Club has made available to members holidays normally associated with a privileged elite, with sailings in the Red Sea, around the Mediterranean island of Mallorca, and along the Turkish coast. A new Greek Islands sailing programme is planned for 2010.

Having a proven track record for first-rate management, means Club La Costa resort teams can be found right across Europe. The company's own managed resorts are located in England, Scotland, Austria, southern Spain, Tenerife and Turkey.

## Freehold opportunities

The number of members progressing from its points-based Vacation Club, to owning Club La Costa resort properties outright, continues to grow, with freehold developments in the UK,

Spain and Turkey, usually sold with some form of leaseback agreement.

Even in the midst of a difficult global recession, Club La Costa has recently released details of an exciting new private homes development: California Golf Resort - Turkey, hot on the heels of sell-out resort Club La Costa Adonis, on the country's idyllic south-west coast.

California Golf Resort - Turkey will be part of the company's flagship brand. The 'California' family of resorts was begun in Spain, establishing a hallmark quality, with interior design of high grade furnishings, classic modern colours and top class materials such as granite work surfaces. Many properties have personal Jacuzzis on terraces and share extensive communal features.

## Supporting good work

Club La Costa's growth has also seen it help and support local communities. In 1999 the Club La Costa Foundation was created to support charitable works and needs. This evolved into The Smile Foundation, which continues this good work with the company's on-going support on both the Costa del Sol and Tenerife.

Currently the Foundation is building the ADIMI hospital on the Costa del Sol. This will benefit physically and mentally disadvantaged children and their families,

“Celebrating the company's jubilee and all that has been achieved, including our charity work, is a proud moment for me personally,” says Roy Peires..

“That pride is shared by loyal Club La Costa staff, many with long service records, and our members who joined in the early days and have witnessed the way we've grown and diversified.

“We are continuing to refine the product, right through from reservations to delivery on site and plan to take our successful formula and superior service into other major holiday destinations across the world.

*“It really is just the beginning!”*

For more information about TATOC platinum sponsor, Club La Costa, visit [www.clublacosta.com](http://www.clublacosta.com).



Club La Costa Alpine Centre



Club La Costa at Hustyns

## RCI luxury network nears 170 mark

The Registry Collection, Group RCI's largest luxury exchange programme, now has approaching 170 properties that are either accessible for members or under development.

RCI introduced its luxury exchange program for the emerging fractional market in 2002. “We couldn't be more pleased with the growth of the programme and the quality of world-class resorts that this network of luxury destinations continues to offer its members,” said Mr Geoff Ballotti, president and CEO, Group RCI.

“This segment of our business has shown tremendous momentum and we view this milestone as an illustration of just how much value we continue to deliver,” he said.

Most recently, new affiliations in the United States, Latin American and Caribbean regions were announced.

Going beyond traditional vacation accommodations, Registry Collection members can exchange into vacation product types worldwide that range from luxury hotels to estate homes and luxury yachts.

In addition to the the properties either available for exchange or under development, members have access to specially negotiated travel services from foremost luxury travel providers.

The Registry Collection comprises more than 30,000 members and more than 130 affiliates on five continents.



Club La Costa at California Beach Resort

## NEWS

## RSL resort deal

Resort Solutions Ltd (RSL) has signed a new management agreement with the Monte Carvoeiro resort in Portugal. Both are TATOC members.

The resort, located in Lagoa on the Algarve, sits on a hill above the tiny bay and village of Carvoeiro and comprises a mix of apartments and villas.

Since June, RSL and the new owners' committee have implemented a number of changes aimed at bringing the resort back to its former stature.

The complete refurbishment of a two-bedroom show apartment is in process and a newly-formed sales company, Vacations for You, is scheduled to start operations.

Resort Solutions manages 14 resorts in Europe and is one of the largest independent companies specialising in the management of timeshare resorts.

## Happy Birthday to the Osborne

The Osborne, Torquay celebrates its thirtieth birthday this year. The resort is a unique development of 46 apartments in a Regency Crescent overlooking the sea.

As England's first timeshare resort, the property has been sold out for over ten years and now has 1,654 members.

## Langdale Hotel and Spa named Sustainable Hotel of the Year

The award is for any tourism business working to maximise its positive impact on the environment and local area/community while communicating its environmental commitment to visitors.

The award-winning 35-acre Langdale Estate, set in the heart of the English Lake District, is a natural woodland haven with streams, tarns, and landscape dotted with massive millstones. It offers a choice of self-catering and timeshare accommodation, together with two restaurants and bars, a traditional pub and extensive leisure and spa facilities

The award - presented at the annual Cumbria Tourism awards ceremony in Kendal - is recognition of the many years of commitment by the project's management team. This has culminated in the implementation of a Biomass Boiler to supply the hotel and spa (including 21 metre swimming pool) with virtually carbon neutral energy.

Other activities includes large scale recycling, home working, biodiversity planning, low energy solutions across the hotel and 100 lodges, responsible purchasing and much more.

Langdale works closely with environmental protection groups to preserve the environment that the Lake District is renowned for the world over.



## Merlin comes to help

by Geoff Chapman, TATOC board director

Development is nearing completion on a comprehensive software system which will enable TATOC's consumer helpline to provide an even speedier and more professional service.

The system, from software company Merlin, is based on existing software designed for use by timeshare resorts, management companies and a range of other timeshare businesses. It has been extensively modified to meet the requirements of the busy helpline, serving both existing/potential timeshare consumers and victims of non-timeshare scams.

The new helpline system is based on 'TRUST', a professional software platform launched at the 2009 TATOC conference. The Merlin system has evolved from a programme developed in 1988 by timeshare industry professionals who identified a need for a professional software product to manage their businesses.

The new software, a multi-user, multi-entry system allowing full access via the internet, is a powerful database product supported by user-friendly, 'front-end' software that facilitates helpline staff to make data entries both speedily and efficiently. It will:

- Replace the manual paper-based system;
- Enable the helpline to receive and record enquiries and complaints while the consumer is on the telephone, or directly from e-mail communications;
- Enable helpline consultants to link into any previous calls or e-mails from the consumer and search for similar complaints against the same or similar companies;
- Enable helpline consultants to e-mail (or post) additional information to consumers within minutes of receiving an enquiry/complaint;
- Provide search and report facilities by all principal data fields making it a prime tool in immediate problem resolution and strategic planning; and
- Provide analysis and report writing

facilities for use within TATOC and for government agencies such as OFT, BIS and so on.

Development started in June 2009 and, under the direction of Merlin 'head magician' Mr. Mike Pnematicatos, has shown tremendous dedication and commitment to meet TATOC's deadline of launching the system on January 1, 2010.

At times TATOC and Merlin development review meetings were taking place every few days and, as a result of this commitment, the system was scheduled to 'go live' one month early on December 1, 2009.

*Just as the original Merlin was to King Arthur – every indication is that Merlin will prove to be our very own 'wizard', and will enable the helpline to provide an even better service to consumers.*

Applications are invited for the position of Gwenevere.



*Merlin dictating his poems, as illustrated in a French book from the 13th century. We think the picture may actually depict an early timeshare consumer receiving help from the TATOC helpline.*

## Web guide to Club Paradiso

Resort Properties has launched a website to support its new Club Paradiso resort

The site outlines the Club Paradiso concept and how it works, and provides an overview of all the range of high-end holiday resorts in the portfolio.

The website - [www.resortproperties-group.com](http://www.resortproperties-group.com) - has been designed to reflect the luxury elements of

Club Paradiso locations that make up the network of boutique resorts.

With residences in Tenerife, Malta, Dubai, Florida, Tuscany and Jamaica, Club Paradiso offers a broad choice of experiences to its members and the new website has been designed to provide a taste of that diversity.

Said Mark Cushway, European managing director of Resort Properties: "Club Paradiso is a high-cost, high-quality product and we wanted the website to mirror those values. Our members enjoy incredible holidays with Club Paradiso every year and we wanted them to be able to show their friends and families what an amazing product they own".



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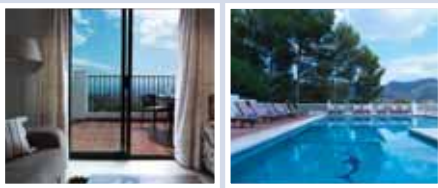
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Indoor pool - Macdonalds Resorts at La Ermita

# Macdonald Resorts in major up-date programme

by Sharetime reporter Emily Collins



(From left to right) Lounge view and upper pool - Macdonald Resorts at La Ermita

Relationships remain very strong between Macdonald Resorts and the elected owners committees.

A proactive approach has resulted in improvements made at each resort site.

Following on from last year's agreement at Elmers Court Country Club, the Plas Talgarth Health & Leisure Club also renewed its management contract following negotiations with the committee.

## Macdonald Resorts launches new TV and internet bundle

A new TV and internet service has been introduced into the lodges at Plas Talgarth, Elmers Court, Doña Lola and Leila Playa. This new facility includes broadband internet, movies on demand, music channels, a resorts information service as well as a full range of TV channels and SKY service.

At Lochanhully Woodland Club in Scotland, an internet wireless facility is available in each woodland cottage. Similar plans are being

looked at for Forest Hills Lochside Resort and Dalfaber Golf & Country Club.

Refurbishment programmes have been undertaken at Macdonald resorts in Spain and the U.K.

### In Spain, 109 units have been refurbished:

- 63 at Doña Lola;
- 35 at Villacaña; and
- 11 at Leila Playa

In addition phases three and four at La Ermita have been completed, adding 31 new apartments and an indoor heated pool to complement the existing leisure facilities and new underground car parking.

### In the U.K. 129 accommodation units have been fully refurbished:

- 55 lodges at Dalfaber Golf & Country Club;
- 23 lodges at Forest Hills Lochside Resort;
- 15 lodges at Elmers Court Country Club;
- 17 lodges at Plas Talgarth Health & Leisure Club and 12 'mini' refurbishments in the Mansion House; and
- 19 lodges at Lochanhully Woodland Club.



Lounge - Macdonald Resorts at La Ermita

## Macdonald opens La Ermita resort with a veiw

In January 2010 the new phases at La Ermita will open. A 20-minute journey from Malaga airport, the hillside resort lies beneath a spectacular backdrop of pine-clad mountains and overlooks the 'white village' of Mijas.

"It is a place where the emphasis is very much on rest and relaxation – perfect for those who wish to escape the stresses of modern life," says Simon Jackson, managing director of Macdonald Resorts.

The resort is minutes away from world-class shopping in Marbella or Puerto Banus and a wealth of leisure activities that range from water sports to golf to fishing.

"Since the company started developing La Ermita we have focused on the long term," says Simon Jackson. "Some £7m has been invested in creating a resort that takes into consideration the ever-changing needs of today's holidaymaker.

*"At the same time we've stayed committed to integrating the highest levels of quality and style in the resort."*

Each apartment at La Ermita has two bedrooms and two bathrooms with spa bath and a private balcony with panoramic views over the Mediterranean. A choice of apartment styles is available.

The resort boasts two outdoor swimming pools and an indoor pool with steam rooms. Also available is a state-of-the-art fitness centre, equipped with cross trainers, exercise bikes and weight-training stations.

"La Ermita's prime location and fantastic setting will certainly delight visitors and there are various types of ownership available," says Alastair Baird, marketing manager of Macdonald Resorts.

For example, those looking for more of a second home choice without the hassle of huge property costs could choose the new fractional ownership product.

Further information on Macdonald Resorts and La Ermita is available on [www.Macdonald-Resorts.co.uk](http://www.Macdonald-Resorts.co.uk).

## New affiliation for II in Cyprus

*Interval International has added the Cypriot resort of Pafiana Heights to its holiday exchange network.*

Located on the outskirts of Paphos, on the southwest coast of the island, the resort comprises 57 units furnished to high standards. "This prestigious resort and spa is another

quality affiliation for our company in Cyprus," said Darren Ettridge, Interval's vice president of resort sales and service for Europe, Middle East, and Africa.

"From 700 feet above sea level, there are breathtaking panoramic views from all the rooms overlooking the Paphos coastline and mountains."

Amenities at the property include a spa with sauna and whirlpool; a gym and fitness centre; indoor and outdoor swimming pools; a gourmet restaurant; and a roof garden with bar. Guests

also have access to on-call chef/butler and concierge services.

Paphos is a popular tourist destination for the British, German, and Scandinavian markets. Among its many attractions are an archaeological museum, the Byzantine castle of Paphos, the Tombs of the Kings, St. Paul's Pillar, and the Temple of Aphrodite (the Greek goddess of love and beauty).

"We chose Interval because of its prestigious reputation, high standards and quality of services," said Fantinos Hadjimitsis, developer of Pafiana Heights.



# Timeshare Cold callers

by Mark Caldicott, helpline co-ordinator

It is an ongoing concern for TATOC and a source of much frustration for legitimate timeshare companies that there are still 'scammers' around who fraudulently part the public from its hard-earned cash and give the industry a bad name.

One of the current scams about which TATOC has received a significant number of complaints concerns re-sales.

Timeshare owners are being targeted by fraudsters who offer to sell their weeks for them. The victims are asked to pay up-front fees for any number of reasons but then hear nothing more from the scammers - no sales, no refunds.

Others are duped into parting with up-front cash - often hundreds or even thousands of pounds - only to find that the supposed buyer has dropped out of the deal. They are then lured to a foreign country to meet a "corporate

buyer" who, it's claimed, is interested in buying their week. However, when the owners arrive at their destination they usually find that the corporate buyer is really a sales person who subjects them to a hard-sell presentation for a bogus holiday pack.

TATOC strongly recommends that consumers deal only with resale companies who are affiliated to TATOC and/or are members of the Resort Development Organisation (RDO).

TATOC also recommends that consumers are extremely cautious of re-sale company representatives who:

- Make an unsolicited contact (cold call);
- Request any form of up-front payment for such things as deposits, administration charges, bonds of trust, surety against withdrawal, insurance cover, validity survey, land registry tax, certificate charge and VAT;

- Promise that your payment is fully protected under laws governing the use of credit cards;
- Ask for your credit card, debit card or bank details and assure you that no payment will be taken;
- Suggest they can obtain an unexpected or unrealistic high price;
- Say they have a purchaser waiting to buy your particular timeshare product;
- Ask you to send them your ownership certificate; and
- Apply undue pressure for a decision within a short time period

These people have unlimited imagination when it comes to stealing your money. So don't trust them - no matter how convincing and reassuring they may seem.

To see a list of companies who have recently been cold calling consumers visit our website [www.timeshareassociation.org](http://www.timeshareassociation.org). This list is updated regularly on our website. Please help us to make more people aware of the scammers by keeping us advised by email or telephone with information on cold callers not listed.

Telephones 0845 2302430 or 0871 2040329  
Email [info@timeshareassociation.org](mailto:info@timeshareassociation.org) or visit [www.timeshare-association.org](http://www.timeshare-association.org) or our sister site [www.timeshare-consumer-advice.co.uk](http://www.timeshare-consumer-advice.co.uk)

## NEWS



### New member of staff for TATOC

Pauline Bryers has joined the TATOC team as an administrator and accounts officer.

Prior to joining TATOC in 2009 Pauline spent 30 years working in different roles within multi-national organisations. She brings great experience in liaising with offices in many countries and working in a multi-currency environment. Her role within TATOC is to ensure that the administration of the Manchester head office is efficient and effective. Pauline has been married to Andrew for 15 years and has one son, Michael.

### Resort Directory Update

The TATOC online directory of member resorts is being updated.

Each listing in the website directory will include a short description of the member resort, contact details and photos.

The task is being undertaken by Emily Collins. She urges: "If you have any additional resort photos or a different contact number please email me directly with the details on [emily.collins@timeshareassociation.org](mailto:emily.collins@timeshareassociation.org)."

### New sponsors

Resort Properties Group and the Costfield Organisation have become TATOC Platinum Sponsorship supporters.

"We are delighted that these groups have entered into sponsorship with us," said TATOC chief executive Harry Taylor.

Further details on Platinum Sponsorship, can be obtained from [harry.taylor@timeshareassociation.org](mailto:harry.taylor@timeshareassociation.org)

The Business Directory is also increasing in strength with the addition of EVC Marketing and the Pace Financial Group.

### Membership fees for 2010 – no increase

David Eastburn, chairman of TATOC, has advised members that, once again, subscriptions will remain unchanged for the following year.

However, he has advised members they should be aware that this decision has been taken by the board against a background of greatly increased costs over the previous year "which has virtually exhausted TATOC's reserves."

These costs are a direct result of TATOC's widening scope of operations and the production of the new Sharetime magazine; this in turn has increased the TATOC membership base and other administrative costs.

"While this increased membership has produced a rise in gross subscription income," said Mr Eastburn, "members should be aware that the present level of operations will produce a further deficit in 2010 which can only be met by a significant increase in membership fees for 2011 and beyond."

He revealed that the board had been under considerable pressure to anticipate increases by formulating a rise for the forthcoming year. "It was eventually decided to postpone an immediate increase in order to assist member resorts struggling to balance their books at a time of great economic challenge."

This decision was somewhat assisted by the income stream being generated from TATOC's website, and by generous grants from the Timeshare Partnership Trust to fund the Help Line. "However, these grants are made on an annual basis and depend on a num-

ber of factors outside our control.

"Certainly, they cannot be relied on in future years as a regular source of income."

He assured members that the board would continue to monitor costs and seek other sources of income in order to keep membership subscriptions at a level fully commensurate with the greatly improved service now being offered.

With the accreditation programme now fully established, "it is becoming increasingly clear that resorts outside the scheme are being scrutinised ever more closely," he said.

"TATOC membership is rapidly becoming essential for resorts wishing to uphold standards and protect their membership."

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	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom
Doña Lola, Mijas, Malaga, Spain	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295
Leila Playa Mijas, Malaga, Spain	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295
Villacañã Estepoña, Malaga, Spain	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295
Elmers Court Lymington, Hampshire	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295
Plas Talgarth Pennal, Poywes, Wales	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295
Forest Hills Aberfoyle, Scotland	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295
Dalfaber Aviemore, Scotland	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295	£995	£1,195	£1,295
Lochanhully Carrbridge, Scotland	N/A	£1,195	N/A	N/A	£1,195	N/A	N/A	£1,195	N/A	N/A	£1,195	N/A

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**T**imeshare is a fantastic holiday product. It is also a business which has to deal with the whole range of tax and business regulations. Stuart Carrington, head of timeshare services at accountancy firm Thomas Westcott, highlights an issue of relevance to resorts.

The article is based on U.K. rules, but the legislation involved is European in origin and could end up having a far wider impact.

2000, a concession has been obtained that, in certain circumstances, the benefit only needs to be disclosed for the years 2006/07 onwards.

Employers who have employees provided with living accommodation need to be aware of this issue. They may need to assess what type of exemption they have been using for their employees.

Where the **essential rule** has been used employers will need to consider the tax and other implications. We are aware that some fire regulations can require a staff member's physical presence on certain types of premises at all times.

If this is the case affected employers may need to consider the implications of the WTD, and perhaps the need for a shift pattern to provide 24 hour cover, and then determine the tax situation.

It should be noted that employees provided with living accommodation under the customary rule do not appear to be affected by the WTD issue and should be able to continue as before. However, employers should keep the circumstances of the employment under review to ensure the employee continues to qualify for exemption.

#### **All is not bad:**

Whilst this is very much a live issue there are a few things to bear in mind before worrying excessively:

From discussions that Thomas Westcott has had with other accountancy firms, it would seem that this issue is yet to spread to all industries. Residential care homes appear to be bearing the brunt of this at the moment and it may be some time before the connection to timeshare is drawn more widely.

HMRC are not fully geared up for this matter and at least one district when contacted was not even aware of the issue. This gives those concerned the opportunity voluntarily to put the matter right on negotiable and favourable terms.

In one very successful case, Thomas Westcott were able to obtain HMRC agreement that the taxable benefit should be less than £50 per year. It is usually far better to be proactive in these matters than wait until HMRC comes knocking on the door.

#### **What next:**

If you would like to discuss this, or any other matter, with Stuart he can be contacted at [stuart.carrington@thomaswestcott.co.uk](mailto:stuart.carrington@thomaswestcott.co.uk). As well as timeshare, Thomas Westcott is a leading firm of Chartered Accountants with specialists in a wide range of areas including VAT, Corporate Tax, Audit, Income Tax, estate planning, etc.

## Employee accommodation: A taxing problem

by Stuart Carrington, Thomas Westcott Accountants

Many timeshare resorts have employees who are provided with living accommodation. This provision is generally a benefit in kind for the employee, which means that it is valued and taxable with further National Insurance charges on the employer.

However, in most cases this is covered by two regularly-used exemptions:

Where accommodation is provided for the proper performance of duties: **the necessary or essential rule**.

This is generally interpreted as the employee having to occupy a particular property. Examples include caretakers, certain staff on night duty and some resort managers.

Where accommodation is provided for the better performance of duties: **the customary rule**.

This is generally interpreted to mean that an employee in this role would normally be provided with accommodation. (This is less common in timeshare and examples include stable staff of racehorse trainers, managers of newsagent shops which have paper rounds and members of the clergy).

The new tax issue relates to employees who have previously been exempt under the **essential category**.

The European Working Time Directive (WTD) has already altered many of these employment situations. Where employees are required to be on call and on the premises they are considered to be working. Under the WTD, employees are required to be provided with 11 hours rest each day and consequently cannot work during the day and then be on call overnight.

In addition, when these employees are on call and on the premises they have to be paid at least the national minimum wage (NMW), except for the hours when they are asleep.

To get round this problem many employers are changing working practices to avoid WTD and NMW issues – the effect often being to make the employee no longer on call.

However, the UK tax authorities have taken the view that, as resident employees are no longer on call during the night, they are not working and therefore do not need to live in that particular accommodation. They have argued successfully that the accommodation provided to the employee is a benefit in kind and no longer tax exempt. This has caused some significant hardship for individuals.

One industry group, more affected than most, has already started negotiations with HMRC. While this issue theoretically started on April 6,

## NEWS

### Fairways Club hits year 20

**T**here are great celebrations this year as the Fairways Club - a TATOC member - reaches its 20th anniversary.

"It seems like only yesterday that we were looking around South Tenerife for an area to build our project," recalls developer Martin Beasley. "But just look at what we've achieved".

In late 1986 construction work began on building an Andalucian-style village within the new golf complex known as the Amarilla Golf and Country Club.

The complex was originally to be sold on a freehold basis but, with the arrival of the recession, the plans were adapted and the apartments were marketed and sold on a Holiday Ownership basis from sales offices in Birmingham and London.

This decision saved the Fairways Club project and the first timeshare sale was recorded in 1989 with the first occupation in 1991.

Facilities such as the Club House restaurant, managed by John and Lorraine Palmer, soon followed. Today the resort offers a large heated pool, several restaurants and is close to a small harbour.

"We're ideally suited for families or couples looking to get away from it all and there's also the added security of being a gated community. Hustle and bustle and attractions are available just a short distance away."

Since its inception, the resort has gone from strength to strength and the Fairways Club offers owners and guests a top quality holiday experience with a home-away-from-home atmosphere. Today, the Fairways Club has members from 47 countries.

Martin Beasley is particularly keen to acknowledge the hard work of the resort's on-site team, especially manager Dagmara who celebrates her tenth anniversary with Fairway this year.

"The tireless efforts of Dagmara and her team have resulted in the club maintaining RCI's Gold Crown award for fifteen years in a row and the Hospitality Award for seven years – a major achievement," says Beasley.

"However, I really want to thank our owners for their support over the years and hope to see them all at Fairways for many years to come".

# Timeshare 'stripped to the bone'

by Harry Taylor, TATOC CEO

**T**imeshare was 'stripped bare' and given a thorough analysis at a seminar staged in the UK last autumn.

Held at the Barnsdale Hall Hotel & Country Club near Oakham, in Rutland, it was sponsored by Dial an Exchange and moderated by David Lilley, the company's managing director.

The event was also attended by Mr Harry Taylor, TATOC chief executive, and Geoff Chapman, director.

The seminar was designed to be an honest and in-depth look at all the issues that have confronted timeshare and given the industry a tarnished reputation for the last two decades.

In his introduction, Mr Lilley gave a "no pulled punches" review of the industry. Delegates agreed that painful changes and decisions would have to be made by developers and resort committees if new members were to embrace the concept of timeshare and fractional ownership.

Mr Taylor outlined how TATOC is helping the timeshare industry and also gave his views on the industry problems and how TATOC is trying to help address some of the challenges.

He reported that TATOC had helped in formulating the new European timeshare directive and had consulted with various government bodies such as the Office of Fair Trading and BERR (Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform).

TATOC had worked both with the U.K. government and with Brussels to try and tighten up the laws in Europe which were at currently allowing the 'scammers and rogue developers to flourish.'

"Some scammers are already moving their operations to bases outside the E.U. in order to try to beat the new initiatives." He said.

Mr Taylor outlined how TATOC is growing and now has over 70 resorts signed up as members. These resorts represented 250,000 timeshare-owning families.

After some initial problems, TATOC had opened membership to individuals so that all timeshare owners - irrespective of whether their home resort was represented or not - could now join TATOC. Accordingly, individual membership allows points owners to be represented within TATOC.

Mr Taylor stressed that the TATOC helpline is open to all and it is not necessary to be a member in order to seek help, advice or representation in the event of a dispute with a developer.



David Lilley

He also revealed details of the recently rolled out initiative 'Resort Accreditation Programme'. This on-site assessment looks at resort practices and standards with the emphasis on the needs and rights of the customers. Suitable resorts are given accreditation status on completion.

Mr Geoff Chapman, TATOC director, outlined how the TATOC consumer helpline protects the best interests of both timeshare owners and consumers of holiday products in general.

Giving details regarding the type of enquiries received, he said the helpline had gone live on January 1, 2008 and during its first 18 months dealt with 8,000 telephone calls. Most of these related to dubious resale malpractices or scams based on holiday clubs.

#### He revealed that:

- 46 per cent of calls related to rogue re-sale companies;
- 21 per cent were about selling a timeshare; and
- Seven per cent about dubious marketing practices of non-timeshare products

These three items took up 74 per cent of the helpline call volume.

An internal analysis of calls showed that only about two per cent of complaints concerned individual developers or resorts (seven out of 300 calls).

The helpline, he told delegates, had previously been run by VOICE (a grouping of resorts and owners committees).

At that time there were 200 calls per month. Under TATOC, this has now increased to 700 calls per month and is rising. The longest consumer call took 31 minutes to handle; the longest it took for helpline to answer a call was 27 seconds.

Many e-mails and letters were also handled. Mr Chapman said a conservative estimate of savings to the consumer was some £1.5 million in the first 15 months. This estimate was based, he said, on enquiries about specific companies where TATOC is able to give help to consumers enabling them to withhold or recoup cash outlays.

#### During the seminar, presentations were given by:

Mr Simon Jackson, managing director of Macdonald Resorts; Mr Philip Watson, managing director of Worldwide Timeshare Hypermarke; Mr Ramy Filo, CEO of Classic Holidays; Mr Paul Mattimoe, editor of Owners Perspective Magazine; Mr Matthew Moody, managing director of Millennium Property; and Mr David Lilley, managing director of Dial An Exchange Europe.

## Free maintenance fee collections from PACE

**C**ollecting annual maintenance fees can often be a time-consuming and costly exercise.

Added to that, a number of resorts have reported budgeting difficulties over the past 18 months with wildly fluctuating currency exchange rates. In some cases resorts have collected insufficient funds from their U.K. owners to cover the true Euro or Dollar based costs.

It appears that help is now on hand in the form of PACE Financial Group's free cross-currency collection service - launched earlier this year.

PACE provides an off-the-shelf solution that can be embedded into a resort's website or integrated into its existing technology platforms and enables owners a quick and easy on-line facility to settle their bills.

The specific aim of the service is to enable a resort to set its bills in the applicable local domestic currency - typically in Euros or Dollars. U.K. owners can then settle their bills on-line in sterling, using major credit or debit cards, at a competitive exchange rate.

The system gives the resort full reporting functionality including the ability to view all transactions in real-time along with historic transactions relating to specific owners. The resort can set early payment incentives or impose or waive late payment penalties.

In addition, PACE will be offering owners a cross-currency direct debit facility designed to help spread maintenance payments over the year.

For more information on the PACE can be contacted on +44 (0) 20 8973 2571 or by email at [enquiries@pacefinancialgroup.com](mailto:enquiries@pacefinancialgroup.com)

## A new attraction for visitors to Aviemore



A polar bear has recently moved from an enclosure at Edinburgh Zoo to roam in the Highland Wildlife Park in nearby Kingussie. The park is a great destination for guests staying at Scandinavian Village.

# DRI defines the meaning of **Yes**

by Stephen J. Cloobek, chairman and CEO

**D**iamond Resorts International (DRI), a leader in the holiday ownership industry, claims to set itself apart from competitors during the economic downturn with a commitment to providing service excellence through its corporate ideology of 'The Meaning of Yes.'

Says Stephen J. Cloobek, chairman and chief executive officer: "While other hospitality and travel companies are abiding by the so-called 'post 9-11, no waivers, no favours' philosophy, we continue to position DRI in two very different, but most important, functional aspects.

"First, we bring the component of hospitality to the timeshare industry and, secondly, we service our customers by saying 'Yes'."

Recognising that building lasting customer relationships is significant to DRI's short-term growth and long-term health, Cloobek has developed 'The Meaning of Yes' as a fundamental ideology for the company's workforce.

According to Cloobek, any successful business builds customer value through trust-based products and purposeful relationship management.

DRI, he says, continues to deliver on its promise to grow its club product through expanding member benefits and resort affiliations.

Specifically, customers continue to ask for more exchange and points-redemption opportunities as well as more resort locations, DRI continues to build "the most sought-after" holiday ownership and holiday membership product available in the market place today.

"Quite simply, says Cloobek, "we continue to say 'Yes' to our customers."

# Yes

As a company, he adds, DRI shares with its customers mutual interests in each other's success. "Our customers want us to succeed and we want them to trust us to deliver our promises to them.

"In effect, we are collectively saying 'Yes' to each other."

As hotels and other timeshare companies limit customer benefits and, in effect, shorten the quality of their stay, he says, DRI is bridging communication and service gaps between resorts, customers, and corporate.

Launching educational seminars at U.K. and U.S. resort locations, DRI invites members to half-day seminars to learn more about the product and the company "so that both can better serve each other."

*"...our customers want us to succeed and we in turn want them to trust in us to deliver on our promise to them."*

Members get up-dates on new tools available for them to further enjoy their holiday life-style product and the company benefits by receiving instant feedback about performance, what it's doing right and what needs improvement.

Annually, nearly 1.4 million owners, members and guests sample the DRI product.

Says Cloobek, "At DRI, it doesn't make a difference what the customer asks: the answer is still 'Yes'. We work to create a positive customer experience."

"We collectively deliver the meaning of 'yes', and it starts with the chairman of the company. The meaning of 'Yes' is what defines our success."

## Making the TATOC helpline a success

**T**he TATOC consumer helpline now handles more than 700 consumer phone calls and 80 consumer e-mails a month - double the number received last year.

Helpline activities are co-ordinated by Mark Caldicott, who is based at TATOC's offices in Manchester. Originally from Morecambe, Lancashire, Mark has a degree in hospitality management.

His first encounter with timeshare was working for five years with Diamond Resorts at its European headquarters in Lancaster. He began in the reservations department and was then promoted to the commercial department as manager responsible for ancillary products.

He escorted members' cruises around the Mediterranean, the Baltic States and the Caribbean. Mark believes that his experiences with Diamond have greatly helped him in his position with TATOC.

Mark joined TATOC in January 2009 as helpline co-ordinator/office manager. He attended the 2009 TATOC conference in Warrington and says he was delighted that the voice of TATOC is being heard in the industry.

"Working with chief executive Harry Taylor is great and he is a wealth of knowledge. I also like to keep him on his toes!"

Of the telephone calls and e-mails received in Manchester, the majority concern rogue re-sale companies. After the success of the timeshare re-sale item on the BBC One Show, the helpline was especially busy and TATOC was able to help many more consumers with their problems.

TATOC has produced a number of Consumer Guides which are available on the website and can be downloaded. These support the activities of the helpline and are regularly updated to reflect changes in legislation.

In addition to aiding consumers in the UK, the helpline also assists timeshare owners from throughout Europe. "We have even taken calls from Singapore so the TATOC name really is spreading far and wide", says Mark.

Key to the helpline's success is the speed in answering calls and e-mails and Mark Caldicott's desire to help and advise consumers.

The helpline has recently assisted a timeshare owner who, following advice from TATOC, received a refund of £16,000.

It is expected that the new timeshare laws that are being introduced next year will mean an increase in the number of calls to TATOC. The laws will safeguard consumers more than ever and make it difficult for rogue companies to operate.

*"I love to hear back from people I have helped when their issues have been resolved," he says. "It's always nice to get feedback and very satisfying".*



Diamond Resorts at Sunset Harbour

# RECESSION and the industry

by Sharetime reporter Emily Collins

It is an accepted truth that a recession is good for the timeshare industry. During previous economic dips, resorts have experienced near boom conditions as holidaymakers in the market for a second home opt instead for the more cost-effective product: timeshare.

But is this truth relevant today? Is the recession having a negative impact on our independent resorts or do they continue to buck the trend of other holiday types and remain successful?

Ms. Linda Freer is head of management company Resort Solutions which manages 14 independent resorts in the U.K. and Europe. She believes that now is not the time for resorts to sit back and simply hope things will all work out.



New lodges at Keswick Bridge



Interior new lodges at Keswick Bridge

*"Blaming the recession is not enough. It is time to make bold decisions and it is experience that you need to call on," she says.*

For resorts in the Euro-zone, the exchange rate has had quite a crippling effect over the past 18 months. While management companies do not normally become involved in hedging their bets on currency, RSL protected its resorts by taking calculated risks.

"We bought forward Euros and secured funding at the average budget rate. Our resorts have really benefited from our knowledge and over 20 years' experience in the industry," says Ms. Freer.

And RSL's resorts are not alone. Keswick Bridge, a small independent resort of 23 units in the Lake District, has also had a good season this year.

Resort manager, Mr David Etherden explains: "Over the past few years classic timeshare owners disappeared as they bought whole ownership properties instead. With the recession these clients have come back to timeshare".

The resort has also seen an increase in the number of sales to grandparents who are buying additional weeks so that their families can join them on holiday.

The resort has also seen an increased demand in rentals. "We realised that we are in the long term rental business and have used our skills as property managers to great effect".

Keswick Bridge now supplies property management services to a large number of independently-owned cottages in the area. This subsidiary operation, established some years ago, has become a useful tool in helping to provide services to owners and proved to be a great source of income for the owners club.

By having direct access to the broader letting market, owners looking to sell their weeks find that the rental service means annual fees are covered by rental income. Moreover, many of the rental guests like what they experience and have become a major source for new timeshare sales.

Ian Davison, manager of the Quaysiders Club, believes that resorts have to be pro-active during this difficult time and says that Quaysiders "has done well" over the past 18 months.

The resort like many has been affected by the recession and for the first year ever had 12 weeks out of a total 900 either handed back or forfeited. This was a new experience as the resort had never had more than two weeks handed back or forfeited in the past 22 years of operation.

"While a lot of resorts would die for this position we did not like it as we budget for all our fees being paid," says Davison. "It had a big effect on us".

As a result, the Quaysiders' Club team held an auction for their members to sell the 12 weeks. All were sold and at prices that more than made up for the lost management fees. "Everyone was happy."

The resort has also responded to changes in the rental market. "We reduced the price of our weekly rentals to keep the resort competitive."

"A lot of companies in our area panicked and reduced rental rates at the beginning of the year so we had to be aware of the market," he said.

In hindsight, he is not convinced that this was necessary as rental numbers have been better in 2009 than in 2008, although the income has been much less. "As usual all our RCI and DAE weeks have been taken up and the recession does not seem to have hit this side. But this may not happen next year as these bookings are often made at least one year in advance".

George Stewart, director of Stouts Hill Club, reports that his resort has had a great year so far and puts this success down to successful, cost-effective marketing. "We were very concerned how the downturn

in the economy would affect us but our rental income is up mainly due to the favourable exchange rate for overseas visitors coming to the U.K. and many British residents choosing to holiday in the Cotswolds".

The resort has introduced new products to generate rental income, including popular three-day special interest breaks covering golf, fishing, gardens, bird watching and walking. Owners are also offered reduced-price rental weeks which can be taken during the blue and white seasons.

Other marketing initiatives include increased advertising in selected journals, development of an interactive DVD promoting apartment sales, and revamping the website to ensure it is 'search engine optimised' so that it is on Google's first page when selected phrase searches are used.

The resort has also formed a number of strategic alliances with major players such as RCI, Diamond Resorts and the Pestana Group where it has figured prominently in world-wide directories. "All have been implemented on a very small-scale advertising budget," says Mr Stewart.

Since its launch 30 years ago, The Osborne Club, in Torquay, has faced many problems, but perhaps the present time is its greatest challenge.

Rentals continue to be an important part of the resort's business. These have remained strong during the peak months and the weak pound has seen a rise in European visitors this year. The resort has a very comprehensive website showing rental availability and the resort is registered with a few holiday websites which attract enquiries.

Ms. Sarah Smith, club manager, says clients are more price conscious these days. "Gone are the times when people booked their holidays months in advance. Nowadays they are prepared to risk waiting to see if there is late availability – and are not always lucky!"

Ms. Smith reports: "Re-sales have been slower this year, but some of the prices obtained have been encouraging with school summer holiday weeks selling for £7,000-£8,000. We are regularly transferring deeds to other owners, either within a family or to friends".

Scandinavian Village in Aviemore is an independent resort managed by the owners committee and general manager Miriam Grant. The resort's strategy to beat the recession included reducing the maintenance fees, improving facilities and retaining its RCI Silver Crown for 2010.

Ms Grant explained "we have made a number of changes such as making the office more user-friendly, undertaking a refurbishment programme, adding a book and library video and offering a new on-line booking system for rentals. We also give our guest more value with free Wi-Fi connection, digital TV receivers and offer new recycling facilities."

Visitors to the village have free use of the McDonald Leisure Arena during their stay, and a new outdoor play zone and picnic area has been built which will keep the under 12s entertained.



## Bogus Holiday Clubs: Warning to owners

Discount holiday clubs which promise much but hardly ever deliver are not covered by the European Timeshare Directive. Unlike timeshare, there are no automatic cancellation rights for those who change their mind after committing to a purchase.

An ex-police inspector is leading a project organised by RDO (Resort Development Organisation) to warn consumers about the dangers of bogus discount travel membership clubs - more commonly known as holiday clubs - and fraudulent resale companies.

The project aims to draw attention to unscrupulous companies which deliberately deceive consumers and pressurise them into signing up to membership of a holiday club or a resale scheme.

Holiday clubs promise a lifetime of discounted luxury holidays at hundreds of locations around the world. Having paid a fee of between £3,000 and £25,000 to become a club member, many customers find that the reality does not live up to the promises made during the sales presentation.

They find that they have merely bought access to a bookings service such as a website or even just a telephone number. Unscrupulous clubs often only provide last-minute, limited-availability accommodation that is usually low-star rather than luxury in standard.

As well as the membership fee, each holiday taken has to be paid for. By the time a club member tries to book a holiday, the company could even be out of business.

Holiday clubs are not covered by the European Timeshare Directive. This means that, unlike

timeshare, there are no automatic cancellation rights for those who change their mind. Bogus holiday clubs exploit this by employing high-pressure sales techniques such as long presentations - lasting up to six hours - to get customers to sign a binding contract.

*Bogus resale companies operate by demanding a fee of up to £1,000 before undertaking to sell an owner's timeshare. Many make contact through a 'cold call' and, persuade the owner to pay the fee, claiming that a buyer has already been located.*

On receipt of the payment, however, the sale falls through and the company refuses to return the money. In an increasing number of cases, the seller is instead invited to a presentation and is pressurised into signing up to a holiday club that they had no intention of joining.

RDO chairman Richard McIntosh says the public should be aware that the majority of companies making such offers are not legitimate, can cause financial detriment and, in some cases, result in the loss of an owner's membership week(s).

**"We strongly recommend that timeshare owners do not accept offers made by companies they do not recognise," he says. "They should instead contact TATOC or RDO (info@rdo.org) to check if the company is a member of the organisations and complies with its Code of Ethics."**

## New board members

Two new co-opted directors have joined the TATOC board.

Brian Backhouse, from Macdonald Resorts at Lochanully, and Geoff Hill, from Macdonald Resorts at Elmers Court and Dona Lola, are long-term timeshare owners and knowledgeable committee members and bring a wealth of experience to the board.

Mr Backhouse will be a contributor in the next issue of Sharetime.



Geoff Hill



Brian Backhouse

## Over-50s are snap-happy

Timeshare owners aged over 50 are making their holidays more interactive by using technology to tell their loved ones about trips away.

Recent research from Saga Holidays shows that 60 per cent of over 50s surveyed will take a camera phone on holiday with them, while one in 20 say they will use their camera phone to capture holiday memories.

The majority of those surveyed said they were happy using technology to take snaps of their breaks away. Of those customers who have camera phones, two-fifths (40 per cent) revealed they would prefer to use a camera with higher resolution.

Lauren Mackay, brand manager at Gap Year for Grown Ups, pointed out that it is now easier than ever before for people to share holidaying experiences with their friends and family via social networking sites.

She pointed to socialnomics.com data, which revealed the fastest growing segment on Facebook is 55 to 65-year-old females.

# TATOC Conference 2010

## Working Together

TATOC will hold its 10th Conference over the weekend of 26 - 28th March 2010. Venue is the Nottingham Belfry, part of the Qhotel Group.

The conference - with its theme 'Working Together' - is expected to surpass previous records for attendance and sponsorship. It is the ideal event for timeshare owners and industry professionals to network while enjoying superb programme of speakers and events.

## The initial details of the programme are:

### Friday March 26:

- Registration from 5 pm.
- Reception from 7-8pm
- Dinner from 8pm.

### Saturday March 27:

- Breakfast served from 7am.
- Conference begins 9am with usual coffee breaks and lunch.
- Conference ends approximately 5pm.
  - Reception from 7-8pm
  - Dinner and speaker from 8pm.

### Sunday March 28:

- Breakfast served from 7am.
- Conference begins 9am.
- Conference ends approximately 11am.
- TATOC AGM at 11.30am.
  - Lunch from 1pm.

Booking forms and sponsorship opportunities are now available to download from [www.timeshareassociation.org](http://www.timeshareassociation.org) or telephone 01612373611 for more details

### Please note our new address:

Manchester House, 84-86 Princess Street  
Manchester, M1 6NG