



Member Profile

Nigel Notley

Hertfordshire, England

“I have been a dedicated golfer since the age of 10 although I couldn’t join a club until I was 12,” says Nigel Notley. “I was also sent away to school (as we do in England) 200 miles away to the Welsh hills. Here I played rugby and cricket, embracing the team ethic which probably helped me later in life.”

Notley says the school had a two-mile stretch of fast running trout river and that sheep grazed on the land. “It was great golfing land, with the railway line down one side and the river on the other,” he says. “I got permission to lay out a totally natural six-hole course, which still exists.”

Notley says his golfing life can be assigned two distinct eras: A highly competitive period from age 18 to 29, pre-children, and his golf since age 45.

“In that first period the amount I played whilst holding down a proper job was prodigious,” he says. “I competed far and wide, without much success but thoroughly enjoyed it. I resisted the temptation to turn pro due mainly to close hand experience of team mate Nick Faldo. There may have been only two shots between us in handicap but it was patently obvious that he was at least six better. Nick turned pro in 1976 and I had a decent record mainly as a team player through to finishing as County Captain in 1986.”

Notley Captained Porters Park in its centenary year in 1999, then took up hickory golf almost full time. “This past 15 years has been very rewarding personally in terms of pleasure and camaraderie,” he says.

How often do you play hickories?

Right through from March to the end of October.

What’s in your play set?

My dear and much put upon wife will tell you I have 28 play sets, but what I have in my bag today, on the eve of the Scottish Hickory at Scotsraig, is:

Driver – from Nuwara Eliya in what we Brits used to call Ceylon
J H Taylor cenosaure brassie

Patrick baffy

Stewart driving iron

The shaft of a Stewart deep faced mashie. The head is lost in the gorse on 16.

A jigger which I use for knock down shots through the wind, say 160 yards,

Stewart shallow face mashie which I use for pitching from 20 to 135 yards.

Two Stewart mashie niblicks. One goes a max of 115 and the other 135.

Stewart niblick

Flanged putter

These are all authentic and I only okay pre-1934 clubs.

(Nigel has since reported that “The Scottish was an even greater rousing success than I had envisaged. I replaced the broken deep faced mashie with a James Bradbeer – Porters Park, and it turned out to be better! I got home by one shot to win the scratch with 81 on a tricky day.”)

Favorite club?

The driver. Very strong shaft. Low trajectory. I reckon I hit this straighter than my old MacGregor persimmon!

What ball do you play?

I have been talked into the Callaway soft but I really like the McIntyre Quimet. I would like to see all tournaments use authentic looking balls.



Good form of Nigel Notley was captured at Brancaster, also known formally as Royal West Norfolk. Chris Frazer Smith took the photo. The occasion was an annual match between the British Golf Collectors Society and RWNGC. “For those of you unfamiliar with Brancaster,” Notley said, “it is a seaside links on the north Norfolk coast about 120 miles north east of London. In 2013 it came close to being lost to the sea.”

Favorite course for hickories?

I love links golf and we are spoilt here in Britain. I am very fond of Aberdovey in Wales and Rye in England.

Favorite hickory tournament?

The Welsh at Aberdovey is awesome. I love the others as well, but the excitement when all the Swedes and Finns fly in from their cold winters to compete is hard to beat. Great course, great organisation, great people.

Any particular player or aspect of golf history you especially enjoy?

Like a few of us I am enamoured with Bernard Darwin (home club Aberdovey, but also played at my club, Royal Worlington). I would like to write on Darwin when I retire.

Best thing about hickory golf?

I feel lucky to have been brought up in the persimmon and blade era. Finding hickory and once again experiencing the joy of being rewarded for a properly struck shot is what attracted me to the game initially. Modern golf equipment has dumbed down a very difficult sport. I suspect it is partly due to its decline (don’t want to put a damper on it.) I wish we had killed the modern technology at birth! Every hickory player I meet is caught up on reliving the experience of getting back to playing proper shots.

Ideas to promote hickory golf?

We have great tournaments. Just encourage more people to give it a try.

Most recent book on golf that you read?

Loved George Peper’s St. Andrews Sojourn. How did an American talk his non-golfing wife to go and live on the Old Course? Also the Sacred Nine, by John Gillum, a history of Worlington. A great read.