



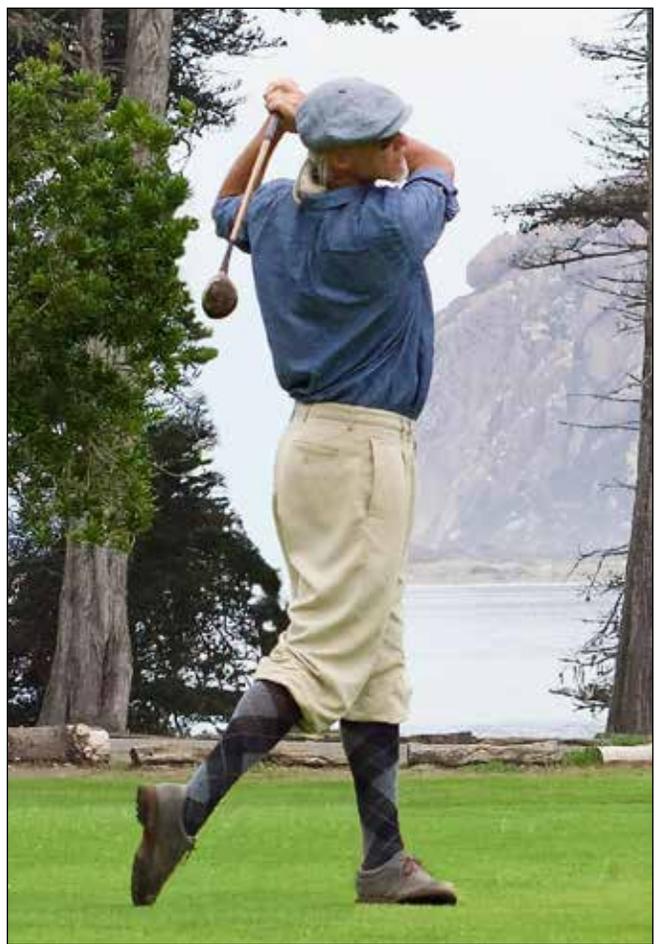
Member Profile
Tim Bell
Ben Lomond, Calif., USA

The first time I walked onto a course with a few hickory clubs and intent to play, I felt very sheepish. Nearby golfers studied me as if to say, 'what the hell are you doing?' That was in 2015 just after I ran into my retired local pro who was practicing for an upcoming hickory tournament at Del Monte GC in Monterey. I was tepidly pulled into this realm of golf and convinced to play in that same tournament. Little did I know, it would be a fork in the road I never anticipated, especially since my father had just died and my lifelong chapter of golf with modern clubs was waning. Somehow, over those preceding years golf had become 'work' and not 'play'. But, as I discovered, the golfer who has never played with 100-year-old hickory clubs has really never played the game of GOLF.

Now, having completely eschewed modern clubs, I walk onto the golf course wearing my small shoulder bag of hickories like a badge of honor. I play confidently and consistently, demonstrating to every steel-shafted modern golfer that I can score as well if not better than they – and that I am actually enjoying my experience much more thoroughly. I am a willing ambassador of our way of golf and gladly share it with other golfers who are curious. Playing Hickory Golf gives my abundant creativity an outlet for shot making, and restoring clubs merges my product design training and woodworking background. Years of sourcing, repairing, refinishing, and playing these vintage clubs has brought me much closer to understanding the intent of original Scottish club builders. It's gone beyond just knowing, I can feel my Scottish heritage and can only assume there must've been a Bell family descendant that worked in the trade - especially since my Scottish great grandfather was an apprenticed shoe cobbler and my Scottish grandfather a metalsmith.

So here I am, old enough to have experienced most things in golf but young enough to be able to still strive for the lowest round of my life. I once chased shooting-par with my modern clubs in a doggedly fashion, regularly buying new clubs and living at the range trying to groove the same robotic swing to apply to all 14 clubs in the bag. Now, I play every shot uniquely. Every club in my 9 or 10 club bag has a slightly different swing applied to it. I can report my 1919 hickory putter is the best putter I have ever played with, (and since age nine I've played with a lot of putters). The game of golf, as it was originally created has become a thing of passion for me. I no longer go to the range, I don't research the newest piece of golf technology, I don't watch it on TV anymore. I do read about golf at the turn of the 19th century (Willie Park Jr.'s *The Game Of Golf* being a favorite) ... and occasionally listen to Rob Birman's PlusFour podcast. But mainly, I just play the game, preferably on an old course with fellow hickory mates and usually near my home next to the Monterey Bay in California. You never know what day will be the last day experiencing a particular activity so I play every round like it could be my last and I stay open to any new opportunities that arise. That previous golf shot is history, I look forward to what's next.

You can find me at [just.a.niblick.and.a.putt](#) on Instagram.



Californian hickory golfer Tim Bell is shown playing at the Morro Bay Golf Course in Morro Bay, Calif.

How often do you play hickories?

I try to play weekly and post my rounds on the SoHG website.

What's in your play set?

As of 2024, I completed a custom set of Early 20's Burke Grand Prize Irons. But I have other sets: MacGregor, Gibson, Stewart, etc. My playset fluctuates between 8 and 10 clubs.

- Brassie - Jack White (14° - D3)
- Spoon - Malcolm Drummond (17° - D3)
- Long Iron - Robertson Flanged (23° - D8)
- Mid Iron - Burke Grand Prize (26° - D4)
- Jigger - Burke GP Custom (31° - D5)
- Mashie - Burke Grand Prize (37° - D6)
- Wee Mashie - Burke Grand Prize (43° - D6)
- Niblick - Burke GP Custom (49° - D6)
- Flanged Niblick - William Burke's (55° - D7)
- Putter - 1919 Spalding Chicopee

Favorite club?

I joke that I want to be buried with the Chicopee!

What ball do you play?

For several years I have been playing with the Maxfli Soffli, preferably a matte version stripped of its markings and reformed into a square mesh pattern with my vintage mold.

Favorite course for hickories?

My favorite courses for hickory play are Corica North in Alameda, Calif., or the Gearhart Golf Links in Gearhart, Ore.