

# Gerald Smith – 2020 Centenary Seniors’ Captain

## An Op-ed by the Club’s Longest Serving Member

I first hit a golf ball, or more accurately tried to hit a golf ball, at Hawkstone in August 1956 at the age of 13. My Dad Colin, who learned his game at the pre-war golf course at Press Heath and where he served as Hon. Sec. from 1929 to 1935, introduced me to the course together with cousin Anthony and his dad, Hubert who served as President of the reconstituted HPGC for five years from 1967. I was hooked on the game immediately but Anthony remained to be convinced that it was not an old man’s game!

"ONE OF BRITAIN'S LOVELIEST COURSES"

Handicap Difference	Stroke Allowance	
	Men	Women
1	1	0
2	2	1
3	2	1
4	3	2
5	4	2
6	5	2
7	5	3
8	6	3
9	7	3
10	8	4
11	8	4
12	9	5
13	10	5
14	11	5
15	11	6
16	12	6
17	13	6
18	14	7

**Hawkstone Park Hotel and Golf Club**

**LOCAL RULES**

1. A ball is out of Bounds if played outside the Boundary Fence of the Course or in the Club House enclosure.
2. A ball played into the lake at the 13th, 14th, 15th holes or into the pond by the 17th green is not out of bounds and should be treated under the lost ball or the unplayable ball rules.
3. A ball lying in a rabbit scrape or burrow may be lifted and dropped within two club lengths of where it lies, but not nearer the hole, without penalty. If on the green the ball may be lifted and placed without penalty.
4. Plug balls may be lifted, and dropped on the fairway.
5. If a ball in play shall strike a guide post or telegraph pole, the player shall have the option of dropping another ball as near to the spot where the first ball was played without penalty, or if from the tee of receiving a ball without penalty. If a guide post or telegraph pole is in the direct line of play between the player and the hole being played the player may lift and drop within two clubs' length of where the ball is lying, so that the post shall not be in the direct line of play, but not nearer the hole, without penalty.
6. A ball played on to a green other than that of the hole in play must be lifted and dropped off the green but not nearer the hole in play, without penalty.
7. A player may lift his ball when lying on the green and remove any dirt without penalty, after first notifying his opponent.

**NOTICE TO PLAYERS**

Players must not drive or play until those players in front are out of range.  
Golfers replace Divots—Others MUST.

The gutter on the left of the 8th fairway is out of bounds, stroke and distance.

Golf Professional : A. Lyle  
Telephone : Lee Brockhurst 209  
Resident Manager : J. S. Blackwell  
Telephone : Lee Brockhurst 223

In the late 1950s and early 1960s Club membership was down to about fifty and the course was still in recovery mode following neglect during and following the war years. Alex Lyle had arrived only some 16 months prior to my introduction to the game and I recall well the superb manicuring of the course for which he and his young apprentice Frank Tong were entirely responsible. But at that time the foundation slabs for the prisoner of war camp were still in-situ in front of the third tee and extending across the fourth and fifth fairways.

There was little competitive golf organised by the Club in those days and invariably upon arrival at Alex’s



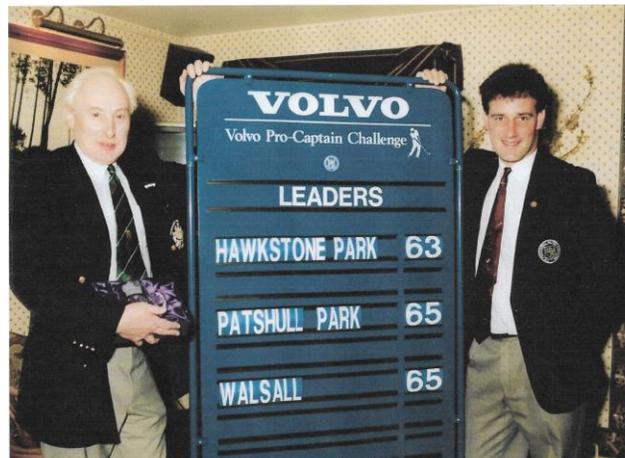
shop he would announce that he was organising a medal that day. Such was the lack of competitive golf that Anthony produced a “Cock Smith” tie to be played for over 18 holes matchplay by any family member. Needless to say, Anthony was always the man to beat!

The oldest card of the course I possess dates back to 1959 – note the ivy on the hotel - while the oldest photo taken on the course a few years later shows in the background the old Club House which also housed Alex’s shop and home.

I passed my driving test on Friday 13 January 1961 and as a consequence of which Anthony and I organised a two-week golfing trip to Scotland on a budget of £100. In the morning we would play a “minor” course paying a green fee of no more than 2/6d in the “honesty” box in preparation for a “major” course in the afternoon which included the Old Course at St. Andrews at the top end of our budget at 7/6d! And it was at St. Andrews that I posted my first sub-80 score, needless to say in calm conditions.

I was unable to play much golf during my four university years and subsequent early working days but by winning back to back competitions in May 1971 I managed to reduce my handicap to 4 which “qualified” me to be a member of our first ever winning Hargrove team in 1971/72 when we beat Ludlow in the final with our progress helped very much by the presence of a 13 year old Sandy Lyle. My pride at this achievement was matched when I was a member of our first winning Ken Smith Trophy team in 2003/4 when, also, we beat Ludlow in the final.

It was a privilege to serve the Club as Captain in 1996 in Paul Wesselingh’s first year as our professional during which time we played together in



many events throughout the UK the highlight of which was 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the Volvo

Pro-Captain finals at Wentworth which were played on the day following the PGA Championship to pin positions played to by the pros on the previous day. Our then Hon Secretary, Ron Thomas, said he always fancied our chances as in those days we were used to playing Club competitions on Sundays when the greens had not been cut!

I was honoured to be elected President for 2013/14 and astonished to be asked to serve this year as Seniors' Captain which, so far and sadly, has not been much of a challenge.

Membership of the Club has afforded me many wonderful golfing opportunities including serving as County Seniors' Captain in 2007/8 when I lead my team in both years to the English Seniors' County Finals a feat not achieved either before or since. This together with organising golf for the Midlands Branch of the Institution of Civil Engineers has afforded me the opportunity to play many of the top golfing venues in the land for which I will be eternally grateful.

*Gerald C. Smith*

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May 2020