

Nailcote Hall

A Great Golfing Experience



Notable golfing establishments are ten-a-penny around the East Birmingham to Coventry corridor. The M42 and A45 slip roads regularly have those brown signs, pointing you towards the likes of Forest of Arden, The West Midlands and Stonebridge amongst others. Competition is fierce around these parts for green fees and society bookings, yet there's one location that offers something a little bit different, welcome to Nailcote Hall, a 17th Century Jacobean Country House Hotel. An ideal, easy to reach conference venue, the idyllic wedding location, and in its grounds a Par 3 course that hosts currently the West Midlands most prestigious pro tournament, the British Par 3 Championship, a mid-summer event high on the agenda of local and European pros plus many celebrities.

History

The British Pro Short Course Championship was first held way back in 1933 in Torquay. Legends such as Ted Ray, Harry Vardon and Henry Cotton graced the tournament in its early years. In 1998, a new era was born as the newly designed Nailcote Hall became the events host course and in the subsequent years has provided many exciting tournaments, many of them undecided until the last putt has dropped.

Nailcote is a family run business; everything is done in house including course design, owner Rick Cressman and Ex European Tour stalwart and Head Pro Mark Moulard work tirelessly to improve the layout and present an annual strict examination of everyone's short game skills.

The Course

It only tips the scales so to speak at just over 1,000 yards in length. It only takes an hour to play and anyone who brings a wood or hybrid along with them is probably going to be ridiculed. What could be simpler? Hit a few wedges, sink a couple of putts to feel good about yourselves, have a pint, job done. Take a look at the view from the 1st tee however and re-evaluate your pre-conceptions, there's an instant early example of the tricky task ahead and why many of the British par 3 competitors have struggled over the years.

The long narrow and very raised green is only 116 yards away but finding its centre is your only chance of joy. Anything off target will leave you either in one of the steep-lipped bunkers that surround it or faced with a chip up a steep bank with the realistic danger of slipping back down the other side too.

Holes 2 and 3 offer probably the best of the birdie opportunities although you cannot afford to be short on either; a meandering brook runs in front of both, with sand too. The 4th is a little devil of a

hole, more of that later. Needles Eye is the name of the 5th, apt too as your wedge will need to be straight as a die to avoid the two oak trees placed just 10 yards apart in front of a bunker clad green.

The 6th has an elevated tee set amongst trees with Nailcote's lake threatening on the right hand side and out of bounds perilously close to the back of the green. Hole 7 is the longest at 146 yards with an elevated green guarded by a huge and penal bunker. The 8th is much shorter but a scary proposition, two more oak trees and the lake guard the front and left of the putting surface and as you may find out there's more trouble back right, only the centre of the green will suffice here.

Signature Hole, 9th – 133 yards

A fitting finish to this ultimate of short game examinations. Until 2007, the water was confined to the back of the green, now it stretches around to the front too for a near "Sawgrass" look – The only dry bit is occupied by one more large oak to deter the cheeky route. Disasters are inevitable here on this superb closing challenge, aesthetically pleasing on the eye as well.



The Golfer Magazine Favourite, 4th Hole, 87 Yards

The shortest challenge has the tiniest green too, protected at the front by three small pot bunkers. The fenced off border of the course is much too close for comfort, any over hit shots will end up out of bounds, this little gem can lead to more than a few red faces.

Facilities

The Hotel has 40 bedrooms. Nailcote Hall has a restaurant and a café/bar plus full leisure facilities. The grand old untouched look of the exterior is mirrored by the fixtures, fittings and décor inside. Rather like its Championship Golf Course, everything is done to a very high standard.



Summary

There are many clubs out there that purport themselves to be The Hidden Gem of the West Midlands but for an entirely different reason Nailcote Hall may have a claim to that title. It's not because golfers don't know about it, maybe more of a case they are dismissive of its format and merits to their golf games. It's a well-known fact that we don't spend enough time honing our short games; Nailcote is the perfect venue for that. Just 9 holes here will put it through a full MOT and no matter what your standard is, shooting anywhere near par is a real achievement. However, the biggest factor here is fun; it's something different and massively enjoyable. Groups and societies too who haven't visited here yet should take note of the fact that this little track has the potential to play host to a fun tournament type day, possibly a quick-fire match play event that's a little bit out of the ordinary. Thrills and spills are guaranteed as part of the package that is Nailcote Hall.

The Greens

The majority of the putting surfaces are raised and upturned saucers in shape. Holding onto them is difficult enough and the run off areas are often very severe. Like the rest of the course, the greens are in great condition and good putters will get some joy. It's reaching them that's the permanent test here; some pin positions can be devilishly tough.