

Members playing in competition for the Sidney Ball Niblick may be wondering who Sidney Ball was. He was the first professional at Heaton Park and was appointed as such in 1913. As was the norm with professionals in those days, he manufactured many clubs. Two of his clubs were offered to the committee by a collector from Sheringham in Norfolk, who was disposing of his collection and asked if we would like to purchase them, which we did.

There is the Niblick but also a club called a mid-iron, which is probably the equivalent of a 4 or 5 iron, both manufactured by Sidney Ball, with his name, and the club forged on them. Sadly, as with many of the clubs' items, we have nowhere to display them for all the members to see, but due to the delicate nature of the niblick, we now present a small salver in its place.

One of Sidney Ball's initiatives was to issue a challenge to members in a game of match play. The member would pay 1/6d and if he lost, Sid would keep the money. If Sid lost, he would buy the member a dozen golf balls. I don't have a record of any of the matches but from what I can gather, it was a popular event.

When he left Heaton Park, I believe in 1927, he set up his own golf course on land close to Blackley Cemetery. I don't think this venture lasted very long and I am not aware of any history of it.

Sidney Ball's grandson is a current member of Stand Golf Club and I invited him to present the trophy as part of our Centenary Presentation in 2012, but sadly, he was not available.

I forgot to add that he had a brother, Thomas who was also a professional golfer. Thomas was twice runner-up in The Open Championship in 1908 and 1909. When he finished runner-up in 1909, guess who won it? Yep, John Henry Taylor, who designed Heaton Park Golf Course. Amazing coincidence, eh?