



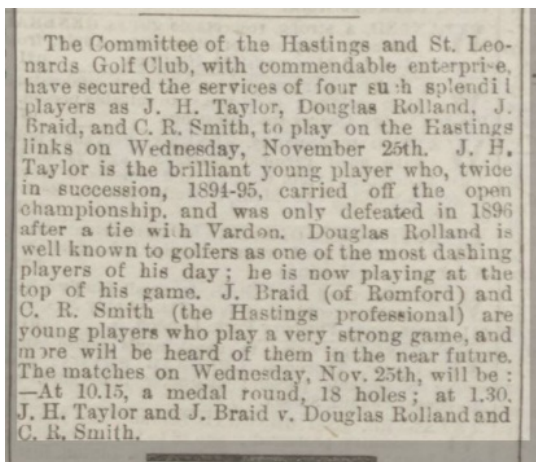
Charles Ralph Smith (known as C. Ralph Smith) 1871 – 1953

C (Charles) Ralph Smith was actually born in Canada of English father and Scottish mother in Quebec in 1871, but he came to live in Elie aged about 8 where he went to the local school. He lived in 6 School Wynd and his mother was shown as a lodging housekeeper. He also had a younger brother, James A. Smith (q.v.). He went to school and became very friendly with many of the young golfers of the

time, including James Braid with whom he had a long-lasting friendship. He was Braid's best man at his wedding and he played many exhibition and high stakes games with Braid when in England. He signed on as apprentice to George Forrester where he learnt his trade and indeed it is said he taught Braid how to make clubs because although Braid was a joiner to trade Braid did not actually serve under Forrester.



He started as a pro at Beverley in Yorkshire in 1891 but there is no record of his stay there – the professional at that time was George Sayers (Ben's brother) and it is possible that he was assistant to Sayers. He did not last long there but he came south to London to join the Army and Navy stores as a golf club maker. The story goes that he was back in Edinburgh 1893 for a holiday and happened to meet Jamie Braid in Princes Street where they had a chat and he convinced Braid to join him at Army and Navy stores in London as a golf club maker. They lived in Sydenham



together. He left Army and Navy stores and became professional at Hastings club in 1896 – this may have been Hastings and Down Golf club with which Braid had an association too

and he re-modelled the course. This is a report of a match which also feature Braid and Douglas Rolland (q.v.). He was obviously high profile hence this article in 1903



Then in 1900 he moved to West Middlesex club until 1921. The West Middlesex club was a prestigious organisation being reasonably close to the centre of London and many exhibition and challenge matches were played there. Indeed, there are frequent newspaper reports of himself and Braid playing exhibition matches at the opening of new golf courses and there was often a good purse at stake. He was extensively sought after as a teacher and seemed also to occupy his winters in department stores (see advert right).

Even a dose of flu seemed worthy of newspaper reports – see below.

Lessons in Golf

Arrangements have been made with the well-known Professional

C. RALPH SMITH

Scottish International, 1903, 1904, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1913; Winner, Dewar Shield, 1907;

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GOLF.

ILLNESS OF A NOTED PROFESSIONAL.

C. Ralph Smith of West Middlesex, who played for Scotland against England in the professional internationals of 1903, 1904, and 1907, is confined to bed suffering from a severe attack of influenza. **Smith** has been in bed since Thursday last, but hopes to be himself again in a week's time.

In one of his transatlantic trips later he cited Widen as his GB address.

He went off to America at the quite late age of 40. His departure itself seemed to have been newsworthy.


Manao, Philadelphia.

C. Ralph Smith, one of the best-known figures in London professional golf, is resigning from the West Middlesex Club, to which he had acted as professional for many years, and is to go to the United States next month. Although born in Canada, **Smith** qualified to play for Scotland, and he represented this country in the professional international matches against England in 1903, 1904, 1907, 1909, and 1913. He has for many years acted as instructor in a golf school, in addition to carrying out his duties at West Middlesex. It is **Smith's** intention to tour in America, where he will lecture, teach,

JANUARY 24, 1905. THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS

C. RALPH SMITH.

I SHOULD fancy I am correct in saying that **Ralph Smith** is the best Canadian-born golfer now before the public. Although, however, **Smith's** early childhood was passed at Quebec, he comes of an English father and Scotch mother, and it is probably from the latter parent that he inherits his golfing skill. When only eight years old the West Middlesex professional was taken to Ess, and at fourteen became formally associated with golf, when apprenticed to that well-known club maker, Forrester. Three or four years were spent in learning all that Forrester could teach him, and then, with a fine knowledge of his business, he migrated to the Army and Navy Stores in Victoria-street. There his



C. RALPH SMITH, WEST MIDDLESEX GOLF CLUB.

complete mastery of his trade was soon recognised, and in a very short time young **Smith** became manager of the club-making department, having under him such well-known men as Braid, James Allen, Yesman, Walkerley, Fairfax, and Neaves.

With his time more or less fully occupied, it was, of course, impossible for **Smith** to get any golf except in the immediate neighbourhood of London, but there he soon made his name known, playing in many foursomes with Braid as a partner, and doubtless deriving vast help from the future Champion. In these days Rolland was a power in the land and one of the early matches in which **Smith** and Braid engaged was against Rolland and T. **Smith**, on the Taplow links, the prize at issue being a purse given by the club. The Stores' couple won, but not without lowering the record for the course from 81 to 79. Shortly after this the same couple were opposed to H. B. **Widens** and T. **Smith**, and once again they succeeded in breaking the record, as on this occasion their total for the round was only 77. Finding, as one can readily believe, that Braid was a rare man to have on his side, **Smith**, in conjunction with the ex-Champion played two money matches against **Manro** and **Duncan** at Chiswick and Richmond, and on each occasion won easily.

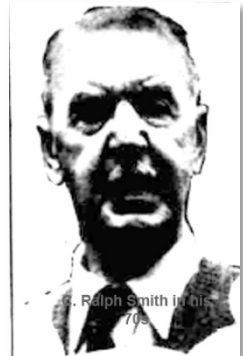
In 1896, or thereabouts, **Smith** resigned his appointment in Victoria-street, and migrated to Hastings, where he remained until the West Middlesex Club appointed him their professional. Whilst at Hastings **Smith** did some wonderful things in the way of scoring, as in his first year there he made a new record for the original nine-hole course, when doing these two rounds in 28 and 34, truly wonderful work even on a short links like the one under notice. In the same year **Smith** took part in a professional competition on his home green, and though he had to yield first place to Taylor, he came out of the fray with so semblance of disgrace, for he tied for

His first appointment seems to have been in Denver Colorado where he was instrumental in setting up the Denver Golf Course but he was not there for very long before he was probably poached for a club in Long Island and then he was appointed pro at Canoe Brook G. C. in New Jersey as immediate successor to Isaac Mackie (q.v.). Indeed this was frequently the case over these years that the Earlsferry "mafia" dictated who followed whom into what jobs. It may have been, however, that they were the only professional golfers and it seems to have been the height of success to have a Scottish and especially Earlsferry pro at your club.

Whilst at Denver he played in many professional championships and whilst advertising Denver as a golf venue his success was not conspicuous. He played well into his late 70s featuring in a tournament in 1947 in Denver. He retired shortly after this and returned to Great Britain where he lived in Hastings but his fame was such that visits even in his 70s attracted attention as is evidenced by this article:

Postman's Holiday Dept.: Professional **C. Ralph Smith** of Denver's Wilshire Country Club, in Austin on a vacation tour, played the Municipal layout Friday in 73. Mr. Smith, who is 75 years old, played with Jack Gratton of Denver, with him on the "tour," and Dudley Krueger and E. B. "Red" Gober . . . Bill Perkins, noting a 270-yard drive by Mr. Smith, said he'd back the Colorado pair (whose combined ages total 110) agin' any other similar combination in these United States.

And even his picture appeared.



He died in Hastings aged 81.

SMITH.—On Tuesday, January 12th, 1954, Margaret, widow of the late C. **Ralph** Smith, one time professional at Hastings Golf Club and later at the Denver Country Club, Colorado, U.S.A., passed peacefully away at her home, 13, Milward-road, Hastings. Fortified by the last rites of Holy Church.—R.I.P.

His probate disclosed

assets amount nowadays to £50,000. He and his wife Margaret who died very shortly after him had one daughter Margaret Lillian Cribb who died in January 1997 in Cambridgeshire.

Friend and partner of James Braid

C. Ralph Smith
HOLIDAYING at Conway— with his sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. R. J. Jones, Mona Road—is 78 years-old professional golfer C. Ralph Smith, recently returned from America where he has taught golf for nearly 30 years.

One of the first golfers Ralph Smith called upon in England was James Braid, 80 years-old former "open" champion—at the Walton Heath club. Braid and Smith have maintained a close friendship since they first met at Elie (Fife) about 70 years ago. They lived in adjoining villages.

Pre-1914, Ralph Smith's younger brother—the late James A. Smith—was professional at the former Oakwood Park Golf Club, Conway.

Caddie: stepping-stone to fame

Braid, his assistant. Like many others of "the old school" of professional golfers Canada-born Ralph Smith's introduction to the game was as a caddie. He won a caddies' competition on his home-town, Elie course, and at 14 was apprenticed to a noted club-maker, George Forrester.



DEATH OF NOTED GOLFER
 Mr. **C**. Ralph Smith, who died in hospital at Hastings on Sunday, aged 81, was a well-known professional golfer and represented Scotland in international matches on eight occasions. A frequent visitor to Conway, he stayed here with his brother-in-law and sister, Mr. and Mrs. Joshua Jones, Mona Road, and was an entertaining talker about golf and golfers both in this country and the United States. He used to recall his early associations with James Braid. Starting as a club maker when handwork was the rule and not the exception, he developed great skill as a player and was persuaded to turn professional. He served in that capacity at Hastings, St. Leonard's, and the Middlesex Club, London. Going to the United States he held appointments at the Denver County Club and Canoe Brook, New Jersey. In 1926 he won the Texas open and in the following year the Colorado open championship, while in 1928 he was runner-up in the New Jersey "open."

Addendum

For what it is worth Smith was a fairly regular pundit to the newspapers and below are some of the interviews he gave.

C. RALPH SMITH. I SHOULD fancy I am correct in saying that Ralph Smith is the best Canadian-born golfer now before the public. Although, however, Smith's early childhood was passed at Quebec, he comes of an English father and Scotch mother, and it is probably from the latter parent that he inherits his golfing skill. When only eight years old the West Middlesex professional was taken to Elie, and at fourteen became formally associated with golf, when apprenticed to that well-known club maker, Forrester. Three or four years were spent in learning all that Forrester could teach him, and then, with a fine knowledge of his business, he migrated to the Army and Navy Stores in Victoria-street. There his complete mastery of his trade was soon recognised, and in a very short time young Smith became manager of the club-making department, having under him such well-known men as Braid, James Allen, Yeoman, Wakerley, Fairful, and Neaves. With his time more or less fully occupied, it was, of course, impossible for Smith to get any golf except in the immediate neighbourhood of London, but there he soon made his name known, playing in many foursomes with Braid as a partner, and doubtless deriving vast help from the future Champion. In those days Rolland was a power in the land and one of the early matches in which Smith and Braid engaged was against Rolland and T. Smith, on the Taplow links, the prize at issue being a purse given by the club. The Stores' couple won, but not without lowering the record for the course from 81 to 79. Shortly after this the same couple were opposed to R. B. Wilson and T. Smith, and once again they succeeded in breaking the record, as on this occasion their total for the round was only 77. Finding, as one can readily believe, that Braid was a rare man to have on his side, Smith, in conjunction with the ex-Champion played two money matches against Munroe and Duncan at Chiswick and Richmond, and on each occasion won easily. In 1896, or thereabouts, Smith resigned his appointment in Victoria-street, and migrated to Hastings, where he remained until the West Middlesex Club appointed him their professional. Whilst at Hastings Smith did some wonderful things in the way of scoring, as in his first year there he made a new record for the original nine-hole course, when doing these two rounds in 28 and 34, truly wonderful work even on a short links like the one under notice. In the same year Smith took part in a professional competition on his home green, and though he had to yield first place to Taylor he came out of the fray with no semblance of disgrace, for he tied for second place with his old friend Braid, but in a foursome coupled with Rolland he found Braid and Taylor a little too good. During his residence at Hastings Smith was frequently opposed to Rolland, and, on the whole, had none the worst of the several meetings. He was also busy winning prizes in the professional tournaments, which were held at Forest Rowe, Neasden, Musselburgh, and other places, and was thus constantly playing in first-class company, no mean advantage for a young golfer. Now let me turn to another of Smith's record-breaking feats, and one on which he possibly looks back with just pride. There can, of course, be small doubt, when players of the class of the subject of this notice are in question, that they are always liable to do something phenomenal on their home green. Nor is the reason far to seek. Every golfer has his good and bad days, but naturally when a man is playing four or five times a week throughout the year on a certain green there comes a day when he can do practically nothing wrong. Such a day seems to have come to Smith when he succeeded in compassing the links of the West Middlesex Club in the extraordinary score of 69. To fully realise the magnitude and brilliancy of this work it is necessary to state that the "Bogey" score at Hanwell is fixed at 78, a proof that the course cannot be done without some hard hitting. I am ignorant of the name of the golfer who was playing with Smith on this memorable occasion, but be he amateur or professional, it is certain that

he must have enjoyed his object lesson in the game. In the Professional Golfer's Tournament, at Richmond, Smith did fairly well, as he obtained fourth prize, having in front of him such golfers as Braid, Taylor, and Kinnell. In Mr. Russell's tournament he again obtained "place honours," as only Braid and Taylor could succeed in beating him, whilst, when coupled with his old foursome partner, Braid, he was able to claim a victory and an easy one, too-- over Taylor and White. Perhaps, however, one of Smith's best performances was done at Romford in the Professional Golfers' Competition, which took place last year. Despite all Braid's wonderful knowledge of the green, Smith fairly held his own with the ex-Champion during the first round, each man having a splendid 75 to his credit. Eventually, however, Braid's wonderful consistency told its tale, and Smith had to play second fiddle to him. Such is the history of most of Smith's performances in competitions, and space will not permit me to say much more, though a word or two must be added in regard to his general form. Physically the West Middlesex man is all that one could wish for in a golfer, and he certainly turns his great strength to the fullest account, for it will hardly be disputed that he shines most in the long game. With his brassy he is most deadly, and the length of balls he obtains is at all times wonderful. As, however, he gets nearer to the hole he shows possibly a slight falling off, and he lacks, perhaps, to some extent the deadly earnestness which characterises such men as Harry Vardon and the Champion. Power of concentration is an immense factor towards success at golf, and there is, perhaps, no out door sport where it is so absolutely essential, though I am glad to learn from one who knows Smith's game well that he is rapidly strengthening this undoubtedly weak point in his golfing armour. As a club maker I happen to know that such a grand judge as Braid considers him quite at the top of the trade, and it may, without any fear of contradiction, be said that the ex-Champion's opinion is shared by every member of the West Middlesex Club. And now I must perforce take leave of this bright and cheery professional, merely expressing the opinion and, I may add, the hope, that what he has done in the past he will eclipse in the future, and that at some not too distant date the highest honours to which a professional golfer can aspire may be his. Niblick The Illustrated Dramatic and Sporting News January 1903

U.S. GOLF. Interesting Interview with C. Ralph Smith. Many interesting sidelights were thrown on golf in the United States by C. Ralph Smith, the former Scottish Professional Internationalist, who has just returned to this country on holiday from Denver, Colorado. To a Press Association representative he said that it was most noticeable that the golfers in the States went in for their game with a real thoroughness, and it was customary for the American in going in for any sport to go into it with the intention of excelling. They did not take to it in the spirit of "I hope to be fairly good." The professionals in America were, of course, as good as we are in Britain, but it was notable that State's youngsters were now being bred into the game, though there was all the time room for the good British professional. However, the day had gone when a man had only to go to the States bearing a Scottish name and a Scottish accent and be assured of success. The Americans did not want anything that was not first rate: they wanted nothing that was "dud." Americans were naturally great lovers of success, they worshipped successful men, and they had no time for anybody who was a failure. It was also a fact that if a man were not successful at the beginning, he might as well go back home. The professional golfer going to the States had to know his business and be a gentleman at the same time, while particularly there was an opening for the man who could teach golf. In short, added Smith, the golfer going over there would do well to impress upon himself the idea that he was being closely watched and that the whole of the British race was being judged by his actions and manners. One point in American golf which Smith said he scarcely approved of was the prevalence of four-ball matches. Too many of those were played in preference to the single or foursome, and, to Smith's mind, that was not a good thing. The four-ball match did not develop a

man's golf, and it was not good training in so far as a man "always had the other fellow to play for him." Many of the courses in the States were as good as those in Britain, and, on the subject of courses, Smith mentioned an interesting fact concerning the Denver, Colorado, course. There, he said, they had no grass excepting what was cultivated, and yet they grew the finest of grass, even although it had to be irrigated every day, tens of thousands of gallons, of water being poured on the course from the numerous springs every twenty-four hours. Smith added that the United States Amateur Championship of 1923 might be played on the Denver Country Club's course, which is 6,400 yards in length and a good test of Championship golf. The climate there he characterised as wonderful, being very dry, with sunshine on 360 out of the 366 days of the year. The course was situated almost at the foot of the Rocky Mountains; indeed the three highest peaks in the range were clearly visible. So dry was the climate, remarked Smith, that there were no fewer than six drinking fountains on the course for the benefit of the golfers, these being at the first, fourth, seventh, ninth, twelfth and fifteenth greens.. 1921

RALPH SMITH ON HIMSELF. WELLKNOWN GOLFER INTERVIEWED. Mr. C. Ralph Smith, the West Middlesex professional, has been Interviewed by "The World of Golf," from which the following Galled:— If I had only half the reputation for playing golf that I have for teaching it and making clubs, I should make my fortune. It is championship winning and record breaking that commands the money in our line nowadays. In these times of specialisation, too, it is impossible to excel at everything. I have a natural gift for instructing and club making, but I am afraid that my obligation in too many different kinds of sport has militated against my ever doing much in the way of capturing big events. I have, of course, won a good lot of quite important golf competitions, have been twice second for the 'Tooting Bec Cup,' and have won six out of the seven Internationals that I have played in, but everything considered I think it is as a club maker and instructor that I now stand tall. It does not only require same patience and the power so diagnose correctly, hotels," the facility to prescribe the right treatment. Beecham's Pills, you know, won't ours everything. "Teaching in moderation does a great deal of good for the instructor himself, but, on the other hand, too much teaching is prone to make one become selfconscious. Personally, I come under the category of those who do too mash Maintain'. I have been at it all my life. " When we came over from Quebec, Canada where I was born. to live at Elie, in Fifeshire, I was made a pupil teacher by my master at school. I was then apprentice to Forrester and, acquiring a reputation as a competent club maker, I afterwards obtained a berth to the department at the Army and Navy Store.. and, after nine months, I became head of their sports department. I was subsequently attached as professional to the Hasting, Club, and, twelve years ago, came to West Middlesex, where, as you know I have remained ever since. I have been an instructor in the Polytechnic gymnasium. Even now I can move at will every muscle in my body, and I am noted for very strong grip. I could take a pack and a quarter of cards in my hand and tear them in half. I first came into public prominence through participating in a series of challenge matches with James Braid, who has been one of my closest and best friends all my life, We used to go about the country playing exhibition matches and games for stakes, and, on the whole, London Professional Golfers' Association. I was their first chairman. Middlesex County Times 1914.

GOLF AT HARRODS. RALPH SMITH AND THE LADY Mr. Philip Gibbs had an amusing article on Parlour Golf : A Comedy in Old Brompton Road " in the " Daily Chronicle " on Thursday. In the course of it he said There was one girl who stepped forward with a pretty boldness, which was the admiration of all of us, but I fancy that before she had finished her lesson she wished

the floor of Harrods might open up and swallow her into the darkness of the deepest basement. It was Ralph Smith who dealt with her, and he has a masterful way with him, kind but firm, gentle but determined. The girl swung up her driver, glanced at a sister as much as to say " It's a child's game, my dear," and missed the ball by half a yard. " How utterly absurd" she remarked to herself, the professional, and the world in general. Ralph Smith did not commit himself to an opinion upon the subject of absurdity. But in a strictly businesslike way he put his hands on the club while the girl still grasped it and made her swing to and fro until her hat was all awry and her face was flushed. " That's better," he said, " Have another go at it." She had another go, but before she hanged at the little white ball sitting up perkily on its india rubber tee the professional grasped the lady's hat firmly in his right hand—it was a delightful hat with two feathers which said " What T What ?" and held her head down as though he were the executioner of Lady Jane Grey. Presently, after many efforts on the girl's part to hit the ball, always frustrated by the professional before she had time to evade his restraining hand, he raked her left knee in with the crook of a niblick, and proceeded to twist her into a picturesque and easy attitude as though she were a figure of plasticine. Now!" he said, releasing her. For a moment she managed rigidly fixed in the attitude of a coloured poster on the Underground Railway. Then she came unstuck, as it were, gave a little squeal, and made a vicious whack at the ball. said Mr. Ralph Smith. Still, you're getting the idea of it." 1914