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## **Wellington Travel/Golf Writer Returns From Editorial Excursion to England**

WELLINGTON, FLORIDA – June 26, 2018 – World-class golf and tourism opportunities abound in England’s county of Kent. That’s the message from Wellington, Florida-based golf writer Mike May who has just returned from a recent trip to Kent – located immediately to the southeast of London. While in England in mid June, May played eight rounds of golf, visited two castles, saw one cathedral, toured Britain’s oldest brewery, and dined in a pub that predates Christopher Columbus’ arrival in America.

During his stay in Kent, May played eight courses in six days. Three of the rounds were on championship links courses, which have all hosted past (British) Open Championships – Royal St. George's (the site of The Open in 2020); Royal Cinque Ports (hosted The Open in 1909 and 1920); and Prince's Golf Club (venue for The Open in 1932). A fourth course that he played – Littlestone Golf Club – is also a championship links course and has served as a qualifier for The Open.

“The entire experience of enjoying Golf in Kent was off the charts. Since arriving back home, I have constantly shared the overall experience with other golfers, friends and business associates, encouraging them to place Kent at the top of their list of international golf and travel destinations,” stated May.

May was welcomed with open arms in all parts of Kent during his six-day visit to the county.

“Golf in Kent was delighted to host Mike May on his foray into Kent to experience some of the finest golf courses that the county has to offer,” said Helen Heady, project director for Golf in Kent. “Conveniently located close to London and its three international airports, Kent is easily accessed by overseas visitors and offers a treasure trove of highly-regarded championship courses from links to parkland, clifftop to downland, as well as a host of historic and cultural attractions such as Canterbury Cathedral, Dover Castle and the White Cliffs of Dover. Kent, known as the Garden of England, also has a growing reputation for its local gastronomic fare and its fine wines whilst it is also home to Britain’s oldest brewer – all good for the 19<sup>th</sup> hole!”

May's trip through Kent began on June 10 at the [\*\*Hever Castle Golf Club\*\*](#) in Edenbridge. Built in 1270, Hever Castle was the childhood home of Anne Boleyn, the second wife of King Henry VIII. Golf was first introduced at Hever in the 1920s when a private nine-hole course was built north of the Hever lakes where today's championship course now lies. It was created for the personal enjoyment of the then American owners, the Astor family, and to entertain friends and business contacts. He spent his first night in England (June 10) in the **Pippin Room of the Anne Boleyn Wing** of the **Hever Castle**. There are now 18 holes at the Hever Castle Golf Club.

The next day, May was given a personal tour of Hever Castle and its majestic gardens. He then played nine holes at the [\*\*Leeds Castle Golf Club\*\*](#) near Maidstone. He spent the night at the **Stable Courtyard Bed & Breakfast at Leeds Castle**, located next to the 900-year-old Leeds Castle, known as one of England's most iconic castles and also the "loveliest castle in the world." The castle and its vast moat sits adjacent to the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> holes of the Leeds Castle Golf Club. That evening, he dined in the Castle View Restaurant which provides spectacular views across the terrace of the adjacent Leeds Castle.

On day three, May's golfing trail took him for 18 holes in the morning at [\*\*Littlestone Golf Club\*\*](#) near Romney Marsh and 18 holes in the afternoon at **Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club**, adjacent to the former port of Deal. Both courses are championship links courses with a strong pedigree. **Littlestone**, which overlooks the nearby English Channel, is one of the top 100 golf courses in England and was one of the final qualifying venues for the 2011 Open Championship. As for **Royal Cinque Ports**, it was the site of The Open Championship in 1909 (won by J. H. Taylor) and 1920 (won by George Duncan). Five-time Open champ James Braid once referred to **Royal Cinque Ports** as "the best course in England." A strong coastal breeze off the nearby English Channel regularly adds to the challenge of this course, something which May experienced during his round.

"The mystique and appeal of Royal Cinque Ports can be attributed to winds off the English Channel, which change daily," remembered May. "As for the green complex at the par five 3<sup>rd</sup> hole at Royal Cinque Ports, I've never seen a putting surface like it. A two-putt is an achievement on that green."

On day four, May experienced another 36-hole day on the links, starting with **Royal St. George's Golf Club**, with the assistance of a professional caddy, followed by 18 holes that afternoon at **Prince's Golf Club**.

**Royal St. George's** – or, simply, Sandwich, as it is often called -- will be the site of The Open Championship 2020. Founded in 1887, this is one of England's most mesmerizing golf courses, as it offers stunning views over Pegwell Bay and the world-famous white cliffs along the coast of Kent. The tallest and deepest bunker in Great Britain is located on the 4<sup>th</sup> hole at **Royal St. George's**, which has hosted more Open Championships (14 Opens to date) than any other golf course in England.

"Playing Royal St. George's with a caddy was an amazing experience," added May. "My caddy, Gary, has been affiliated with Royal St. George's for 50 years. His advice and stories about the course made it one of the most memorable rounds of golf that I have ever played. I finished with a par on the closing hole because Gary told me that I needed a par four in order to win The Open. And, I did just that!"

**Prince's**, which hosted the British Amateur in 2013, boasts 27 holes of championship links golf in three nine-hole loops: The Shore, The Dunes and The Himalayas. Each loop has its own unique characteristics that have recently benefited from substantial investment and redevelopment including a

reimagined Himalayas by architects Mackenzie & Ebert, consultants to several Open Championship courses. Prince's features an impressive array of 97 revetted bunkers -- including the now-famous Sarazen Bunker, which sits next to the 9<sup>th</sup> hole of The Himalayas. The ever-present seaside breezes add a degree of difficulty to the golf experience at Prince's. May played 18 holes at Prince's, namely The Dunes and The Himalayas,

While in Sandwich, May stayed in the on-site accommodation at Prince's -- The Lodge at Prince's -- which is the ideal base for golfers playing the county's championship links, as it sits overlooking both Prince's and Royal St George's and is just a few miles from Royal Cinque Ports. The well-appointed Lodge, with apartments and rooms, also has glorious views over the adjacent English Channel and offers a fine dining restaurant, The Brasserie on the Bay, that serves Kentish fare using in-season, local produce.

Before departing The Lodge at Prince's, May received a personal guided tour through The Gallery, located at The Lodge. The Gallery is a mini museum which contains a number of letters, pictures, trophies, old clubs, and memorabilia that are connected to growth of golf at Prince's. The focal point of The Gallery is the original sand wedge which was created by golfing legend Gene Sarazen, who won the '32 Open at Prince's.

"If you travel to play golf in Sandwich, you must stay at The Lodge at Prince's," said May. "It's a total golf atmosphere with a first-class putting green adjacent to the facility. The rooms are clean and spacious. The breakfast is delightful. The views of the nearby English Channel are unobstructed."

While in Kent, May saw Canterbury Cathedral, one of the oldest Christian structures in England, in the medieval city that oozes charm and quaintness. That offered a fascinating and relaxing side trip off the golf course.

On day five, May played 18 holes at the [\*\*North Foreland Golf Club\*\*](#) near Broadstairs. Founded in 1903, this clifftop gem, with its views over the English Channel and North Sea from every hole, is another course that has been used for final qualifying for The Open.

"Breathtaking is the best way to describe the views of the North Sea from the majority of the holes at North Foreland," added May.

Prior to golf on his final day in the Garden of England, May took a morning tour of the Shepherd Neame Brewery in Faversham, home to Britain's oldest brewer. He then headed for the exclusive [\*\*London Golf Club\*\*](#), located in west Kent, which is run along similar lines to an American country club. The club has two 18-hole golf courses -- the Heritage and the International courses. The Heritage was designed by the legendary Jack Nicklaus whilst the International was created by Ron Kirby, under the Jack Nicklaus Design banner. A European Tour Property, London Golf Club has hosted numerous professional tournaments including the Volvo World Matchplay Championship in 2014 on the International course and the European Open twice -- in 2008 and 2009 -- on the Heritage course. This August, the International course will host the Staysure Seniors PGA Championship on the Staysure Tour in August.

May played the International course.

"The International course was a true treat, was in tournament-ready shape, provided wonderful views of the Kent countryside, and featured two par threes with memorable, downhill tee shots over water," recalled May. "Ron Kirby designed a jewel."

During this trip, May sampled the local fare at one of Kent's top pubs, the George & Dragon in Sandwich. This ancient pub first opened for business in 1446, 46 years before Christopher Columbus sailed the ocean blue in 1492. The George and Duncan is a traditional pub with an open fireplace, low beams, and a range of local ales.

He experienced a variety of the accommodation in Kent that ranged from a castle (Hever Castle and Leeds Castle) to a lodge designed specially with golfers in mind ([The Lodge at Prince's](#)) to an old-style seaside hotel, [The Marine Hotel](#) in Whitstable.

In addition to playing Golf in Kent, there are many non-golf sightseeing venues in Kent, such as the White Cliffs of Dover, beautiful gardens such as Scotney Castle Garden, Sissinghurst, and Emmetts Garden; more castles and historic sights than any county in England; and England's two oldest cathedrals -- [Canterbury](#) and [Rochester](#).

"For years, golfers from around the U.S. have been flying to Great Britain, where they have made a beeline to Scotland to play courses like St. Andrews (the Old Course and the New Course), Turnberry, Royal Dornoch, Carnoustie, Gleneagles, and others," said May. "Now, with my stories about Golf in Kent, I'm focused on exposing golfers to the great golfing opportunities in the southeast of England. In Kent, the weather is generally drier and better, the average cost of golf is lower, tee times are accessible throughout the year, and it is home to some of the finest championship links in England, as well as a variety of picturesque parkland, clifftop and downland courses. Furthermore, it is easily accessible from London's three international airports and offers a wide variety of off-course attractions, as well as a reputation for fine food, ales and wine. Once Americans get a taste of Golf in Kent, the word will spread about the premier golf courses that this part of England possesses."

In many respects, this golf foray to England is a 'homecoming' of sorts for May who lived for four years in the late 1970s/early 1980s with his family in southwestern England – in the seaside fishing village of St. Ives, Cornwall. When May lived in St. Ives, his parents (Chris and Joanne May) co-owned and co-operated the Pedn-Olva Hotel in St. Ives from June 1977 to July 1981. It was in England, while playing golf at the nearby West Cornwall Golf Club in the village of Lelant, that May's fascination and interest in links golf was nurtured and blossomed. While in England, May graduated from high school at Truro School in Truro, Cornwall in July 1981. He, then, returned to the U.S. to attend the University of Florida, where he graduated from in May 1985.

At the end of his Golf in Kent journey, May returned to his former hometown of St. Ives where he played a round at the [West Cornwall Golf Club](#), which is the oldest golf club in the county of Cornwall and arguably one of the most scenic golf courses in the United Kingdom, with views of the beautiful St. Ives Bay from 16 of its 18 fairways.

As a resident of Wellington, Florida, which is located in Palm Beach County, Florida, May distributed goodwill gifts from the Village of Wellington and Discover the Palm Beaches, the tourism agency of Palm Beach County (Florida). To honor this year's U.S. Open at Shinnecock Hills, May wore a USGA U.S. Open hat while playing Golf in Kent. It's worth noting that fellow Palm Beach County resident Brooks Koepka won this year's U.S. Open during May's was Golf in Kent excursion.

While playing Golf in Kent, May wore golf apparel provided by Carnoustie, Antigua and Gold Toe Golf socks; used Callaway Hex Diablo golf balls provided by Discover the Palm Beaches Florida and Titleist Pro V1 golf balls provided by Matt Godek Rugby & Soccer Supply (Merrifield, VA); utilized video equipment from Fine Productions (Atlanta, GA); wore golf shoes supplied by New Balance Athletic

Shoes; wore new PerformanceGrip Pro golf gloves provided by Bionic Gloves; hit Mizuno JPX 850 irons (courtesy of the PGA TOUR Superstore); and used woods from Krank Golf.

For more information about Golf in Kent, please access: [www.golfinkent.co.uk](http://www.golfinkent.co.uk).

May's recent golf trip to England was his second in as many years. Last June, he traveled to England's **Atlantic Links** -- six premier championship links golf courses in England's three southwestern counties of Cornwall, Devon, and Somerset. These six courses -- **Trevose** and **St. Enodoc** in Cornwall; **Royal North Devon**, **Saunton East** and **Saunton West** in Devon; and **Burnham & Berrow** in Somerset -- are clustered along the northern coast of the southwest of England, overlooking the spectacular north Atlantic Ocean.

In addition to his interest in writing about golf, **May** works as the director of communications for **PHIT America**, the non-profit cause working to reverse America's 'Inactivity Pandemic'; is a communications consultant with the **Sports & Fitness Industry Association**; is a correspondent for **Team Insight magazine**; is a sports correspondent for the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*; and is the head coach of the girls varsity basketball team at Berean Christian School in West Palm Beach, Florida.

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