



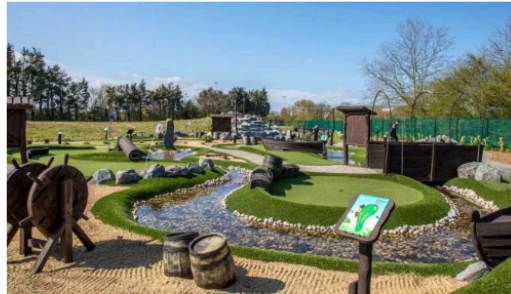
## Exciting family adventure golf course opens its doors

### News

5 hrs ago

## Exciting family adventure golf course opens at Garon Park, Southend

By [Katie Feehan](#) | [@KatieFee452](#)  
Chief Reporter



Garon Park adventure golf



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**AN EXCITING new adventure golf course for all-the-family has opened in Southend.**

Garon Castle Adventures is based at Garon Park, just off Eastern Avenue, and already looks set to become a hugely popular destination for children and adults alike.

It sits alongside Garon Park Golf Complex, but has its own entrance, car park and starters cabin.

The 18-hole course, which takes between 45 minutes to an hour to complete, has some exciting features including a huge waterfall and a cable ferry where players pull themselves across a river between the 1st and 2nd holes.

The remainder of the course circles the impressive centrepiece – a model recreation of the nearby **Hadleigh** Castle.

Proprietor Alan Walker said: "Every hole tells a story of Essex. What we are aiming at is for young people to come and learn about the county of Essex - there's a quiz which they can interact with while they play too.

"It won't be until you visit that you realise just how rich a history the county has – homeland of the original Essex girl, Boudicca; the first capital of Roman Britain, Colchester; and the grizzly 16th century executions at Gallows Corner to name but three."

The course features full AstroTurf holes, floodlighting and some model features on every hole, this is a far stretch from both Crazy Golf and traditional golf.

Crazy Golf has a long-standing history at seaside resorts across the country.

But where once they conjured up images of only concrete courses with bizarre windmills to navigate through, owners say the modern adventure golf adaptation has an altogether different feel.

Mr Walker said: "We're trying to do something a little bit different and bring more people into the game of golf.

"We had everything at Garon except for adventure golf, which has really taken off recently, so we decided to create Garon Castle Adventures as another operation to showcase the sport."

Players only use a putter, meaning it's a game that can be enjoyed by anyone and everyone – regardless of whether they've ever played golf before or not.

For more information, visit [www.garoncastleadventures.co.uk](http://www.garoncastleadventures.co.uk) or [www.garonparkgolf.co.uk](http://www.garonparkgolf.co.uk).

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## 18-hole adventure golf course opens at Garon Park P7



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## New course at Garon Park offers fascinating insights into Essex history



■ Adventures - Garon Castle Adventure has opened its doors as a brand new facility in Southend for families and golf lovers alike

## Exciting family adventure golf course opens

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By KATIE FEEHAN

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## Dosey-do at barn dance

A BARN dance has been launched and will take place in September.

The event, held by Havens Hospice Helping Hands, will take place on Friday, September 6 and will feature the metric foot barn dance band.

The doors will open at 7pm, with the dance starting at 7.45pm.

A bar will be available on the night, with snacks and nibbles able to be purchased.

The venue can be found at Freight house, Bradley Way, Rochford, SS4 1BU.

## Fun for all in holidays

KEEP the kids entertained over the summer break as ParkLives comes to Southend.

The free outdoor activities for children, young people and families to enjoy are organised by Southend Council.

Equipment for the events, which will be held at Chalkwell Park on Chalkwell Avenue, will be provided.

On July 29, boxing and kickboxing fitness sessions will kick off ParkLives.

This is suitable for children aged five to 14 and will start at 11.15am until 12.15pm.

To book, please contact Kirsty Horseman on 01702 212057.



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# GARON PARK GOLF COMPLEX, SOUTHEND, ESSEX

A beautiful, well-run golf centre  
offering top quality golf to the  
Southend area





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The complex has three full-length loops of nine holes, a further nine hole par three course, a well appointed floodlit range extending to 30 covered bays, two separate function rooms and a well developed food and beverage operation. There is also a Foremost golf shop, stocked with all of the latest equipment and doing a brisk trade, staffed by a team including four golf

professionals. The head professional is Gary Jacom who has been friends with Alan Walker, the owner of the centre, for nearly 40 years.

Last year an adventure golf course was built at the complex. It is called Garon Castle Adventures and is themed around all of the features in surrounding Essex. This is a very clever idea, as it is classed as an educational opportunity and therefore can be offered to schools from many miles away as part of their curriculum. This is a great idea for schools too, as playing adventure golf whilst having a history lesson is far more compelling than a fusty old classroom and a text book. The adventure golf course is very busy in the summer months and has excellent trade at the weekends on the finer days of the British winter. It has its own clubhouse and reception with a separate car park, so a visit to the adventure golf course does not block or hinder the regular golfing trade. For those interested in developing their own adventure

golf course, many of the ideas found at Garon Park have been carefully honed over years of clever management and experience.

The adventure golf course was built by City Golf, who have been responsible for many excellent courses around the country. Their UK representative, Gary Jenkins, spoke to Golf Features:



*Above: Alan Walker, who led the turnaround at Garon Park Golf Complex.*

"We were delighted to have been chosen for this exceptional course. It plays very well in terms of adventure golf, but the historic local theming has been great fun and allows people of all ages to find out more about their local area as they take part in their round of adventure golf. It's an idea that is becoming more and more popular and we love providing the bespoke features that bring this vision to life. Alan and his team were a pleasure to work with and they are bound to do well, as their professionalism ensures that customer care is of the highest level."



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producing a good quality finish to the golf course. No one area was terrible, but the collective failings combined to make the course unpopular and underwhelming to visit, from a golfer's point of view."

The site, which extends to over 240 acres, is immaculately maintained with superb greens and closely cropped tees and fairways, so it is not surprising that membership is still growing and there are now over 580 season ticket holders at the complex. The 27 hole layout gives so much flexibility for customers - and also for maintenance - that it is possible to accommodate a large group without regular players being inconvenienced in the slightest. In addition, a winter composite 18 holes can be played, which allows the greenkeeping team to take out nine holes and work on them exclusively at quieter times.

The clubhouse is light and bright, and provides excellent views across the course. It

Garon Park was in a muddle 10 years ago. It went into administration after a series of poor decisions by the previous management. Alan, who had previously designed the complex, was asked to step in and help. He bought a substantial share of the business and has increased his stake in the years since. Just four years after this business being a non-viable money-pit, it won England Golf's golf mark award as the best golf centre of the year. This was quite a turnaround and one that Alan and his fabulous team are rightly proud of. He explains:

"Ten years ago, when I took the reins of this business, the quality of the core golf product was nothing like it is today. The greenkeeping machinery was worn out and not capable of





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has two separate function rooms and is a regular host of weddings, wakes and other events, which complement the normal golfing trade. But it is the golf that is foremost in Alan's heart. Golf has been his whole life and it is clearly his main focus at Garon. He elaborates:

"Since I was a young lad, I have been fully committed to golf: as a player, coach, retailer, designer and consultant. It's also been a privilege to own a few cracking golf facilities along the way. Here at Garon Park, I am most interested in driving the quality of our golfing product up in anyway I can. I think that keen golfers are happy to pay a little bit more for a facility that is presented to them in perfect order, rather than just in a passable order.

Everybody who works at Garon Park has bought in to this philosophy and it's great fun coming to work every day."

Alan Walker started his career as an amateur golfer at Chingford Golf Club in Essex. He passed his PGA exams in 1974 and was assistant at Wansted Golf Club to Reg Knight until 1976, when Reg left to become the professional at Aldeburgh in Suffolk. Alan got the job and was very young for the position, becoming the club professional at just 22 years of age. He stayed for eight years and really caught the retailing bug; from there he opened the Warren Park Golf Centre, which was one of the busiest golf ranges in the country. It allowed him to ply his trade as a PGA golf professional with a near perfect

setting for him to be the dominant retailer of the area. In 2000 he sold the business to JJB sports and started off in a different direction.

He became a golf course architect and designer and undertook a number of major projects. Alan has designed the courses and practice facilities at Benton Hall, Garon Park, Rivenhall Oaks, Hayden Grange and most recently Ingrebourne Links. He has also acted as a golf consultant in all sorts of different capacities. Few people have had such a wealth of experience in owning, operating and also designing so many golf courses and centres over the last 40 years. Alan expands:

"It's been so much fun. I couldn't possibly have enjoyed my career more and done so many interesting things in golf. It has allowed me to travel and meet fascinating people all over the world. I still love the excitement of getting up and coming to work in the golf industry."





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*Left and Below: The Garon Castle Adventure Golf Course.*

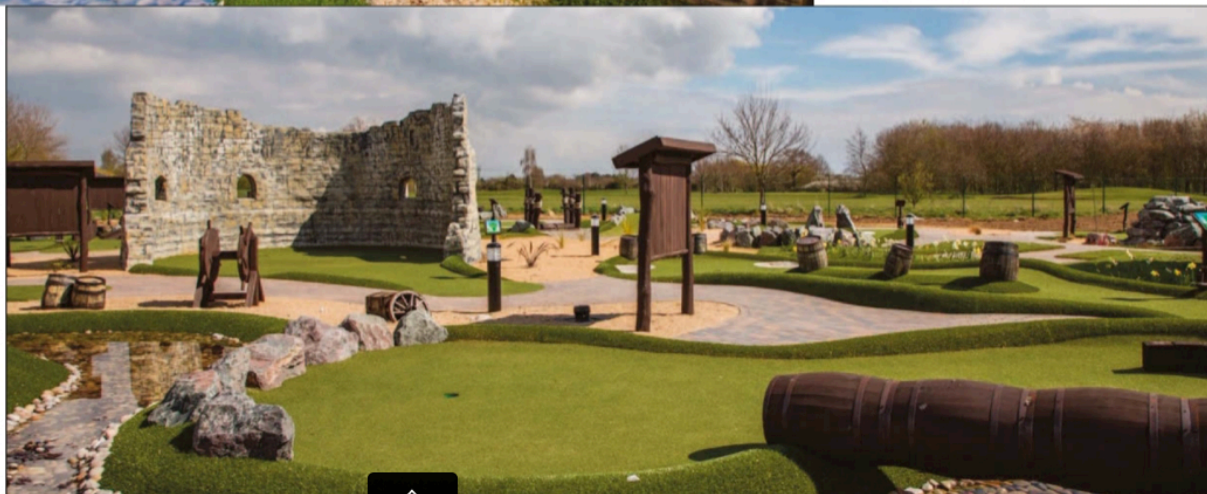
surprising that Alan, and the other four professionals at Garon Park, have a very strong bond. All of the professionals are able to teach free of any percentage charge at the golf centre and all are keenly involved in the retail side of the business. The shop is immediately adjacent to the reception area in the clubhouse and is crammed full of all the latest equipment. Golfers have to travel a very long way to find a better stocked retail outlet than Garons Park, and it is not surprising that his turnover is continuing to grow despite most professionals having a bleaker outlook on their prospects for the future.

Now in his mid 60s Alan is looking forward to playing some more golf, but retirement is a very long way away. It would be hard to find a better run golf centre than Garon Park.

For more details on this excellent golf complex, please visit the website:  
<http://www.garonparkgolf.co.uk/>

Alan was heavily involved with PGA throughout his career and served, first as a committee member in the south region where he was appointed Chairman; then when the East region was formed in 1987 he was appointed as the first Chairman of that region which took him onto the Executive Committee, with him then taking on more senior management roles within the PGA, becoming a board director and vice captain, and then in 1999, Captain of the PGA. This involved flying on Concord to the Ryder Cup and representing the PGA at a whole host of extremely prestigious events throughout the golfing calendar.

With such a strong association with the Professional Golfers' Association, it is not







Online

## Garon Castle Adventures Opens In Southend

2.26pm 28th June 2019 - **Courses** - This story was updated on Friday, June 28th, 2019

**The latest Adventure Golf experience has opened its doors in Southend, to much plaudits from the first visitors of the new attraction. Garon Castle Adventures has been built by Alan Walker, PGA Master Professional and Proprietor of Garon Park Golf Complex and introduces an interesting new educational angle to the family-friendly activity.**

The popularity of Adventure Golf venues has been widely spoken about recently with the continuing expansion of BGL Group's 'Mr Mulligans' brand and the recent £27m funding injection into Puttshack. Where once 'Crazy Golf' was largely associated with seaside resorts, concrete courses and holes where you had to navigate through a windmill, the modern Adventure Golf courses take an altogether more grandiose theme – from dinosaurs to jungles to lost paradise islands.

Garon Castle therefore represents somewhat of a homecoming for the exciting new leisure phenomenon with its location in the popular seaside town of Southend-on-Sea. Yet there's very little traditional about the course, and certainly no windmills! Taking inspiration from the local Hadleigh Castle, the course takes players through an historical journey of Essex's past.

Indeed, it's not until you play the course that you realise just how rich a history the county has – homeland of the original Essex girl, Boudicca; the first capital of Roman Britain, Colchester; and the grizzly 16<sup>th</sup> century executions at Gallows Corner to name but three.

The course itself has many spectacular features including a huge waterfall and a cable ferry where players pull themselves across a river between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> holes. The course continues by circling around the feature 8<sup>th</sup> hole – the accurately reproduced model of Hadleigh Castle. The original is located just 8 miles from Garon Castle Adventures and was built in 1215 by Hubert de Burgh, who was effectively ruler of England during Henry III's childhood.

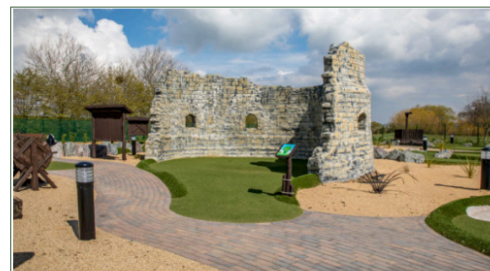
Working with Promote Golf, Garon Park Golf Complex didn't come across the theming by accident. This was a wisely thought out strategy that considered very carefully the peaks and troughs of demand experienced by all Adventure Golf courses.

Alan Walker explains, "We knew that Adventure Golf is hugely popular during school holiday time and we've already experienced that at Garon Castle. However, we wanted to develop something that could also attract trade during the day when the kids are at school. We worked with the team at Promote Golf to devise this historical theming that would also attract local schools on educational trips. We're even in the process of creating school worksheets that accompany the course for children in key stage 1 and key stage 2."

It's a new angle to Adventure Golf theming that certainly shows potential of expanding the popularity of the game beyond family leisure time whilst also retaining the fun and engagement for younger participants.

Garon Castle Adventures [www.garoncastleadventures.co.uk](http://www.garoncastleadventures.co.uk)

Garon Park Golf Complex [www.garonparkgolf.co.uk](http://www.garonparkgolf.co.uk)





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