SHINING BEACON BILL RETIRES

A BIGGA stalwart, and great friend to many in the industry, Bill Paterson has retired after 50 years in greenkeeping. Bill has spent 26 years at Beaconsfield Golf Club in Buckinghamshire. Here Billy McMillan pays tribute to his friend...

Starting at Old Randurly golf club in the early sixties as an apprentice Billy was soon hooked on greenkeeping. He was number 27 on the register of young greenkeepers taking up a formal education in Scotland at that time. Once qualified he soon took on the role of Deputy at Old Randurly then Paisley.

In the early seventies he became Head Greenkeeper at the Randpark Golf Club in South Africa - not only was this a big move for him personally but also a massive learning curve in the management of warm season grasses. Creeping bent grass was on his agenda, and with great initiative he managed to get his hands on some seed, introducing it into his greens during dormant conditions to give his membership quality surfaces year round.

This was not a simple thing to achieve with sanctions going on at that time. He actually managed to have this grass seed smuggled in on the back of his then club captain’s business of importing American cars with a trunk full of bent grass seed stashed away for a timely door to door delivery.

In the mid to late seventies home beechwood – maybe he missed the charm of wet feet and a cold wind - and for many years has taken the role of Deputy at Old Randurly then Paisley.

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Now you may think a greenkeeping career was all that he aspired to - but you would be way off the mark. He has lived a well-rounded life. He has been much more than the man who tends to the green…you name it, he’s been involved in it. Bill not only has a quiet attitude of not being in the limelight but is a great human being.

His job here has been his life. He’s been much more than a greenkeeper. He’s arranged Christmas parties, he puts the Christmas trees up, he’s done so much work with the Artisan section…you name it, he’s been involved in it. I am going to continue the terrific work Bill has done here. I’ll be continuing the woodland management project he started and also the layout of the new paths. Then it’s likely to be working on the greens, bringing up the putting speed, and reviewing and investing in our machinery fleet. I intend to continue the terrific work Bill has done here. I’ll be continuing the woodland management project he started and also the layout of the new paths. Then it’s likely to be working on the greens, bringing up the putting speed, and reviewing and investing in our machinery fleet.

The recent Chalara Management Plan released by DEFRA lacks any uniform and equitable assistance for landowners and organisations affected by the disease. Grants will be given for removal, destruction and disposal of recently planted common ash and replanting with alternative tree species, but this only applies to a selective swath of counties (Cornwall, Devon, Gloucestershire and up through the Midlands). The aim is to slow down east to west disease spread and help create a ‘Vhalara free’ zone in westernmost England. The Royal Forestry Society describes the plan as a ‘postcode lottery’ but worse still it excludes the amenity and landscape sector and therefore golf courses.

Simon Ellis, marketing director at Crowders Nurseries in Hornsea, Lincolnshire, which currently holds 250,000 healthy ash trees, told Greenkeeper International: “We are about to destroy the entire stock. They are unsalable and difficult to manage. Many are up to ten years old which means a decade of investment down the drain with no compensation from government. “This plan is selective, divisive, inequitable and unfair. Grant aid will only be available to forestry sector landowners with planted ash sites funded under the Rural Development Programme for England. It excludes the amenity and landscape sectors but it is they who buy our larger trees.”

Bill Paterson has spent 36 years as Course Manager at Adwickbury Park Golf Club.

Stuart Langhorn comments: “I’ve been seeking a new challenge and the role of the modern day greenkeeper is one that fills me with enthusiasm and energy. I’ve managed to get this role at Adwickby and it will be an experience to remember for anyone that has had the pleasure to be in his company. I remember lying in bed at many a HTME with the silence being broken with the rendition of some Scottish ballad drifting through the night as Billy returned to his room. Now you may think a greenkeeping career was all that he aspired to - but you would be way off the mark. He has lived a well-rounded life and for many years has taken the role of Deputy at Old Randurly then Paisley.

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