

When Prince Andrew steps onto the BTME lecture podium at Harrogate in January to present Master Greenkeeper Certificates, the four MGC recipients will, I'll wager, be on tenterhooks: nervous, highly excited, tingling with the expectant pleasure of an occasion they will remember 'til their dying day.

To be acclaimed by one's peers as a Master Greenkeeper is the highest accolade known in British greenkeeping, for gaining membership bestows acceptance to an exclusive brethren that consists currently of just five men.

Laurence Pithie, the first ever to warrant the letters MGC after his name, has risen to fame and glory and his story is writ large in the history of our profession. Now four more MGCs are to be thus honoured, and in recognition of their 'Right Royal Acclamation', Greenkeeper International outlines their careers, Masters all!

WILLIAM (Bil) MONTAGUE, CGCS, MGC

Bil Montague is the first American to gain MGC status, and I am indebted to Thom Martinek, President, Northern Ohio Supt. Assoc., for his commentary.

'Bil started in the business in the sixties after serving in the US Army. Under the watchful eye of Walter Dean, Bil learned quickly, acting as Walter's most able assistant. He attended night school until the State of Ohio declared an austerity programme and laid off many of its employees, working then as a superintendent at a public course before returning to education, this time as a full time student at Ohio State University. Following his time at Ohio State, he worked for Leo Petronzio, gaining valuable experience of landscape layout and plant selection from one of the best known exponents of the art.

In 1972, Bil began working at the Oakwood Club, and he will soon be starting his twentieth season, having been named superintendent upon his predecessors retirement. The Oakwood Club was founded in 1905, with the

first nine open for play in 1906. In 1915 a Donald Ross plan was prepared and several changes were made over the years. Latterly, the noted architect, Michael Hurdzan, has made several dramatic changes, bringing back interest, character and definition to the old course. Dr Hurdzan is now consulted on all long range plans, from trees to bunkers and including a new irrigation system.

Bil served enough time as both assistant and superintendent to be tested (in 1985) by the GCSAA, and he now carries the proud designation CGCS (Certified Golf Course Superintendent).



Four greenkeepers have a particular reason to be looking forward to the 1993 BTME. They'll be collecting their Master Greenkeeper Certificates from Prince Andrew. We look at the careers of four more recruits to the profession's most exclusive club

In 1988 Bil was introduced to BIGGA and attended his first conference in Scotland. "I was so taken by the hospitality of the people I met", Bil told me, "I came home an avowed ambassador for BIGGA, keen to tell everyone of my experiences and of the great educational opportunities existing within the organisation".

Bil began his quest for MGC in 1990, "after having been in golf for over 20 years, and having been certified by GCSAA, I felt the need for a career orientated educational goal, which BIGGA fulfilled perfectly via its MGC programme. With the time

involved to complete Phases I and II, and the comprehensive written exam in Phase III, I had an unbelievable feeling of accomplishment upon reading David Golding's fax, which read: 'Congratulations! - the second Master Greenkeeper and the first International to achieve this status'...".

Influential in Bil's life have been architect Jack Kidwell, who he describes as "a man whose wisdom you can take to the bank", and Dr Michael Hurdzan, apprentice to Jack and a talented architect who "gives his clients exactly what they want, whilst never losing sight of the needs of the

story, for though he was born in the Kingdom of Fife, often acclaimed as 'The Home of Golf', in the 16 years he spent there he never once set foot on a Scottish golf course!

Kerran moved with his family to Hertfordshire and on leaving school at 18, started work at Berkhamsted Golf Club, home of the Berkhamsted Trophy and scene of early triumphs by the young Sandy Lyle. Some 18 months later he moved again, this time to Brighton's finest municipal golf course at Hollingbury Park and after just one year he was appointed their head greenkeeper. Two years at Hollingbury gave him the confidence to move into the private domain, and he became head greenkeeper at East Brighton Golf Club, then the home club of editor, David White, who recalls, 'though I was not at that time involved in greenkeeping journalism, I can readily vouch that East Brighton's windswept acres were in sparkling condition, obviously in very capable hands'.

Six years later, 'the rough edges knocked off' as Kerran puts it, he ventured north to Staverton Park Golf Club and spent five years learning about USGA spec greens and how to care for heavy clay fairways, 'greenkeeping at the sharp end' as he now describes the experience. Whilst at the Daventry club he attained the EIGGA Diploma in Golf Management and won the coveted EIGGA Course Manager's Gold Diploma.

The lure of the Downs brought Kerran back south, this time to the historic and welcoming Salisbury and South Wilts Golf Club, and it is here that he cares for the needs of his members, producing turf that is, according to his peers, a pleasure to play upon.

Education has never been far from Kerran's mind, and mindful of the benefits such education brings in keeping greenkeepers 'on top of the game', he has completed Phases III and IV in Golf Course Management. His recognition as an expert saw him compete in the ICI Professional Product Premier Greenkeeper of the Year awards in 1990, placing a creditable third.

superintendent, who must maintain the end product".

Bil lives in Kirtland, Ohio, with wife Monica, son Jason (18) and daughter Amanda (10), together with several horses. In expressing his appreciation to his friends in BIGGA, Bil especially singled out fellow American, Jean Esposito, who introduced him to the Association. He also thanks his family for "all the times I couldn't be with you, 'because the grass was growing' and you all understood".

KERRAN DALY, MGC

There is a novel, some might say cruel, twist in Kerran Daly's career

In his 21 years of greenkeeping there has been no stronger supporter of BIGGA, in the past as chairman of the Sussex section, whilst now holding office on the committee of the South Coast section. Apart from this active participation in committee, Kerran is at ease on the lecture podium, and he has addressed both South Coast and Devon and Cornwall section meetings on several occasions. In January, greenkeepers will be able to see and hear him in action at our own BTME, when he will address the subject: Computers and Golf Course Management.

Kerran is married and confesses to spending most of his spare time with his daughter, Shona, who is just three years old and the apple of her father's eye.

ROBERT MAIBUSCH, B.Sc., CGCS, MGC

Bob Maibusch is the second of our American Internationals, a man whose first experience with the game of golf was as a caddie. He writes: 'I was employed at the Oak Park CC from 1971 to 1976, fortunate to work at a club that cared enough about their caddies that they encouraged us to play. An outcome of this experience was that I attained a Chick Evans Caddie Scholarship. The scholarship is based on a combination of grade point average, caddying experience, financial need, moral character, a written essay, and the recommendation of the members of your club. This scholarship allowed me to attend Michigan State University for four years, majoring with a B.Sc. in Turfgrass Management.

Another experience that I had caddying and which, more than anything else, convinced me that I wanted to devote my life to golf was that as the top caddie at my club I was qualified to caddy in the 1974 Western Open. By luck of the draw I chose Tom Watson, who had played well the previous week in the U.S. Open but had faltered in the last round in what has come to be known as the "Massacre at Winged Foot". Fate works in mysterious ways, and on the last day Tom Watson came from six behind to win his first ever tournament. Since then he

has gone on to win over 30 professional events including five British Opens. Throughout his career he has been an inspiration, we have stayed in touch and his encouragement has been a great motivation for me.

From 1976-'78 I was employed at Oak Park CC and got my first taste of how difficult this line of work really is, thereafter (1979-1981) I was assistant at Kenosha CC, Wisconsin. Working under superintendent David Ward, I learned some of the difficulties involved in managing a staff and projects. Dave Ward, now the superintendent at Olympia Fields CC, was and continues to be a great mentor for me. He gave me the opportunity to develop my management skills and much of the credit for my skills as a course manager can be attributed to his positive influence, and his willingness to let a 'wet behind the ears' assistant prove himself.

From 1981-'82 I was assistant at Ravisloe CC. This position came as a result of Dave Ward taking the job as superintendent. It was a new experience for me, because the course had many agronomic problems as a result of prior mismanagement. The experience I gained in seeing it transformed from its poor condition into one of the finest conditioned courses in the district helped to prepare me for the step up the ladder to superintendent.

Since 1982 I have been superintendent at Hinsdale Golf Club, fortunate in the past ten years to have worked with a board of directors and committee who were committed to the betterment of the course and were willing to allocate funds to see our goals achieved. Also, I have been blessed with an extremely dedicated and competent staff. I believe that these two factors, more than anything else, have been instrumental in whatever success I have enjoyed professionally.

Cheryl, my wife, is my biggest supporter and understands the long hours and dedication that it takes to be successful in this business. It helps that she was also a Chick Evans Caddie Scholarship recipient and had worked on the

ground staff of three different golf courses.'

Bob and Cheryl have two youngsters, Alexandra, aged four and Kieron, three.

GORDON IRVINE, MGC

It struck me in writing about Gordon Irvine (27) that he is the youngest greenkeeper thus far to achieve MGC status. Further, he is the third Scot to be so honoured and I am eaten with curiosity – who will be the first greenkeeper born south of Hadrian's Wall to join the hallowed MGC Club?

Though still the youngster in the pack, Gordon has ten solid years of experience behind him, culled in the main on the championship links of Turnberry, Ayrshire. Joining Turnberry straight from school, his first assignment was on a Government Job Creation Scheme, a stint of just six months. The wisdom of his peers was shown when after those six months had expired he was offered a full time job on the course as a trainee greenkeeper, a fortunate decision for both parties.

Fortunate again, Gordon was sent on a day-release management course to Langside College in Glasgow. He spent four years at Langside studying Greenkeeping Management and passed through each year with Grade A results – four straight 'A's, as our American friends might say. At the end of this period, based on exam results and glowing tutor recommendations, he won the title: 'Young Scottish Greenkeeper of the Year'. It is his proud claim that during his time at Langside College he received on-course training from some of the finest course managers in the country, whilst working with a team of 'most highly skilled greenkeepers'.

Seven very happy years were spent at Turnberry, preparing the golf courses for club members and many thousands of visitors. Turnberry nevertheless plays host to many famous events, notably The Open, the Amateur Championship and the British Seniors, this exposure acknowledged as a huge bonus in the learning curve of any young greenkeeper. The time came, however, when Gordon

was ready for a new challenge and a chance, as he states 'to put back into greenkeeping all that I had been trained and educated to achieve'.

Luck fortunes the brave, and Gordon was successful in securing a position at Surrey's exciting new Mill Ride Golf Club, where in 1989 he came as clerk of works during construction and is now their course manager. His fortune continued during construction in being part of a fabulous team consisting of the modern-day triumvirate – architect Donald Steel, agronomist Jim Arthur and constructor Brian Pierson – who welcomed and encouraged his input and responded favourably to his ideas from the maintenance viewpoint. Opening the project eight months ahead of schedule, the course has received huge praise and has attracted some of the top golfers in the country as playing members.

"My studying has carried on over the years, Gordon told me, 'with added interest in the game generated through study of course design and a growing collection of books and literature on golf and greenkeeping. I have now achieved three of my targets in life: I have become a Master Greenkeeper and I have a golf course of my own to prepare in a way that will enable me to demonstrate what British greenkeeping is all about. Finally I am lucky enough to be married to a very supportive wife who understands the greenkeeper's lot. She insists my 'baby' is Mill Ride, though our first child is due in November." (Written in early November, readers may now assume that Gordon is adding the word DAD to his MGC title! – editor).