

BILL BYTES THE BULLET

Bill Paterson is Head Greenkeeper at Beaconsfield Golf Club. He started work as an apprentice greenkeeper in 1964 and was one of the first students to study for the newly formed City and Guilds qualification in greenkeeping.

Throughout his career he has been fortunate enough to work for clubs who realise the importance of continual training to keep abreast of the latest legislation and improved practices.

"I have certificates for everything from first aid (to save things) to spraying (to kill things)," said Bill.

But the one skill he never learned was how to use a computer.

"My wife and two children have been using them for years and when I asked them to show me how they worked they used to say that it was much quicker to do the job for me. I just dictated my report or whatever it was and they did the clever bit with the machine," said Bill.

In January 2000, he tried the computer skills course at The Learning Experience in Harrogate, but found there was too much to take on board in two days – "I couldn't even use the spell checker!"

But Bill was determined not to give up, so when he came home he found an evening course run by

Buckinghamshire County Council called "A Gentle Introduction to Computing for Older Students".

"I phoned up and asked whether, at 52, I was too old. The young lady at the other end of the phone giggled, said that I wasn't and immediately signed me up. I turned up at my first class expecting to be with a bunch of twentysomethings only to find that I was the youngest in the class – by some years!

"There was a husband and wife with a combined age of 150 and an old boy of 86 who was writing a book and wanted to use a keyboard because his hands were too shaky to hold a pen."

He soon became 'Young Bill' and for the next 10 weeks had the time of his life learning about keying-in, saving, printing, cutting, pasting, copying and numerous other aspects.

The following year he again tried the Harrogate course and this time ended up using spreadsheets, graphs, file management, databases and PowerPoint.

"I now use my computer to produce reports, articles



for the club newsletter, presentations and for record keeping as well as for reading Hazard Data Sheets and information from suppliers."

Club Secretary Keith Wilcox added "Bill's enthusiasm has always been first class and his new-found skills are a bonus. He can present reports in a professional and businesslike way and this all projects a good image for the club."

Bill concluded, "You're never too old to learn, and you meet some smashing people while you're at it. If old 'Young Bill' can do it, anyone can!"

OSPREY WATCH

One of Britain's rarest birds is a regular visitor to Piper Dam Golf Club, near Dundee, and Head Greenkeeper, Gordon Mitchell, has become very used to watching them "Ospreys have been using Piper Dam, near Dundee, for about 30 years for feeding only as the dam is ideal and stocked regularly with Brown and Rainbow trout," said Gordon.

In 1997 Piper Dam constructed an 18 hole golf course around the dam and this was opened in August '98 and although there was all the activity normally associated with a golf course it did nothing to affect the Ospreys behaviour or pattern of feeding.

"In '99 the Directors of Piper Dam, Tom Smith, Phil Mullholland and Murdie Smith decided to erect a nest and Osprey Centre so that the birds could be studied and also give visitors the chance to see these magnificent birds," explained Gordon.

"That year a pair of birds took to the nest and although no eggs were laid the thought was that perhaps the female was too young and this same pattern was followed for the next two years."

"However this year a new pair of birds arrived and

ousted the resident pair, who had worked hard at improving the nest which had been provided for them to the extent that they stole divots from the fairway to line it."

The new pair also improved the nest and in May there were three eggs which hatched in June.

"Sadly two of the chicks were lost, possibly because of the weather but we now have one thriving chick."

The nest is about 150 yards from the 18th tee and security is extremely tight and the nest is monitored 24 hours a day seven days a week with cameras and a very sophisticated alarm system.

"I will never get tired of watching them catch fish in the dam and feel very privileged to be able to observe such stunning birds," said Gordon.

HSS

HSS, the UK's largest equipment hire group, has appointed Steve Hailing as divisional manager of HSS Ground Care.



Steve Hailing has worked for HSS since 1992 and joins HSS's GroundCare division having previously set up the company's Lift and Shift trailer hire service.

"Everyone from the enthusiastic DIY gardener to the professional groundsman or greenkeeper can hire a range of specialist equipment from HSS GroundCare to get the job done," said Steve.

DIVING FOR GOLF BALLS

Recovery of lost golf balls from golf course water hazards is covered by health and safety legislation, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) points out as the golf season hits its peak.

Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees, and that persons not in their employment are not exposed to risks to their health and safety.

This includes other contractors working on or visiting the golf course as well as members of the public.

The guidance on the general health and safety topics are in HSE's booklet: Health and Safety in Golf Course Management and Maintenance.

"This guidance does not have a specific section on the recovery of lost golf balls from golf course water hazards. However, a general risk assessment of any

water hazard associated with the golf course should have included risk control measures to prevent foreseeable incidents like drowning," said Nigel Hammond, acting head of HSE's Local Authority Unit.

If the recovery of lost golf balls requires the use of divers who are at work then the Diving at Work Regulations 1997 apply and an Approved Code of Practice for Commercial diving projects inland/inshore gives further practical advice on how to comply with the regulations.

If the divers are not at work then the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 still applies and a similar duty of care standard would be expected.

NEW MAN AT THE NEW

Euan Grant has been appointed Head Greenkeeper on the 107-year old New Course at St Andrews Links Trust. He was selected from around 50 applicants. In his new position, he will be responsible for a team of seven greenkeepers who maintain the New Course, which in 2001 was rated among the top 50 golf courses in the UK by Golf World.

Coming from a greenkeeping background, Euan, 32, has worked on several

different golf courses in the UK. His previous job was as Head Greenkeeper at Marriott Forest of Arden Golf & Country Club. Before that he was responsible for building two 18 hole golf courses for Westerham Golf Club and Happy Valley Golf Club.

As a student, Mr Grant was awarded Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Award in 1994.

"We are delighted to have found a candidate with so much experience and a good eye for detail," said Gordon Moir, Links Superintendent at St Andrews Links Trust.

"Euan has very good course presentation skills and is used to managing large teams. We are looking forward to his contribution to greenkeeping at St Andrews Links."



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