

Your Letters...

Derek Green 1946 - 2005

The tragic death of Derek Green, after a devastatingly short illness, which he bore with a characteristic lack of complaint, has brought many words of praise from those at all levels - with many more deservedly to come. One ventures to comment that life, like golf, is not a fair game.

I add my tribute, not just because he was one of the greatest 'keepers of the green', but because we became a team in 1973 when he came to Woburn to take charge of the new project. Our friendship has lasted from these early days and we made a great team, debating and discussing but never falling out. He was always happy in his quiet unflappable way to help all whom he felt had the interests of traditional greenkeeping and the highest greenkeeping standards at heart.

When he went to Royal Liverpool, in 1985, at my instigation, that friendship continued.

Days at Hoylake were amongst the happiest and most rewarding of times, and not just because the links were always in superb condition. Not only did I, with countless others, enjoy the fruits of his vast experience and skill and his unflinching help given to all, from novice to top men, but he had many other shared interests, from steam locomotives to the wild life of his beloved links, as well as deep involvement in education, including his invaluable direction at North Wales College. He was also a very skilled engineer.

I have always maintained that he had no equal as a producer of supreme quality links turf all year round. I am perhaps better placed than most to give him this accolade, as I was working in parallel as a team with those looking after virtually all the larger links within the UK.

He was indeed a legend in his own lifetime, and few would quibble with my belief that he was the best all-round links manager of his generation. It was largely due to the consistent top quality all year round, which he achieved, year in year out, that earned his beloved Hoylake their forthcoming Open Championship which sadly he will not be there to see.

Goodbye to an old friend and team mate, with all my thanks for his unflinching support and endorsement of traditional greenkeeping, which I know from our last recent talk that he was pleased to see regaining strength and acceptance. He was once asked about the use of fungicides on the Hoylake greens. After consideration he thought that the last time any were applied was five years earlier while he was on holiday (watching steam locomotives, of course) when his assistant had played safe and treated one or two greens. That says it all.

Jim Arthur, Life Member

Never to be Forgotten

A Man with the precious commodity, time. Time for anyone who asked for advice, support or even a friendly chat.

How fitting that the choice of music at the funeral was Handel's 'Zadok The Priest' for Derek, as it was Derek who was the one many of us turned to.

Gone yes, forgotten never.

Andy Peel, Bull Bay Golf Club

A Significant Greenkeeper

It was complete and utter shock when I heard the death of Derek Green, after years of complete dedication to getting the British Open back to Royal Liverpool he will not be there in person.

Derek was a man who gave me his backing, which gave me the strength to take up the Chairmanship of the North Wales Section in very turbulent times and he was always available whenever I phoned for advice. I learnt a lot from him sitting on the Golf Liaison Panel at the Welsh College of Horticulture.

An astute man, he didn't want his words in print in case he was 'misquoted', he was a mind of information!

If ever in the history of the game of golf that a Major Championship should be dedicated to a greenkeeper it is the 2006 British Open at Hoylake in the memory of Derek Green, one of the most significant greenkeepers of the 20th Century.

Dave Goodridge, Head Greenkeeper,
Denbigh Golf Club

A Tribute to Derek Green

Anyone who has had the pleasure to meet Derek Green will agree with me that he will be sadly missed not only as a Course Manager, but also as a great friend to many people throughout the UK.

I first met Derek 20 years ago when he became Course Manager at the Royal Liverpool Golf Club. My first impression of him was this wild man with a beard and a pipe sticking out of his mouth. 20 years on and that is still the impression that comes into my mind when I think of him and I am sure that all the people he has met over the years will know what I mean.

He was the most knowledgeable greenkeeper I have ever met and he was always willing to pass the time away with you sharing this knowledge. The one thing he always told me was that in this game you are always learning something new everyday, no one knows everything.

In 2006 he was to have reached the pinnacle of his career by hosting the British Open. Sadly this is now not to be. Whatever happens between now and the Open, I hope that all concerned will realise that Derek and his men have completed almost all the work required and that they will host the event in his memory.

My thoughts go out to his family and friends at what is a very sad loss. I will never forget what he did to help me in my career, and I am sure there are many people out there who feel the same.

I am not a religious person, but if there is life beyond this world then it is now going to have the best golf course ever.

Derek, Rest In Peace.

Chris Peddie, Head Greenkeeper,
Wallasey Golf Club

YOUR LETTERS ARE REQUESTED!

Send to: Scott MacCallum, Editor, Greenkeeper International, BIGGA HOUSE, Aldwark, Alne, York YO61 1UF, or email them to: scott@bigga.co.uk

Letters continued on page 33...