

50 Years of Greenkeeping

It's unusual, nowadays, for an individual to find a career and industry they enjoy enough to spend 50 years of their life working within.

Les Easthope of Hillsborough Golf Club, Sheffield, is set to retire this December after 50 years service. He left school at 15 and went straight into an Assistant Greenkeeper position. GI found out why Greenkeeping can be a career for life...

What age were you when you started greenkeeping?

"I came to Hillsborough straight from school at the age of 15."

What was your last position at the club?

"I have been an Assistant Greenkeeper for all the 50 years I have worked here."

What first attracted you to the industry?

"I wanted to work outdoors, having gone to look down the mines when I was at school - I didn't fancy that."

What is it about greenkeeping that you enjoy the most?

"Fresh air and also you get to perform a wide variety of jobs. I also enjoy working on the machinery."

Do you play golf? If so, what is your handicap?

"No, I've never had time to play anybody at the club since I first started working there."

It's unusual, nowadays, for someone to stay in the greenkeeping industry for so long. Why have you chosen to stay in the same career and golf club for 50 years?

"It's been a big part of my life, having never been married you can say I have been married to the job."

Do you feel a certain sense of loyalty to Hillsborough GC?

"Yes they showed a lot of loyalty to me when I first started work there, so it is only right for me to do the same."

You must have seen a few greenstaff come and go at the club, have your fellow greenkeepers contributed to your staying at the club?

"Everyone who has worked with me I have got on well with, it is very strange now, when I first started it was sickles to cut the tee banks now its ride on mowers, it was overgreens to cut the greens and now its ride on triple mowers, and its gone from wheel barrows to four wheeled trucks - all the changes I have seen have definitely been for the better."

Will you spend some time playing on the course, now that you have retired?

"No, with having arthritis in my back it is now difficult to walk but I will make time to come and see the greenstaff."

What would your advice be to someone thinking about getting into the greenkeeping industry?

"It's now a good career for someone who is willing to work hard and listen to any advice given to them."

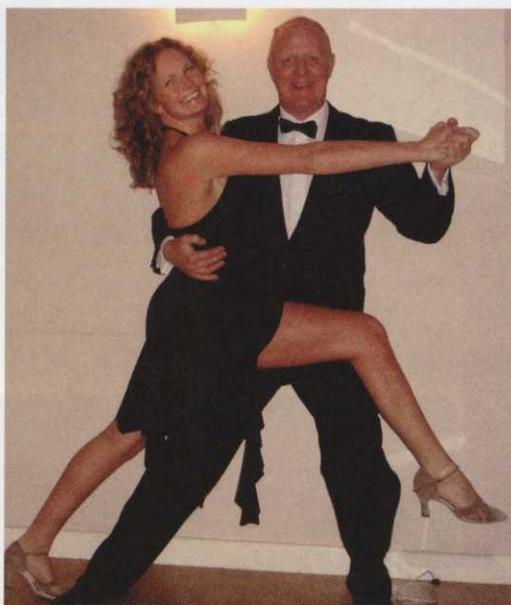
How do you plan to spend your retirement?

"I will be spending time doing jobs in the house and garden."

HOBBIES

GI has begun a new feature, finding out what greenkeepers get up to in their spare time. Here's something you didn't know about me...

Name: Graeme Macdonald
Age: 48
Club: Newark GC
Position: Head Greenkeeper
Hobby: Ballroom Dancing



When and how did you get introduced to dancing?

"When I got divorced eight years ago I was introduced to dancing. I was single at the time and it was a great way of meeting people, especially females."

What is it about dancing that appeals to you?

"It's a great way of keeping fit, meeting people and socialising. It's fun, energetic and a stylish partner dance. It is now the fastest growing partner dance in the UK. It is easy to learn with over a 1000 moves and you can dance to any style of music from 1950s right up through to today's hot rhythms."

Where does it take place?

"It takes place all over the country, but I dance regularly in Nottingham. But at weekends I can be dancing all over the country from Blackpool Tower to Hammersmith, London."

How many years have you been dancing?

"Eight years."

Have you entered any competitions or do you intend to?

"I have been entering competitions for five years and am the reigning Scottish Champion, which I won in September in Edinburgh. I am also part of the UK Team Champions from Nottingham which we have won for the last two years and I have been a UK Finalist many times."

Have you been following Strictly Come Dancing?

"Yes, I am a keen follower of Strictly Come Dancing and have been lucky enough to dance with two of the professional lady dancers from the series, Nicole Cuttler and Erin Bourg."

Do you or your fellow greenkeepers have an unusual hobby?

If so, get in touch, email: melissa@bigga.co.uk or tel: 01347 833800.