

FORMER GREENKEEPER OF THE YEAR TAKES HIS CURTAIN CALL!



David with Roger Fitton

Thorpe Wood and Orton Meadows Golf Courses at Peterborough say goodbye and happy semi-retirement to their Superintendent Greenkeeper David Walden after 34 years.

David started working for the Peterborough Development Corporation in 1972, planting the first trees for Thorpe Wood golf course. He was offered the job of greenkeeper at Thorpe Wood in 1973. The golf course, designed by Peter Alliss and Dave Thomas, opened for the first time in 1975 and David was put in charge of a team of greenkeepers some of whom are still lovingly tending the course today.

In 1979 he oversaw the building of the 12 hole Pitch and Putt course at Orton Meadows. This was followed in 1980 with the overseeing of the start of the construction of the 12 hole golf course at Orton

Meadows which was designed by Dennis and Roger Fitton.

Following the wind-down of the Peterborough Development Corporation, David was made redundant in 1987. The golf courses became part of Nene Park Trust and the management of both Thorpe Wood and Orton Meadows was taken on by Dennis and Roger Fitton who were already installed as golf professionals having moved to Peterborough from Walsall. David was employed by them to run the two courses with two teams of greenkeepers under him.

David has always been a champion for education and training of greenkeepers and himself gained qualifications in turfgrass management, an HNC in sportsturf management and a Master Greenkeeping qualification.

In 1994 at the age of 50, David was awarded the ICI Premier Greenkeeper of the Year Award after being nominated by the East of England British and International Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA). This gained him a trip to the mighty San Francisco golf exhibition. David has also set and marked examination papers for the Institute of Groundsmanship and college courses all over the country and has completed an HNC course in greenkeeping.

David won't be sitting idle in his "retirement" but will be engaged in passing on his vast experience of specialist machinery to a new age of up and coming greenkeepers.

DRIVETIME SHOW

Master Greenkeeper, David Murdoch enjoyed a once in a lifetime experience when the Chris Evans Drivetime radio show was broadcast from his parent's (Mary and Bob Murdoch) house in Auchterderran.

The show was the first of four that the Radio 2 DJ chose to broadcast from people's homes in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and England.

The basis was that all the names of cities, towns and villages from these countries were put into a tombola and then one was drawn out from each country. Residents of the place drawn out were then invited to put their case forward as to why the show should be broadcast from their house.

"My dear old mum did this and the rest is history," said David who is Course Manager at Liphook GC in Hampshire, "The day itself was great fun, although a bit chaotic. All in all a wonderful experience."



Chris Evans with David's girlfriend Deb.

GTC PLAYS KEY ROLE IN FLEXIBLE LEARNING

The GTC has played a major role in the development of higher education learning within the greenkeeping sector.

This development is a direct response to requests from the industry to help further the lifelong learning plan supported by the government for industry, according to Wayne Roberts, curriculum leader for greenkeeping and horticulture at Elmwood College, Fife.

The interest in the delivery of higher education into the greenkeeping and sportsturf industry has been met with the development of HNC, HND, Foundation Degree and First Degree courses in Golf Course management and Turf Science.

"What makes these courses interesting is the accessibility to these programmes of study through the various options of delivery that are available to the industry to ensure that both the qualification aims are met and the 'employability' of the learner is maintained through the balance of academic understanding linked with vocational experience and career relevance," said Wayne.

Greenkeepers can now study with the provider of their choice, through full time, part time and distance learning options and at an agreed time scale that meets the needs of the learner, the industry and the awarding body.

The main benefit to the individual is that distance is no barrier to learning with HE qualifications now available online. With learning

packages only a click away, the office at work, the spare bedroom at home or the kitchen table can become the classroom as well.

"This is an important development because it now provides access to learning for Greenkeepers and Course Managers who cannot give up employment to study full time but wish to continue their professional development," Wayne said.

"But just as much as the learner gets the direct benefit of the qualification, the employer and the golf course also benefit too, by providing the existing workforce with access to up to date knowledge and skills which can only help to benefit the long term of interests of the business.

"Here at Elmwood College we are continually working closely with the greenkeeping industry, the GTC and other industry partners to develop a range of HE qualifications that meet the needs of the industry and yet are flexible enough to provide bespoke learning opportunities for individuals undertaking the programme" he added.

One student who has benefited from the HE programme at Elmwood College is Mark Bewley. Mark, originally from Dublin, was working in the south of France when he came to Elmwood to complete his HNC in Golf Course Management - While studying he also received an R&A scholarship of £1,000 for being an outstanding student.

The HNC course helped to open up new opportunities for Mark including joining Gerry Byrne

and his crew at the K Club in Co. Kildare, hosting the European Open and of course the recent Ryder Cup.

"But what of the future?" said Wayne. "With an HE qualification supporting extensive vocational experience, Mark is returning to his native Dublin to be an assistant at the Grange Golf Club and taking on new responsibilities including the installation of new irrigation system under the direction of Head Greenkeeper, Jon Palmer another successful Elmwood HNC Graduate."

The success that Mark has enjoyed helps to highlight the important link that must be developed between the qualification, the industry and the progression opportunities that it can provide.

As HE qualifications improve not only their relevance and recognition within the industry, so will the opportunities available to graduates.

Over the past five years several students studying on our HE programmes have gone on to not only develop their professional qualifications through BSc and MSc programmes at university, but also develop and widen their vocational experience.

They have successfully obtained key industry positions such as course managers and developed into new industry areas such as course consultancy and research and development where their first hand knowledge and experience of the greenkeeping industry makes for an extremely employable asset to the organisation.