

SHINING BEACON BILL RETIRES

A BIGGA stalwart, and great friend to many in the industry, Bill Paterson has retired after 50 years in greenkeeping. Bill has spent 28 years at Beaconsfield Golf Club in Buckinghamshire. Here Billy McMillan pays tribute to his friend...

Starting at Old Ranfurly golf club in the early sixties as an apprentice Billy was soon hooked on greenkeeping. He was number 27 on the register of young greenkeepers taking up a formal education in Scotland at that time. Once qualified he soon took on the role of Deputy at Old Ranfurly then Paisley.

In the early seventies he became Head Greenkeeper at the Randpark Golf Club in South Africa - not only was this a big move for him personally but also a massive learning curve in the management of warm season grasses.

Creeping bent grass was on his agenda, and with great initiative he managed to get his hands on some seed, introducing it into his greens during dormant conditions to give his membership quality surfaces year round.

This was not a simple thing to achieve with sanctions going on at that time. He actually managed to have this grass seed smuggled in on the back of his then club captain's business of importing American cars with a trunk full of bent grass seed stashed away for a timely door to door delivery.

In the mid to late seventies home beckoned - maybe he missed the charm of wet feet and a cold wind - and after a short spell as Head Greenkeeper at the Vale of Leven Golf Club he was off to the acclaimed Royal Dornoch Golf Club. During his time there he enjoyed presenting the course for many fine



Bill has been succeeded by Stuart Langhorn who spent eight years as Course Manager at Aldwickbury Park Golf Club.

Stuart commented: "I've been seeking a new challenge and this is a great opportunity at a stunning golf course - their ambitions match mine. I've spent six weeks working alongside Bob. When you join somewhere new you always wonder whether it's going to be a little awkward working with the person you're replacing, but it couldn't be further from that here. Bill is a top bloke.

"His job here has been his life. He's been much more than a greenkeeper. He's arranged Christmas parties, he puts the Christmas trees up, he's done so much work with the Artisan section... you name it, he's been involved in it.

"I intend to continue the terrific work Bill has done here. I'll be continuing the woodland management project he started and also the layout of the new paths. Then it's likely to be working on the greens, bringing up the putting speed, and reviewing and investing in our machinery fleet."



amateur tournaments such as the Scottish Ladies, Home Internationals and the British Amateur.

In 1985 he decided to see what England had to offer and took up his role as Head Greenkeeper at Beaconsfield.

An avid reader, Billy boasts at home a collection of books that would be the envy of many, with publications from Kipling, Dickens, and Robert Service as well as greenkeeping to choose from.

He not only has a marvellous ability to recall information but can recite it in such a way you are hooked and entertained, ensuring it will be an experience to remember for anyone that has had the pleasure to be in his company.

I remember lying in bed at many a BTME with the silence being broken with a rendition of some Scottish ballad drifting through the night as Billy returned to his room.

Now you may think a greenkeeping career was all that he aspired to - but you would be way off the mark. He has lived a well-rounded life and for many years has taken part in local church events and runs a youth club for all the local children in his village.

Serving time on greenkeeping committees he has been hugely instrumental in the establishment and development of the BB&O Section in recent years. With a spell as chairman of this section he has always been quietly working away to better the role of the modern day greenkeeper in the area.

A wonderful career is at an end, so from all your greenkeeping friends we wish you Billy, your wife Eileen, your children Fiona and Billy and all your grandchildren a happy retirement filled with many adventures yet to come.

GOVERNMENT ARRANGES ASH GRANTS (BUT NOT FOR GOLF COURSES)

The recent Chalara Management Plan released by DEFRA lacks any uniform and equitable assistance for landowners and organisations affected by the disease.

Grants will be given for removal, destruction and disposal of recently planted common ash and replanting with alternative tree species, but this only applies to a selective swathe of counties (Cornwall, Devon, Gloucestershire and up through the Midlands). The aim is to slow down east to west disease spread and help create a 'chalara free' zone in westernmost England. The Royal Forestry Society describes the plan as a 'postcode lottery' but worse still it excludes the amenity and landscape sector and therefore golf courses.

Simon Ellis, marketing director at Crowders Nurseries in Horncastle Lincolnshire, which currently holds 250,000 healthy ash trees, told Greenkeeper International:

"We are about to destroy the entire stock. They are unsalable and difficult to manage. Many are

up to ten years old which means a decade of investment down the drain with no compensation from government.

"This plan is selective, divisive, inequitable and unfair. Grant aid will only be available to forestry sector landowners with planted ash sites funded under the Rural Development Programme for England. It excludes the amenity and landscape sectors but it is they who buy our larger trees. I don't see why grants should only be given to the 'landed gentry' and withheld from entrepreneurs building and maintaining leisure complexes, golf courses and other sporting facilities."

Small trees planted by big forestry landowners are typically purchased at around 20 pence 'a throw'.

Simon and others in the nursery trade met with Defra and put forward specific plans to assist the amenity and landscape sectors, including golf courses, but this has clearly been ignored.

Dr Terry Mabbett



Grant aid for recently planted ash sites in high priority areas but none at all for golf courses. Courtesy of the Forestry Commission



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BRAVE ASA'S MARATHON MISHAP

Unlucky Asa English endured a torrid time at the recent Brighton Marathon after suffering an injury halfway through – but still managed to finish after limping 12 miles to the finishing line with a torn thigh muscle.

Asa and pal Greg Skinner ran the Brighton Marathon for charity last month, the fourth time Asa – Greenkeeper at Rothley Park Golf Club – has run the 26-mile course.

But disaster struck after 14 miles when he suddenly felt a searing pain in his left leg. However, determined not to let his chosen charity down, he insisted on finishing, and managed to drag himself across the finishing line in 3 hours 52 minutes. A scan later revealed a Grade Two muscle tear with doctors amazed he had managed to complete the course.

He said: "It was all going well and I thought I was on track to beat my personal best of 3 hours 23 minutes when I felt this really sharp pain out of nowhere. I've never suffered any injuries before so I thought I could just keep going.

"But it did become very hard work. I think the spectators must have thought I was suffering from Tourette's because I was swearing constantly due to the pain!"

Asa had been training for months up to the big day, which was watched by crowds of up to 150,000 people on the South Coast. He will now be restricted to certain less intensive tasks at his club until the injury heals.

He added: "It's frustrating, but these things happen. I won't be able to exercise for a month but I'll be back. There's life in the old dog yet!"

Asa was running for 'Miracles To Believe In' – a charity for autistic children. To donate to this worthwhile cause please visit www.miraclestobelievein.moonfruit.com or contact Asa on 07790 574075.

We're always on the lookout for stories involving BIGGA members. So if you've won a sporting trophy, achieved a qualification or have a humorous story to tell contact Steve Castle at BIGGA HQ on steve.castle@bigga.co.uk and you may be featured in GI!

JANE JONES TO DEPART BIGGA

Sadly we are announcing the resignation of Jane Jones from her post as Regional Administrator for the South West/South Wales Region.

Jane has worked dedicatedly for BIGGA for eight and a half years, joining us in November 2004. She has been a hugely valuable employee and we are sad to lose her.

Jane still intends to work within the golf industry on a more local level. Jane's last day will be 31 May 2013 and we would like to wish her all the best in her new ventures.



GI SURVEY

Thanks to everyone who completed our recent Greenkeeper International survey – we had a fantastic response with over 200 members letting us know what they would like to see in the mag. You will notice changes to the magazine as a result from this edition onwards, hopefully reflecting some of the feedback we have had. If you have any further comments or suggestions on anything regarding GI, please contact steve.castle@bigga.co.uk

The most widely read sections of the magazine proved to be technical greenkeeping articles, recruitment and course features/case studies. Some of the least popular sections included the Learning & Development and Membership pages which have led us to revamp these areas with further changes coming in future months. Again, technical detail was the greatest attraction when deciding whether to read an article, followed by human interest, and location in the magazine.

We received a wide range of feedback and suggestions to some of the other questions on how to improve aspects of the magazine – and you will start to see these reflected in Greenkeeper International over the coming months. As always, the magazine is for members – so if you have any suggestions, comments or constructive (!) criticisms contact Steve Castle at BIGGA HQ.

SANDY'S BLOG AT GRANGE-OVER-SANDS

We're continuing to receive details of blogs greenkeepers have started across the UK – proving furthermore that blogging can be a very useful tool for communicating with golf club members, visitors and even committees.

This month we focus on Cumbria – specifically Grange-over-Sands Golf Club. Head Greenkeeper Rob Sandilands started his blog just a couple of months ago and has already noticed some significant benefits – such as the site initiating conversations with interested members. The blog is also well promoted on the club's website, something which would be welcomed at other clubs! Rob said:

"The blog was started in February, mainly because I know how much more support and understanding you get as a greenkeeper when you keep people informed of what you are doing and why you are doing it. It's a 21st century version of a noticeboard or newsletter. As



a club, we are in a process of change in many departments, among them greenkeeping and marketing, so setting up the blog was something I felt would better connect us with

the membership and also act as a good marketing tool for the club. We are also stepping up our efforts to maintain a presence on social networking sites such as Twitter and

Facebook for daily updates on course condition.

"People react very positively to being kept informed - not only what and why you have done certain things but what you plan to do and why. You can also include before and after pictures of projects and links to other articles on things such as winter greens and flooding which have been very topical lately!

"Members have been constantly stopping me and commenting on how much they enjoy the blog, many of whom I've never properly spoken to before. Other friends within the industry have commented on how they find similar benefits from their own blogs and had good things to say about ours."

You can check out Rob's blog for yourself at www.gosggreenkeeping.blogspot.co.uk. Keep the blog suggestions coming in - email steve.castle@bigga.co.uk with details of yours and we may feature you in the magazine!

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