

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.