

BRIEFS

Landscape firm undertakes restoration after TV filming

By Magda Ibrahim

Fans of new BBC drama *Sunrunners* will have been following the tribulations of a group of people left after a virus wipes out most of the human population. But when filming was over, the action truly began for Bolton landscaping and grounds maintenance firm Country Landscapes. The firm was tasked with restoring the grounds of historic Forside Hall — where the TV series is set — to its pre-filming standard.

On the programme, the group of survivors are shown producing their own food after 2 1/2 century comforts have disappeared.

The lawns had been dug up to allow space for the characters to grow food and keep chickens.

Country Landscapes managing director Lee Thorne said he was thrilled when the BBC asked his firm to carry out the work.

"The BBC actually found us through the internet and a lot of our work comes through our website," he said. "It's not every day



Restoration team (L-R): Martin, Thorne and Doll at Forside Hall

you get a call from the BBC." The Lancashire house dates back to 1880 when it was owned by a local mill family, the Pomts. Its established 6.7ha grounds are made up of 3.2ha of meadowland and 3.4ha of gardens and mature woodland.

"There was quite a lot of work to be done after the filming as a lawn had been dug up and used for hens and a vegetable garden," said Thorne, who worked with operations supervisor Anita Martin and landscape engineer Mick Doll on the project.

"The lawns and entrances were in a mess, but with some quality

turf and hard work we got the gardens looking beautiful again."

The team spent three days carrying out the work, which included laying 150sq m of turf.

"It was time-consuming because we had to match it to the existing lawns," Thorne added. "It is a historic house so we had to be quite sensitive. There was quite a lot of work to be done on compaction and that was all done by hand."

"The shrubs needed bringing up to scratch, too, as the owners hadn't been allowed to prune while the filming was going on."

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Grounds and garden maintenance is required at around 30 sites in London as part of a three-year contract. Central & North West London NHS Foundation Trust needs a contractor to carry out grass-mow hedge-cutting, weed control and tree surgery. The work, which covers sites in the boroughs of Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, Brent, Harrow and Hillingdon, also includes leaf and litter clearance, and flowerbed and shrubbery maintenance. The deadline is 12 January. Contact Adam New, Central & North West London NHS Foundation Trust, Greater London House, Hampstead Road, London NW1 7DY. Email adam.new@nhs.net or call 020 3214 5958.

Landscape design aggregates supplier Long Rake Spar has helped create the new mill garden at Stillingfleet Lodge in Yorkshire. Long Rake Spar supplied Stillingfleet Lodge with apricot, sandstone and green granite gravel, which was mixed together to give a variation of colour.



Throughout the garden, garden designer Lizzie Tully said: "The mix of the three coloured stones highlights the modern design and complements the structure of the diamond-cut sandstone." Inspiration for the concept of the mill garden came from Stillingfleet Lodge owner Vanessa Cook, who wanted a structural, minimalist space that provided a peaceful retreat for visitors. She said: "The mill garden provides a peaceful garden where visitors can come to sit and relax. The mix of stones used really makes the garden come to life."

JOB DONE Creation of play equipment

Project Creating play kit for a Kettering school
Client Brambleside Community Primary School
Contractor Wicksteed Playscapes

Wicksteed Playscapes has involved a group of school pupils in the design of a new piece of playground kit. Pupils from Brambleside Community Primary School, Kettering, had the chance to turn designers in a revamp of their playground.

Northamptonshire-based Wicksteed led a design project with 33 pupils from the school to find out what they would like to see in their playgrounds.

The project began in February with a visit to the Wicksteed factory in Kettering to see how the design and manufacturing processes work.

The nine- to 11-year-olds then let the creative juices flow and came up with a unique piece of play equipment, which they named Tropical Breeze.

Wicksteed managing director Phil Holden said the process had been a huge success: "We're talking directly with the kids and their input to design and produce development is fantastic."



After creating a design concept, the pupils presented their ideas to a panel of judges including local entrepreneur Julie White, who has appeared on BBC show *Dragons' Den*.

Teacher Andrew Wood said: "This has been really exciting venture for us and the winning design team is very excited to see their piece of play equipment turned from a model into full size."

Wicksteed manufactured the winning design — a colourful roundabout — and it has been installed at the school. The firm has set up Play Teams to work with schools across the country on similar projects.

Wessex Housing Partnership is letting grounds maintenance contracts worth £223,000. The four-year contracts have been divided into three lots covering Basingstoke and Deane, north of Basingstoke, and south of Basingstoke. There will be the possibility of extending for a further year. The work includes grass cutting, weed control, creating flowerbeds, hedge and shrub maintenance and litter collection. The deadline is 16 January. Contact Linda Agnew, Wessex Housing Partnership, Saxon Court, Sarum Hill, Basingstoke RG21 8SA. Email linda.agnew@whpa.org.uk or call 01256 302338.

Aberdeenshire Council requires an extensive list of kit including 58 mowers and 93 brushcutters. The contract also includes supply and delivery of seven hedgecutters, four leafblowers, five power pruners and six chainsaws. Aberdeen City Council also needs similar items of kit. The deadline is 28 January. Contact Director of Law and Administration, Aberdeenshire Council, Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen AB11 6SG. Call 01224 665650.