



STRI's tribute to Dr James B Beard

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STRI Group is saddened to hear of the passing of one of the true pioneers of turfgrass management Dr James Beard.



Dr Richard Gibbs, STRI's Head of Sports Surface Design and current [International Turfgrass Society](#) (ITS) historian, who knew Dr Beard well, shares his thoughts.

I was slightly stunned to hear that Dr James B Beard passed away on 14th May, aged 82. Dr Beard was a hugely influential figure in the international turfgrass industry, a true research pioneer who is widely credited with turning turfgrass management into a science.

Brought up in Bradford, Ohio, Dr Beard graduated with a bachelor's degree in agronomy from Ohio State University in 1957 and then studied for his masters in crop ecology and doctorate in turfgrass physiology at Purdue.

He developed the Michigan State programme into one of the USA's top turf colleges and then spent almost 20 years working at College Station at Texas A&M University. There, he founded the International Sports Turf Institute and served as its director and chief scientist.

He is perhaps best known in the UK as the author of many turfgrass 'bibles' including Turfgrass Science and Culture, and Turf Management for Golf Courses.

Perhaps less well known to the turfgrass industry here is that Dr Beard was one of the founder members of the International Turfgrass Society (the ITS) which held its first International Turfgrass Research Conference in Harrogate in 1969, assisted by former STRI Director John Escritt.

This conference was the culmination of three years of work to develop enhanced communication among international turfgrass scientists.

The ITS is still going strong today. The most recent meeting was held in 2017 at Rutgers, USA, the last to be attended by Dr Beard.

He remained the Society's official historian until 2007, a role which I have now taken over. However, I first met Dr Beard at the 6th International Turfgrass Research Conference in 1989 in Tokyo as a young research scientist.

It was a very formal meeting – I had been invited to chair one of the sessions he was presenting at – nothing like being dropped in at the deep end! But like many true professionals he guided me through the session and I have remained involved with the ITS ever since.

He will be sadly missed by the turfgrass industry.