

Finally, on 21st June - almost three months later - the vet gave Billy a clean bill of health and he could be released back onto the estate. Billy has since been seen on numerous occasions and is doing well. So, when next you see a tortoise, look to see if there is a scar at the back end of its carapace; if it's there, that's Billy.



Fig 8: The wound healing well



Fig 9: Billy getting more active and well on the road to a full recovery



Fig 10: The wound has now grown closed and Billy could be released

A big thanks to:

The member who reported Billy's injury; the amazing staff at the Family Vet Fourways; Shaun and Colin for their care; and finally to the Club for paying the vet bills.

*It is possible, even likely, the cut came from a mechanical cutter. Golf Data staff exercise extreme caution when grass cutting and, if aware of it, will immediately report any injury of any kind. If this injury was from grass cutting, it's the first incident in all the years that tortoises have been resident at Woodmead.



Fig 11: Billy spotted near the gate entrance a few weeks after release from the holding area



Fig 12: Billy seen walking the Fairways on Rocklands, 2 October 2021



THE COUNTRY CLUB
JOHANNESBURG



A Tortoise called Billy



On the 25th of March 2021, a member and his son were on a walking trail at CCJ Woodmead when they came across a badly injured tortoise. Its hard carapace was not enough to stop a deep cut penetrating all the way through into its flesh. The cause of the gash remains unclear*.



Fig 1: The open wound with maggots

Management was alerted and Shaun Caycraft (Woodmead's F&B Manager), collected the tortoise and rushed it off to the Family Vet Fourways practice. The vet asked Shaun if the tortoise had a name and the first name that came to Shaun's mind was 'Billy'. The vet said she had never seen such a severe injury to a tortoise and was not sure if Billy would survive. However, rather than euthanase poor Billy, the decision was made to treat the wound and give Billy a fighting chance.



Fig 2: The cleaned wound

Maggots were already present in Billy's wound. These were cleaned out, the area was disinfected and sealed against further infection. Billy stayed at the vet for a week under careful observation. Billy's age was estimated to be between 30-40 years old.



Fig 3: The wound sealed against infection



Fig 4: The wound bandaged

On the 2nd of April Shaun received a call from the vet and was told that Billy was making good progress and that Shaun could fetch him. The vet wanted to see Billy each week for the next 6 weeks, so Colin Wiseman (Woodmead's Maintenance Manager), set up a shelter in his garden so that Billy's well-being could be further monitored.



Fig 5: Getting some fresh air and exercise

Each week Shaun took Billy to the vet who was amazed at how well the flesh wound was healing and how new growth on the carapace was closing over the cut. The vet asked that Billy be brought back every two weeks for another six weeks. Colin's job as nursemaid wasn't over



Fig 6: A shelter for Billy in Colin's Garden



Fig 7: Time for another visit to the Vet