

THAT WAS THE WINTER THAT WAS

George Herrington recalls last season's troubles as a warning of what we may have to expect soon.

One can safely say that last winter was one which all greenkeepers want to forget and one that we hope we shall never see the likes of again. In the middle of December, our course was in perfect condition and we cut the greens ready for Christmas golf. Then, soon afterwards, came the frost, day and night, with cold winds into the bargain. Finally came the snow, which I was glad to see, as I thought it would keep off the cold winds.

If the snow had arrived before the long days of frost, I do not think courses would have taken any harm, but there was too much frost in the ground before it came and this remained in the ground for many weeks after the snow had gone.

After about eleven weeks, the snow started to thaw and the only place where there was any sign of damage was where people had walked on the snow and caused scald marks. We also had a little fusarium where the greens and semi-greens joined, but none at all on the greens.

Suffocated

It was with the thaw that the trouble began. There was still so much frost in the ground that the water from the melting snow could not get away and so formed big pools on the greens. With more frost, these were then frozen over for days on end, keeping the air from the grass. Thus, in cases where the grass had been cut close, the greens did not get any air and the grass died back. On the other hand, courses which did not cut so low were better off, because the air was able to get at the grasses more easily. This would seem to be borne out in our district, as none of the courses with long grass on the greens were hit at all badly, whilst we only had trouble on the greens and on odd semi-greens where caddy-cars had worn the grass rather thin and not where the grass was long.

Henry Cotton stated in the "*News of the World*" that Lead Arsenate caused

the trouble at Birkdale, through being put on too late just before the bad weather. He should, however, get his facts straight, as I had a talk with D. Pate, Head Greenkeeper at Birkdale, and he told me he put his Lead Arsenate on in October, but had to water it in. You may remember the weather was very dry at this time last year. I dressed all my greens with lead at 1 oz. per sq. yd. early in October and began to wonder when the rain would come to wash it in, but long before December our greens were back to normal.

Whitewash

After the snow, when the frost was coming out of the ground, I agree it did bring the lead up with it and if you walked on the greens, it came to the top like white-wash. I do not think, however, that it had anything to do with the grass "going-off" as other well-known courses that had not used lead were affected and were just as 'bald' on their greens.

For once, our Pros had something to make excuses about. While they were going to warmer climates for the good of their health, we greenkeepers were striving against the worst possible weather to get our greens back into shape. A lot of people would do well to realise that greenkeepers cannot beat the weather, but only try to work with it and help where we can.

What I should like someone to do is to give a piece of land to make a golf course on, get all the leading Pros to work on it, pay them greenkeepers' wages and work their hours. I suggest they put the Henry Cottons in charge, the Dai Rees as foremen, and the Harry Weetman's to pull up trees, and to borrow a few of Max's old clothes to keep off the birds when they have sown it. Then, when they get it to perfection, if they ever do, call on the first eight in the 'Open' usually foreign players, to show how to play on it.