

NEW COURSE NOTES

W Milton, Assistant Greenkeeper at Downfield Golf Club, describes some of the jobs and problems in making new holes when his course was remodelled last year

DUE to the ever-increasing need for more houses, about threequarters of the course on which I work is being taken over for housing, adjacent land being constructed as a new course, using only three of the original holes.

The land originally consisted of woodland and pasture. The first procedure was the ploughing up, harrowing and sowing of the pasture land with a mixture of grass seed suitable for fairways. This was done about four years ago. It was then left to grow naturally, except for winter grazing by sheep for two years. While this was going on, woodcutters began cutting down the trees, huge beech, oak and sycamore, leaving barren gashes through the trees, except for one or two fine specimens left at strategic points designated by the architect responsible for drawing up the plans, to which the constructors have to work.

About now the greenkeepers begin to realise the tremendous amount of planning and careful measuring that has gone into the drawing of the plans of the course and the greens and the amount of work involved. After the woodcutters are gone, a new machine appears, a huge bulldozer with long steel teeth starts to dig out the roots of the trees, a few smaller ones also arrive and begin work on the greens. They remove the top soil from the area of the greens and put it in spoil heaps, then start to shape the contours of the greens in the sub-soil.

While all this was going on we had been continuing our normal duties on the old course, with the exception of the head greenkeeper, who was fully occupied supervising operations and seeing that the correct procedure was being carried out in accordance with the plans.

With the addition of extra staff it was now our turn to take part in the proceedings.

We cut out three temporary greens which would be played until the new course was finished and ready for play. We also had to remove dykes which crossed fairways and we carted the stones to the site of the new club house, also under construction, to be used as bottoming for the car park. With a new tractor and gang unit the fairways and semi-rough were cut out of the now well-established grass and kept at a height of three inches for the rest of the season.

By now the roots had been extracted and buried in an old quarry nearby and another job was in progress. A stream which was piped through the fields and flowed into ponds on the original course, still incorporated in the new one, was made into an open ditch winding its way across six fairways before it ran into a sluice-box where it could be run into the ponds or diverted into another ditch which is also a feature of the course.

We greenkeepers now started to clear the fairways through the woods of stones and roots which had been torn up by bulldozers and discs in the process of cultivation. This continued throughout the remainder of the season and I would not like to estimate how many loads were carted. But we filled a large part of the quarry left for this purpose and we must have shifted hundreds of tons of material.

I would now like to point out a mistake which was made. We are making a nine-hole par three course ourselves, also in woodland. Instead of tearing it up with bulldozers, we ploughed it and although it was rough going we did not have a fraction of the stones to clear and it was much more easily prepared for sowing.

The end of the season was approaching and the contractors were stopping until spring as conditions were getting too wet. By now the greens were shaped out and six had been covered with a 6 in. layer of clinker plus a 9 in. layer of top soil, taking care not to go on to the greens with tractors, at this or any

other stage of the operation, as this compacts the top soil and possibly breaks drainpipes which are also in the greens and most essential if the greens are to be properly cared for. After making a few tees in the same manner, except that they were turfed, winter was upon us and we all know what last winter was like, but it started us off on a new job which kept us busy all winter.

With seven of the fairways and two greens being in the woodland, there was a lot of undergrowth, branches and dead trees to be cut down and cleaned up. So with axes, saws and fires, we kept ourselves warm. There was a lot of limbing to be done along fairways, round greens and also trees which were left as hazards. This was often quite tricky, but by using a rope tied round the trunk, we were soon clambering round the trees with great confidence and rather began to enjoy it as we saw the trees begin to take shape and look more symmetrical.

Spring arrived as usual and brought quite a few troubles on the old course,

it also brought back the contractors to resume where they had left off. They finished off the greens, then added peat, sand, manure, and incorporated it into the soil with a small rotovator, firmed and raked, then making any slopes blend as gently into the surroundings as possible and sowed the seed. By now we have brought the fairways into a finer cut and can see the course taking shape with a certain amount of pride in having been a part of the proceedings.

As I write now, the contractors have gone, most of the greens have been cut a few times at half-an-inch and also had a light roll. I am looking forward to next year eagerly, as we hope to open for play some time in the new season. We realise there is a lot to be done for many years yet, frequent top-dressings and some bunkers to introduce and also a lot of tree planting, to bring the perfection which we wish, but at the moment I would say it will be an excellent modern course of which we will be very proud.



turf to be proud of

Sutton's know about turf. And they operate a special advisory service for greenkeepers and those responsible for the condition of grass. But most important, Sutton's provide the right grass seed for any need, and know which seed is right for your soil your conditions. Buy your grass seeds, fertilizer, weedkiller and dressings from Sutton's.

don't fail to grow **Sutton's**

grass seeds

Post coupon now for FREE catalogue. To Sutton & Sons Ltd. Reading.

B.3.G.10

name

address

Please send me your free catalogue of grass seeds and turf specialities, also details of your Grass Advisory Service