

## POINTS ON URBAN GREENKEEPING

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A VERY large proportion of golf clubs in this country are situated in and around the big cities and towns. This is obviously due to the demand for golfing facilities within easy reach of the large populations, but from the greenkeepers' point of view many of the courses are too near the towns for comfort! Course maintenance under any circumstances is not without its particular local problems, but anyone thinking of leaving a pleasantly remote course and taking up a post at one of these suburban clubs should be aware, at least, of some of the local peculiarities which he is likely to encounter.

The popularity of golf still appears to be increasing year by year, and as a general rule new members have one aim in life, that being to play as much golf as they possibly can. When the greater proportion of club members live only a short distance from the course, this means they are out for a few holes during every spare hour. The very heavy play to which these courses are subjected means additional work for the green staff, and also there is greater interference with the maintenance operations due to play.

### Greater wear and tear

Tees wear out rapidly at short holes in particular, and since it is necessary to spread wear as much as possible there is often need for a programme of building new tees or extending existing ones. Very few clubs are able to say they have all the teeing space they require. Approaches, too, need a lot of work put into them if reasonable putting surfaces are to be obtained when these areas are used to accommodate winter frost holes. Managing a course well under these conditions is a real test of the head greenkeeper's ability to utilise the labour he has available, and complete all the seasonal tasks in good time relating each operation to the usual busy club calendar.

Whilst dealing with the subject of labour, good, trustworthy staff are very difficult to find since men who might be really interested in their work find the temptation of more comfortable working conditions and sometimes larger pay packets which can be found in local industry too great for them.

### Despoilers!

Better recreation facilities than ever before are provided these days for children and youths but, despite this, there are a few of the younger generation who prefer to "have fun" trespassing on golf courses. Activities range from malicious damage of one sort or another on greens (e.g. using them as bicycle racing tracks) to relatively harmless but infuriating pranks such as playing Cowboys and Indians with flag poles which are sometimes found firmly lodged high in a tree. Tee boxes disappear in large numbers but are seldom taken off the course, and can usually be found if time can be spent searching thoroughly enough in ditches and bushes.

Although most of the situations mentioned so far can, to some extent, occur on any course, a factor which is fairly strictly confined to built up areas is atmospheric pollution. At its worst, this can result in closely mown turf suffering so badly from the effects of toxic substances in the atmosphere that the grass cover becomes very weak and may even be killed out. A more usual state of affairs is for the soil to become acid fairly quickly and consequently the need for occasional liming is increased. There is only one accurate method of determining just when to apply lime and in what quantity. That is to have the soil tested at regular intervals. In addition, the fertiliser dressings require to be carefully balanced, but provided management is on the correct lines very good quality turf usually results since bent and

fescue do well where the soils lean towards acidity.

Where bent grows strongly fibre can form in the turf base very quickly, especially when creeping bent is present to any marked degree. Fibre build-up is, moreover, encouraged by the acid conditions and if all the troubles which excessively fibrous greens can bring are to be avoided extra attention has to be paid to mechanical treatment, e.g. both scarification and aeration.

An efficient watering system is an essential tool these days but unfortunately many of the water supplies are inadequate at the present time. Countless clubs lament the fact that over the years their mains water pressure gets lower and lower as each new factory or housing development scheme in the area grows, whilst the Water Board have difficulty in keeping up with the increased demands, and may forbid watering during droughts! A private supply is a useful alternative but is seldom available in an urban area. Even if a stream or well can be

utilised it is worthwhile having the water analysed to ensure that it does not contain undesirable substances before it is used on the greens. Otherwise there is, unfortunately, very little that can be done to solve the problem.

Another commodity often in short supply is good quality light loam top soil. When sufficient soil cannot be found on the course one is very fortunate indeed if good top soil can be purchased at reasonable cost, and usually every possible source of supply has to be explored before suitable material is found. If, however, a golden opportunity presents itself then a really large stock should be laid by. Whether in town or country, very few people are fortunate enough to find farmyard manure for compost making these days.

If, after considering these points you feel obsessed with the difficulties, don't forget that many advantages also are to be gained from living near the large towns — easy access to fertiliser firms, machinery agents, etc., and not forgetting schools, shops and public transport.

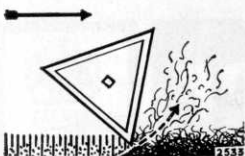
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