I recently read Fred Hawtree's article on Greenkeepers abroad and as one of the emigrants who took the plunge and left England to gain experience in foreign fields it was not only of great interest, but offered advice, others with similar ideas would be foolish to ignore!

Five years ago at the age of twenty-two I was given the chance of work at the Lausanne Golf Club as a Supervisor responsible for the work of ten staff. It was a very demanding position, but after two months I was offered the position of Head Greenkeeper. However for various reasons I turned the job down and returned to England to work at the Moor Allerton Golf Club near Leeds. For the next two years I applied for numerous Head Greenkeeper positions, but at the interview stage the story was always the same - I was too inexperienced and too young for such a responsible job.

Frustration forced me to the conclusion that if I was to make anything of my life, then I had to go abroad again.

To cut a long story short, incredible as it may seem, Lausanne were not satisfied with the Head Greenkeeper at that time and once again I was offered the job. This time I accepted and so began three of the happiest years of my life.

The most incredible aspect of working as a Greenkeeper in Switzerland is the climatic extremes. Taking last year as an example, the temperature during the winter months dropped as low as minus 40 degrees centigrade and in a twenty four hour period we had four feet of snow. At the other end of the scale during the months of July through to October, the temperature ranged from 80 to 100 degrees on the Fahrenheit scale and in this period we had only two days when it rained.

But what about the greens?

They have been asleep for months under a blanket of snow and we must now attempt to encourage growth to withstand the onslaught of the members and guests, all naturally looking for the perfect putting surface. Someone suggested 'yodelling' helps. It may do but it played hell with my tonsils!

Lausanne Golf Club is sixty-five years old, constructed in 1921, at an altitude of 3,000 feet above sea level. It is an eighteen hole Championship Course covering a total of 160 acres. The Swiss Open Championship has been staged three times, the Swiss Amateur on numerous occasions, the World Amateur once and this year we will host the European Seniors Championship.
Although I may not have appreciated tining once a year, which produced a situation of virtually no root growth in inches with extremely good results.

The next problem I had to solve with the greens was root growth, in my case a lack of it. Regular aeration as a turf management programme had not been followed for many years. The most the greens had received was a hollow tine once a year, which produced a situation of virtually no root growth at all on some greens and even the best of them showed only about an inch.

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The machinery we use at Lausanne is similar to the equipment used in the UK, the usual mowers and turf aerators supplied by such firms as Ransomes, Jacobsens, Toro and Cushman.

I have tried a variety of fungicides and fertilisers obtainable from Swiss distributors, but this year Supaturf will be supplying me with SSD for the greens and the May & Baker Rovral to combat fungal infection. In addition I am including the Farmura range of products as part of my turf management programme.

As at home, the golfers will soon let you know when the rough is too long; others will complain about the work rate when tee building and there is always the man who can never understand why the course is being dug up at the very spot his ball hits the fairway. He never appreciates the final result is for his benefit anyway.

As 1 said right at the beginning of this article my decision to come at Lausanne has given me three of the happiest years of my life, but it is a very demanding job and a great deal of hard work.

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