

This Issue

July 1984

Front cover: The new Ransomes Triplex 171 Mark 2 is designed to give a fine finish on greens - whatever the conditions. New wide grasscatchers give excellent collection and increased ground clearance at the rear of the chassis makes manoeuvring on plateau greens easier than ever before. Optional accessories are available to mow tees and green surrounds, verticut and spike - all fitted in seconds.

For further information on the competitively priced Triplex 171, contact a Ransomes dealer or Ransomes Sims & Jefferies PLC, Ipswich, IP3 9QG. ☎ Ipswich (0473) 712222. Telex 98174.

OUT ON THE COURSE	3
John Campbell returns to St Andrews and talks to Walter Woods	
IN MY OPINION	6
Fred Hawtree on golf course architecture	
PHOTO REPORT	8
How golf will be playing a part in the Olympics	
NEWS & VIEWS (EIGGA)	10
SALES & WANTS	11
NEWS & VIEWS (SIGGA)	12
EDUCATION IN THE LOTHIAN	14
A Scottish seat of learning...	
AT TIMES LIKE THIS GREENKEEPERS ARE UNSUNG HEROES...	17
Give due credit, says Jim Arthur	
EVOLUTION OF A SERIES	18
By Eddie Park	
NOTEBOOK	21
APPOINTMENTS	30
BUYERS' GUIDE	31

Publisher: A. Quick & Co Ltd

Managing Director: Michael Coffey

Editor: Robin Stewart

Advertisement Manager: Kay Moss

Contributors: Jim Arthur, John Campbell, Jack McMillan, Eddie Park, Donald Steel and Walter Woods

All advertising matter, editorial copy and correspondence should be sent to: *Greenkeeper*, 121-123 High Street, Dovercourt, Harwich, Essex CO12 3AP. Tel: 0255 507526

Subscription rates:

UK—£12 Continent and USA—£20 Eire—IR£17.50

Greenkeeper is published ten times a year. Printed in England by J.B. Offset, Marks Tey, Colchester, Essex.

Copyright: A. Quick & Co Ltd 1984

**Greenkeeper
has a new phone number
0255 507526**

Out·On·The·Course

Walter Woods

John Campbell went back to St Andrews where he witnessed the build-up to this month's Open Championship and talked at length to the man-in-charge—Walter Woods.



"Preparing for the Open Championship is a tremendous responsibility, which entails a great deal of hard work and long hours for the greenkeeping staff. You will understand what is involved, for you have had this kind of experience at St Andrews," Walter Woods, links supervisor, said as we talked together in the Links Trust office tucked in the lee of the Royal & Ancient clubhouse overlooking the impressive sweep of St Andrews Bay.

I had returned to *The Home Of Golf* and was interested to see what changes had taken place in the preparation and organisation for this great event. "I think you would find quite a difference since your last Open here in 1970," Walter added as we compared notes while all around us was a beehive of activity with huge prefabricated stands being erected to transform the 1st and 18th fairways on the Old Course into a gigantic auditorium for the big event.

Behind the weatherbeaten features and serious gaze of Walter Woods lurks a warm and friendly character who chooses his words carefully. He is extremely capable and with his wide knowledge of all aspects of golf course management he has proved himself to be fully competent to manage the most famous golf links in the world.

He is highly respected locally for his knowledge of the finer points of the game and his ability as a first-class golfer. He has also distinguished himself in many local club championships and two years ago reached the final of the Eden Tournament, which is one of Scotland's oldest amateur events.

I am probably one of the few people in greenkeeping who can understand how Walter feels on the eve of this important event as the pressure and enormous responsibilities begin to mount. "My main worry at the moment with the approach of the Open Championship is the weather, which has not been very kind to us this spring," he said. "It has been cold and dry, which is not conducive to good growth.

"Our second biggest problem is the amount of play.

Continued on page 15...

Out-On-The-Course Continued...



Walter beside the 11th tee stand.



An elevated view of the green for holes 8 and 10. The spectator stand is by the 9th tee.



In the St Andrews maintenance yard, assistant links supervisor John Philp, assistant engineer Walter Woods Jnr and links supervisor Walter Woods.

Being a public links we get a lot more play from visiting golfers during an Open Championship year at St Andrews, which means a great deal more wear and tear on the links just prior to the event. We usually close to the public about 14 days before the championship begins and while this gives the Old Course a little respite, we are still open to competitors for practice play, which entails a certain amount of extra work dealing with divots and repairing ball marks, etc, while the maintenance programme is being brought to a peak for the start of the championship.

"Apart from the intensity of course preparation, there are regular meetings with the championship committee. I have to be aware of all that is happening on the links at this time. It is necessary to be able to pinpoint where spectator stands, TV camera towers, marquees and a host of other amenities are going to be located, so that lorries and vehicles arriving with equipment can be directed to the designated site without the risk of damaging the playing areas or getting bogged down in a hidden bunker.

"Any digging operations have to be carefully supervised to ensure that the miles of electric cable we use for our irrigation system does not get damaged. My staff have to lay out the metal posts and light rope fencing around the perimeter of the Old Course for crowd control and we also mark out the fairway crossing points and erect the signs to indicate these spots for spectators. Most of this is a drill now and we have the benefit of long experience and local knowledge, which is great.

"I am fortunate to have a few older members on the staff who have had previous experience of past Opens at St Andrews and some of these men worked here during your period in office. You know George McLaren, our engineer, very well and I believe it was you who first engaged him to work on the links about 16 years ago. His knowledge of golf course machinery is without parallel. He does all our overhauls and repairs in his own fully equipped workshop and saves us a great deal of money.

"My son Walter assists him in the workshop and is gaining useful experience. My assistant John Philp has proved a valuable asset and is a good man to have around at a busy time like this to take some of the pressure off me. There are many other members of my staff who play a substantial part in the upkeep of the courses."

I told Walter that, during my time at St Andrews, we never tried to 'trick up' the Old Course for the Open Championship. "The same policy still applies today," he said. "We have never considered it necessary to make the course any more difficult than it is. The humps and hollows and speed of the greens can make ball control difficult without sticking pin positions in awkward spots behind bunkers, or narrowing down the width of the fairways, etc. Playing the Old Course from the championship tees adds to the strategy of play and if there is a little bit of wind, it will test the abilities of the world's best players when firm, fast surfaces are retained."

I asked Walter if he would like to have the Open at St Andrews every year. "I would not object to that if everything could be carefully controlled. To have the event here annually, we certainly could not allow the volume of play we presently have on the Old Course and that would lead to complications. This is a public links and we could not impose restrictions on the amount of play to preserve the course as I would wish.

Continued overleaf...

Out-On-The-Course Continued...

"In addition it takes about six or seven years to recover from the effects of heavy vehicle traffic, as well as the wear and tear caused by the crowds. There are many advantages in holding such major tournaments at the same place every year, as they do at Augusta with the US Masters. Augusta has permanent facilities and the layout is specially designed to cope with the crowds and offers every advantage of watching play in comfort. From a greenkeeping point of view, this is an ideal situation, for it is much easier to get on with the work of preparing the course when you have all the amenities permanently on site."

Walter agreed with me that clearing up after the Open is over entails a lot of work and is a critical phase of course conditioning to get everything back to normal as quickly as possible. This is always an anti-climax after the glamour and publicity of the event is over.

"After the last Open at St Andrews, I could not bear to watch the heavy lorries and other vehicles coming and going over the course, so I decided to take my wife out of town for the day. This gave me a welcome break. However, this year I will not be able to do the same. Immediately after the Open, we have to prepare for a series of short matches on the Old Course.

"To keep all our courses in tip-top condition for the many events that we have every year demands a constant supply of good compost and getting topsoil for this purpose and the many other jobs we do on the links is becoming increasingly difficult," Walter said.

"Nowadays, topsoil is a very valuable commodity to landscape contractors, horticulture, as well as golf courses and it's quite scarce around here. We have been using a sand and seaweed compost mixture, which seems admirably suited for our purpose. We try to obtain the seaweed from the district council when they are cleaning up the beaches and we mix this with sand.

"I have some topsoil in stock, but I believe it will become even more difficult to obtain as time goes on. Looking to the future, we may have to experiment with other materials, such as tree bark, as a source of compost.

"After the Open is over in July, we have to prepare for the Eden Tournament. The qualifying rounds are played on the New and Eden Courses, culminating in matchplay for the remainder of the week on the Eden. Then we have the Royal & Ancient Golf Club's autumn meeting and many local club events, as well as a host of other bookings by golf societies to cater for. Greenkeeping is never dull at St Andrews and there is not much time to relax when the season is under way!"



Walter Woods
as portrayed by
John Campbell.



George McLaren, links engineer, and Walter at the workshop entrance.



The famous black sheds are being restored within the grounds of the Old Course Hotel complex.



The 17th green with the Royal and Ancient clubhouse and Hamilton Hall in the background.