

BOOKS FOR GREENKEEPERS AND GREEN COMMITTEES

THE most frequent question I am asked by young greenkeepers is: where are the books we can study? I am afraid that until we have a definitive text book, we must seek our information where we can find it, not just in books specifically devoted to greenkeeping, but those on golf, golf courses and basic science, writes Eddie Park.

I started to collect books on golf and greenkeeping 35 years ago when the price of old books was measured in pennies. Prices have now escalated into hundreds, sometimes thousands, of pounds. Some books are strictly for collectors, but there are still bargains to be had.

In the case of books on golf greenkeeping, it is clear that the small potential market caused publishers to play safe and ask authors for a general volume covering also garden lawns or other sportsgrounds.

This has led to some unsatisfactory compromises and we must also bear in mind the fact that individual books reflect the fashionable methods of the time - using a steam roller (1906), spreading lime (1926) or agricultural granular fertiliser (1978) and these should be recognised as the blind alleys they undoubtedly were.

Country Life magazine was at the forefront in the early years but, naturally enough, the earliest books came from seedsmen and contractors. Martin Sutton produced a book of grasses (mainly agricultural) with beautiful illustrations over a century ago. The first edition of *Lawns And Sportsgrounds* appeared in 1892 and revised editions were still appearing seventy years later. A useful buy.

The same author added *Layout And Upkeep Of Golf Courses And Putting Greens* in 1906.

In these very early days, we find golf greenkeeping chapters in golf books, such as Gardon G. Smith in his *World Of Golf* (1898) and Horace G. Hutchinson in *Badminton Golf*.

Hutchinson, the first amateur

champion (from England), became a prolific writer and in 1906 published *Golf Greens And Greenkeeping*, which was a series of essays by the experts of the day. They range from greenkeepers to architects and, unfortunately, tend to contradict each other.

Sutton again contributed a chapter to Harold Hilton's *Royal & Ancient Game Of Golf* (1912), dealing with the establishment of golf courses on dry and sandy soils. Present-day research on this topic would find his methods of interest, including a nurse crop of rape to bring up fertility for germination.

Sutton also produced his *Book Of The Links* in 1912 and as the game gathered momentum, Reginald Beale, director of rival constructors Carter's, produced two books, *Lawns For Sport* (1924) and *The Book Of The Lawn* (1931). These are of more than passing interest, as they display the then perceived notion that agricultural liming would help golf courses (there's a marvellous picture of the Royal Mid-Surrey Golf Club being 'reconditioned' with the stuff).

We know now that all this caused such widespread damage that the Board of Greenkeeping Research was established. Just before this, Norman Hackett (the founding secretary of Bingley) produced a small book entitled *Soil Acidity - The Vital Importance Of Top Dressing* (1928), which sets out the 'cure' for over-liming - the acid theory. J. MacDonald and William Wood were other contractors and purveyors of fine turf who produced books in 1923 and 1934.

A.J. MacSelf and T.W. Sanders were, at times, editors of gardening magazines and produced books on *Lawns And Sports Greens* in the early 'thirties and *Lawns And Playing Fields* (1940) by F.J. Reed is often available and is a useful general reference.

In more recent times, there has been quite a spate of smaller books aimed ostensibly at the subject of lawns, but with some

useful information for golf greens. Authors such as David Pycraft (of Wisley), Roy Edwards and, most recently, Bob Palin (director of Sutton's) and George Shiels (Writtle College, Essex) have brought the subject up to date.

I fear that I've strayed from my subject of golf greenkeeping and I have omitted the real heavyweight in the field. *Practical Lawn Craft* by R.B. Dawson, the first director of Bingley, initially appeared in 1939 and continued through several editions. In his declining years, Dawson was ably assisted by W.H. Bartle (also of the STRI) and this book should find a place in everyone's library.

It does seem a bit dated in parts and it is not entirely helpful with our modern self-inflicted problems of Poa Annua domination and thatch, but it nevertheless contains a great deal of useful information.

Dawson also produced a Penguin Handbook on *Lawns* in conjunction with the Royal Horticultural Society and one of his former assistants I.G. Lewis wrote *TURF* in 1948. To close the Bingley connection, it should not be forgotten that Dawson's successor J.R. Escritt published an *ABC Of Turf Culture* in 1978 and *Lawns* in 1979.

The two most interesting American text books are *Turf Management* (1950) by H. Burton Musser and *Golf Course Management* (1982) by Jim Beard, both sponsored by the USGA. Although they show an increasing divergence from British requirements, they are packed with interesting thought and information and we simply have to admire the commitment and leadership that the USGA has shown.

An interesting paperback I found is *Lawn Keeping* (1976) by Robert W. Schery, which manages to blend a good deal of basic science with practical information.

● This series will continue with books on golf and golf courses.