

surprised to find that almost all the research was, at that time, concentrated on one weed - Morning Glory (*Ipomoea*), which I was assured was the worst weed and most difficult to control of all tropical crop production.

Naturally, in the course of true (multi-million pound) research, products discarded for the purpose of that specific research may have spin-off value, which can be investigated in other aspects of cultivation, but the truth is that virtually no *fundamental* research is done (or has ever been done) into specific greenkeeping problems.

In greenkeeping, we use only products that have a major agricultural use. This should not be construed, in any way, as denigrating the *investigatory* work - i.e. checking products and the claims made for them - but this is not, in the strictest sense, research.

The pathetically small sums that golf generally still contributes to the work of the Sports Turf Research Institute can never be expected to produce results for golf. In no way is the substantial contribution now being made by the R & A to the STRI not acknow-

ledged gratefully by those of us who want to see Bingley fully regain its place as the centre of such investigatory work, if only to provide an authentic, independent counter to extravagant claims or mad theories, but it is not, and never can be, research.

Current propaganda about the benefits of research into fertilisers in greenkeeping, made by firms serving largely the agricultural market, is nonsense. We do not want phosphates and very little, if any, potash in greenkeeping. The use of nitrogen on any well-managed course must be minimal. Few clubs with good courses spend more than £100 to £200 a year on fertilisers as such - compared with 25 per cent of American clubs which, we are told, buy the equivalent of £35,000 a year.

My message to the new entrants into the fertiliser game is that the market is so small that it is not worth exploiting! Their reputations, as well as the courses, will suffer serious harm by adopting agricultural standards and practices. Keep your ideas for agriculture.

I know of no adviser without commercial attachments advising

NPK fertilisers for golf courses today. I am sure that any who do will not fail to tell us why, if they still are!

Firms extolling their soil analysis service should quietly forget about it. Such analyses tell the experienced greenkeeper or adviser nothing that he should not be able to deduce from the character of the vegetative cover of that soil. If the pH turns out high - i.e. over pH 5.5-6.0 - what can we do about it? Precious little, save increase the sulphate of iron dressings or think of applying sulphur to wet, badly draining clay fairways. If it is very high (pH 6.5 or over), this need not be a nuisance *if* the soil is sandy - e.g. links turf, due to its receiving heavy applications of shell (and thus lime) in blown sand, but no clay in the 'soil'. If it is low, give thanks - certainly, *never* apply lime!

I still hear of nitro-chalk being applied to acid fairways - irreversibly altering the acid-tolerant grasses to alkaline-loving ones (and creating lush lies) but, of course, 'nice and green' fairways. Usually, all such turf ever wanted is air!

The main difference today in presenting courses for a tournament or an R & A championship can be simply described by the fact that the R & A has no wish to alter course character (and course design only where it is necessary to improve course handling). They would not select courses where massive upheaval is necessary.

Furthermore, the R & A - and I - know where the championships are to be hosted years before the event and long-term planning is possible.

With professional tournaments, the accent is on 'tarting' up the course often at short notice for the week of the tournament, so that everything appears lush and green under the eagle eye of the television camera. Often substantial commercial interests are at stake in associated hotel complexes and, since the hotel will be dealing with largely unskilled golfers who measure quality by colour, who can wholly blame them?

In case I am accused of being patronising, let me make it clear that the biggest problems facing those like me who strive to retain old standards and thus the

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Dear Jim

As a regular reader of your articles, which I enjoy immensely, I just felt that I had to write as you recently mentioned that soot was a slow-acting nitrogen fertiliser. It brought back memories of long ago.

I have vivid memories of which bags of soot arriving from the various chimney sweeps with which the company maintained connections. The soot came in hessian sacks with about as much soot on the outside as there was inside and it was an absolutely filthy job handling them.

However, the real snag arose when we had to put the soot through a riddle in order to remove lumps of stone and cement that had been disturbed from the old city chimneys during the sweeping process.

Not only was the soot sought after by greenkeepers, but also professional gardeners used it as a repellent to carrot and onion

fly. They dressed it along the drills.

The view was also expressed that the continual application of soot particularly to light soils helped them to warm up as the dark colour absorbed more of the sun's rays. This sounds reasonable and it was certainly an act of faith with many of the older gardening brigade.

Unfortunately, most of our records were burnt during the war, but it might interest you, in view of the eternal argument about fertilisers, if I give details of the oldest mixture I can find, which was Stronghold Grass Manure in 1901.

The mixture was 8cwt bone meal (very finely ground), 4 per cent nitrogen, 3cwt Liebeg's Guano 6 per cent, 3cwt dried blood 12 per cent, 3cwt super phosphate 35 per cent, 2 cwt potash and 1cwt sulphate of ammonia making 20cwt in all.

*Ian Forbes, Stewart & Co
Seedsmen, Dalkeith.*