

distance learning supervisory course.

David J. Merrills (right) was awarded the Gleneagles Challenge Trophy, which is presented annually to the student submitting the best greenkeeping project. David was, until recently, employed at the Porters Park Golf Club, Radlett, Hertfordshire.

The certificates were presented by Mrs Audrey More, wife of Fife's director of education.

Surrey reports the death of Stuart McKay and offers its condolences to his family and friends.

The branch's autumn tournament was held at The Berkshire and 40 members turned out. Our thanks go to the club for allowing us use of the course and clubhouse and to Bernie Tomlin and his company, Rigby Taylor, for providing a superb prize table.

Scores: 1st G. MacNiven (13) 60 points, 2nd P. Pearse (4) 57 points,

3rd P. Weston (14) 54 points and 4th J. Russell (12) 52 points. S. McMillan (12) had the best morning score, totting up 35 points, while the afternoon's honours went to R. Glazier (10) with 22 points.

Brian D. Pierson presented the first winter lecture at Malden GC and our thanks go to the club and Brian.

Paul Pearse.

Dear Sir...

I write as captain of my golf club and a former greens convenor and with the full knowledge and approval of my head greenkeeper.

We have argued in a friendly way for eight years over autumn maintenance and, in particular, the timing and method of the hollow-coring and topdressing programme.

We are an inland Scottish club some 400ft above sea level with a south-easterly exposure on free-draining soil. I believe hollow-coring should be carried out in late September/early October without fail and that, having cored the greens, the topdressing should be applied and brushed into the resulting hollows.

I well remember 20 or so years ago at Gleneagles watching this job being done by five greenkeepers with SISIS hand hollow-corers, followed by a team of spreaders and sweepers.

At our club, we hire a hollow-coring machine, which whizzes round the course and does the coring all right but, by the time we get around to applying the topdressing, it could be weeks depending on the weather, the cores have overgrown or have been trampled in.

I am convinced we should buy a hollow-coring attachment for our Hydromain, so that one green can be completed at a time. Our greenkeeper thinks it is better to hire and that it does not matter if the topdressing goes into the holes or not.

While I don't see every issue of your magazine, I enjoy reading it very much.

Name and address supplied.

It is refreshing to learn of your interest in course upkeep - most golfers don't want to become too involved, writes John Campbell.

Your reference to the use of SISIS hollow forks takes me back to the 1930s when hand forking greens was the vogue. As a young greenkeeper in the west of Scotland, we used to do all the greens on our two 18-hole courses with Paul hollow-tine forks. This was extremely tedious, leg-aching work when labour was plentiful and golf courses never had the amount of play they receive today.

We did not always follow up hollow-forking operations with topdressing. The cores were allowed to dry out after which they were broken up with a drag mat and worked back into the turf with birch brooms.

Old greenkeepers

Many old greenkeepers favoured leaving the tine holes open through the winter and declared this assisted better surface drainage during periods of high precipitation, as well as allowing the frost to get into the ground to break up panned soil layers.

Nowadays, aeration work is highly mechanised and the job has to be done more quickly and efficiently with a minimum of labour. You take the view that hollow tining should immediately be followed by topdressing, doing one green at a time. This would slow the job down and most greenkeepers do not have the time to do things this way - they prefer to get the work done in methodical stages.

Some do six greens at a time, others nine, while there are

those who like to do all the greens at once - hollow-coring first, then following up with topdressing. It's a matter of timing and other factors have to be taken into account, such as the amount of play, weather, club fixtures, etc.

Golfers often get uptight when these cultivating activities begin on the greens, particularly hollow tining - life is never easy for the greenkeeping staff and it is often difficult to get all the work done according to plan.

If one is intent on replacing poor-quality soil in the greens with something better, then it makes sense to proceed one green at a time, working the dressing into the core holes with the back of a wooden rake or birch broom. This is a slow process if done properly. But you have a 'good free draining soil' on the course and are not trying to replace it with something new!

I am inclined to have the same view as your greenkeeper, who is obviously very experienced and knows that all topdressing is gradually absorbed by the turf - some material finds its way into the tine holes, some of it gets pushed down and is mixed with the soil through other cultivating techniques, such as slit and solid tining. The main objective with topdressing is doing it on a regular basis to build up a smooth resilient surface that will cope with all the wear and tear.

Having your own hollow-tining equipment would be an advantage, but it's not necessary to hollow-tine every year and it should be remembered that a lot of good topsoil can be removed from the greens (if it is done too often), which may have taken a long time to build up with topdressing.