The greens are always scarred in the autumn, being annual meadow-grass and the weather favouring fusarium there ain't much I can do about it, guv. In one ear and out of the other. You can put money on the same greenkeeper's hackles?

It may come as no surprise to learn that the golfing fraternity has always had its benighted element and greenkeeper's hackles.

The history of golf is littered with little gems of banality, focused not just on course condition and the supposed incompetence of the greenkeeper but on every aspect of the game. The written word is a major source of such platitudes with no better source than the renowned golf journalist, Bernard Darwin, a good golfer in his day too.

Although any reference to the condition of golf courses by golfers has to be taken with some caution, the descriptions from Darwin do give some indication of how golf course maintenance and presentation has improved over the years. During the 1890s Darwin received a letter from his father who had been visiting some links, other than his home course, where "the lies are so good that I think a professional could take his driver anywhere."

The insistence on the quality of lies was considered a mute point by Darwin who was writing in the 1930s when a good lie was regarded as a right. In an article on St Andrews, written in 1934, he remembers a time long past when one remarked "I've got a good lie", whereas by that era of high-tech maintenance equipment one only commented on a bad lie! Times have obviously changed little since the 1930s in this respect, though with much busier courses complaints of a poor lie may be more frequently heard, particularly where, as seems increasingly the case, poor golfing etiquette is commonplace.

From the same era it is reported that a distinguished professional, whilst playing in a tournament on a well known links, remarked that he could not see which was fairway and which was putting green. The comment was intended as criticism that the green was not distinct from its surrounds but Darwin praised the fine texture and naturalness of the links turf that caused the fairway to melt into the green. The attitude of the professional would, I am sure, be mirrored by the majority of today's golfers, whatever their standard of play if everything isn't in a contrasting stripe and clearly defined from rough, through semi, fairway, surround and fringe before one sees the green then there is something seriously amiss with the man looking after the course. If only we could follow Darwin's example, especially on links and heathland courses where nature has carved out the golfing territory, then the golf course would be a much more environmentally friendly character, and far easier to maintain.

Support for this view comes from a rather unexpected source, the top American professional Bobby Jones who in 1926 compared the heavily watered American greens and artificial American courses to the naturalness of the British links with greens "watered only from the skies". Jones stressed the variable conditions of the links which "afford ample opportunity for the display of any strategic talent we may possess, and preserve in the most human of games that fascinating personal element which is its chief attraction."

Golfers of the present day would do well to heed these words before they throw the next tirade at the greenkeeper. There does seem to be far more emphasis these days on producing golf courses that favour the less-skilled golfer, holding greens and no impediment to a good lie and stance even into the semi rough, than encouraging the player to improve his game so that he can adapt to prevailing conditions. Yet, it has been known for professionals to make adverse comment on the condition of a true links that is in, by most accounts, good order. Darwin noted a distinguished professional of the era excusing his poor performance in the Open Championship with the quip "I can't play on these beastly seaside courses." One might dismiss the quote as misguided rancour Continued on Page 62
were not a sentiment that has been echoed time and
conditions favouring pitch and run rather than the
that began in 1905 concluded for turf of bents and fes-
tilisers containing lime, such as basic slag, be used with
Continued from Page 53

...master of the game express such opinion what chance
...wiped off the face of the links by feeding and treatment.
• nitrogen is the most important nutrient and should be
...nothing like so smooth and trim” as they had become
...difference between agricultural and golfing needs.
• as a consequence of this “acid theory”, the use of
...were being unrealistic in their estimates for the cost of
...Ho! links existed. This event took place in 1863 yet how
...the sport. Originally few young people in England played
...appeal to the latter half of this century. 
...and greens which were known for their different poor
...heather roots all over it.”
...the upkeep of the course as did some of the small
...being talked when discussing the cost of building and
...and St Andrews, did not spend as much per year on
...towards St Andrews was taken for a stroll on Northam Bur-
...a year later the Westward Ho! links existed. This event took place in 1863 yet how
...increasing to Darwin. I am sure this rings a bell with course
...tea in the clubhouse and perhaps walking around the
...judgment to the latter half of this century. 
...himself is not a modern-day phenomenon, a final
...stress that the main excuse of the time for poor play
...bring down the full wrath of the anti-racist and
...the contention over “square grooves”? Such incidents are nothing new and
...the USA caused a furore amongst the British golfing tradi-
...the Haskell ball from the USA caused a furore amongst the British golfing tradi-
...to a similar tale being told by the golf
course architects of today when they pronounce the
opening of their latest masterpiece, many of whom have
...and unspeakably sqeuclhy in winter”, accord-
...to Darwin. I am sure this rings a bell with course
...staff, says Steve Isaac, the STRI’s
...course when entering into negotiations with the farmer
...of foot traffic with
...uneven edges as there were no supporting cups in
...maintaining the modern golf course? Compare these
...square grooves”? Such incidents are nothing new and
...may well differ, on the “worms paradise” the greatest
...around many a gents locker room!
...all their lives. Do you sense a touch of deja vu when
...anything novel to the latter half of this century. 
...they are well known to the majority of the golfing public to this day.
...changing the rules of the sport. Originally few young people in England played
...is one of the oldest excuses in the book, says Steve Isaac, the STRI’s
...and the
course requires skill if good playing conditions are to be
...appreciate the benefits of natural drainage and infertility in sustaining quality turf and cutting costs. Unfortu-
...that the custodian of the seaside course required little skill but that on the heavier inland course the art of
...greenkeeping came to the fore. Managing any golf
...course requires skill if good playing conditions are to be
...presented, the necessary skills between the two sites may well differ, on the “worms paradise” the greatest
...artistry may be that shown with a sprayer or a course
closed sign!

Club golf has become extremely, some may say
excessively, competitive with many clubhouses losing
...and clubs the camaraderie that used to bring people into the game. This is nothing new. As
...early 1931, Darwin was lamenting that golf at the
...early 1980s was a much "cosier” game. With far fewer playing the game there was a fraternal sentiment to oth-
...neither are golf courses anything novel to the latter half of this century. 
...the first real boom in golfing numbers with social groups other than the “gentlemen” taking up the sport.
...original few young people in England played the game but by the 1930s there were "boy golfers by the thousand."
...course, he had the grace of grooming the links as did some of the small
...many of gentlemanly clubs a "worm’s paradise”. This is a truism today when we
...they're neat, they're just £35 complete

Three sided plinth, plus any colour yardage plate available - P.O.A.