

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A GREENKEEPER AT ST ANDREWS, SCOTLAND

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IT IS no easy matter to condense all that this heading implies in one short article for, as every greenkeeper knows—wet or fine—the successful day's work is the result of previous planning, and indeed this goes for the work from one year's end to the other. Here at St Andrews, the set up is somewhat unique not only for the publicity that comes our way, but because there are four 18-hole courses, three of which have to be maintained at championship standard. In addition, my parish further extends to a five-acre turf nursery, five acres of public putting greens, a bowling green, practice ground and a number of recreation grounds. My duty as Links Supervisor is governed by the Joint Links Committee which consists of ten members—five elected by the Royal and Ancient Golf Club and five by the Town Council—who meet once a month and to whom I submit a report dealing with such items as work done, pending, and contemplated together with matters concerning plant, machinery, compost, fertilizers, and a forecast of further work.

Staff Includes 22 Greenkeepers

The staff consists of a foreman, 22 greenkeepers and four apprentices. Of the total three are starters and, during the season, two are rangers; in effect this works out roughly at five greenkeepers and one apprentice per course, the outside work being taken in the stride. All of them are well able to tackle any job and it is particularly pleasing that the apprentices are as enthusiastically showing their mettle, members of the Greenkeepers' Association to a man, and full use is made of the periodic vacancies in the lecture courses at the Sports Turf Research Institute where so much valuable information can be picked up. The monthly meetings of the Scottish Golf Greenkeepers Association are also well

attended. Special care is taken in the work and training of the apprentices and younger members of the staff for they will be the greenkeepers of the future, and overall it is gratifying that committee members are thoroughly interested in all that we do.

Having mentioned planning, I would add that at the end of each season the next year's work is mapped out in broad outline with alternatives for the inclement weather common to all courses, and the result is that the bulk of the work is largely completed.

Work Programmed in Full

On this foundation is built the monthly and weekly programme, on all of which the staff is informed. This is appreciated because they know in advance what is expected of them, perhaps a minor point but one that concerns them individually. There is always plenty of indoor work to be done during bad weather such as the compost factory, machinery maintenance, painting tee-boxes, repairing seats, and other jobs that go into the making of a tidy course. Major repairs are done by the mechanic who has a fully equipped workshop, but those in charge of tractors, mowers, etc. are capable of tackling normal running repairs and adjustments. All machinery in use is cleaned before the end of the day, filled up and ready for the start of another day. By so doing minor faults can be detected and dealt with long before the stage of a major overhaul. The standard of workmanship is necessarily high and conditions are such that when a vacancy occurs on the staff there is no dearth of suitable applicants.

Another feature worthy of note is the interest of machinery manufacturers. The area of the Links is considerable (450 acres, including 18 acres of fine turf) and to overtake the work it is

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essential to keep abreast of the times and give these firms the opportunity to try out new ideas under conditions not so available elsewhere.

During the season the layout of the next day's work depends on the reservations over the various courses, and a study of the list is essential so that special attention can be given to whichever course is to be affected, thus giving the players a free run. Irrespective of these reservations, and there are many, men are detailed daily for the normal work on greens, tees, and bunkers keeping in advance of the players.

Following the initial morning's work the various squads are rearranged and then engaged in the cutting of fairways and greens with the least possible disturbance to players.

Generally, the Links are worked as a whole because the layout is such that, for example, when dealing with fairways—either cutting, fertilizing, or anything of a similar nature—it is more practical to make a continuous sweep. Where gangs are concerned, tractors with trailers are used to set the men to their work and the reverse process is used for the midday break—individuals are picked up on the way and the whole idea is to make the best use of the available staff during working hours. The day's work is not merely a job, it is part of a considered plan and practical suggestions from various members of the staff frequently occur, thus adding to the general efficiency.

The number of paid rounds over the four courses amounted to 120,774 during 1964, with the Old Course bearing the brunt and closely followed by the New and Eden. The Jubilee is gaining in popularity and the turf is excellent. Many visitors, particularly those from overseas, wish to play on the Old Course. The ballot is full during the season and slow play tends to restrict the full use of the daylight hours, while the task of the ranger is indeed a thankless one. Divots galore are the bugbear of the greenkeeper; only a minority of players take the trouble to replace and heel-in with the result that the cost involved in dealing with this menace is very considerable. The fact, too, that not many players take the trouble to smooth over the sand in bunkers calls for a good deal of unnecessary work. Every greenkeeper however will go to any length to keep his course immaculate. So far no machine has been invented to lift divots and lessen the manual effort.

With the season approaching tees and greens are receiving the special attention necessary following scarifying, slit tining, composting, etc., and with distinct signs of growth we may look forward to a pleasing spectacle to meet the eyes of the discerning golfers who visit St Andrews every year from many parts of the world.

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