

GET RID OF

GAMEKEEPERS and SOCIETIES

and the pigeons and rabbits will go too,

says JOHN CHERRINGTON

WHEN the Government, fearful of pressure from the animal lovers, made it an illegal act to spread myxomatosis, it automatically made the extinction of rabbits an impossibility and at the same time turned into criminals a good many otherwise law-abiding farmers. As compensation for having removed the one sure method of control there is a subsidy for rabbit-clearance societies.

But these are themselves hamstrung in various ways. They cannot legally make use of myxomatosis as a method of control, they cannot use gin traps, and they are not compulsory on all farmers and landowners.

There is some pressure to make the sale of rabbits illegal, as was done in New Zealand. This would be an unenforceable provision in any case, and would provide no answer. Very few people today can possibly make a living out of the sale of rabbits. And it's most doubtful in this age of full employment if many young people would take on trapping for a living. Especially as the two most effective methods of destruction, still used in New Zealand, poison and gin traps, are denied them here.

Plenty of Noise

So far our Rabbit Clearance Societies are making a fair bit of noise and are not, I submit, killing a great many rabbits. As they are not compulsory the non-co-operators refuse to join, and to make matters worse many shooting owners refuse to allow their woods to be invaded by the Society's operators. Instead, they are allowed to do their own destruction with their own keepers.

This is a fundamental mistake. Keepers, in my experience, are possibly the worst pest destroyers in the world.

Of course, they fill their pantries with stoats, weasels, crows and the like, but who ever saw a rabbit hung up even in these days? All they kill are the enemies of the rabbits.

I could confidently guarantee the abolition of our two major pests, rabbits and pigeons, if, as a preliminary, I was allowed to abolish all gamekeepers. Pigeons only nest in our woods and hedges with such abundance because the "vermin" have been ruthlessly destroyed.

The question of the gin trap is one of some delicacy. If it had been illegal for domestic dogs and cats to trespass on other people's land no one would have said a word if their pet had come home with a damaged foot. After all, dozens of cats are killed and maimed on the roads every day, but no one has suggested making cars illegal.

Gin traps

I must say I don't like gin traps. When we used to use them I insisted that they were frequently inspected, but I don't believe they are in themselves any more cruel than any other method of destroying vermin.

Shooting leaves many rabbits to creep off and die. Gassing is acceptable only because we don't watch the death agonies in the depth of a burrow. A snare is not the quick despatch that people seem to imagine. At best it's strangulation, at worst it can be a long drawn-out agony, worse in a way than the gin, because the rabbit is caught by the body and not by a foot.

I think the way to look at the problem is that the rabbit, like the rat, the mouse, and other pests is an enemy of farming and hence of all people who eat food. Our enemies have to be destroyed in order that we all can live.

No one sheds a tear for the rat which is allowed to be poisoned with impunity. It's only the rabbit that seems to arouse the anger of the animal lovers.

Hypocritical

Yet their anger is so hypocritical. At the height of the myxomatosis row, which, if you remember, coincided with the final abolition of the gin trap, one prominent animal lover, in all other respects a most sensible man, threatened in conversation with me that if farmers persisted in destroying their rabbits in this way, then the enraged British public would boycott British food.

I believe they would, too. And go on making use of the products of countries like Australia and New Zealand where, of course, every possible variation of humane and inhumane methods of destruction are not only tolerated but encouraged by the authorities.

But to return to our Societies. They are incapable of containing the rabbit plague without the recurring onset of myxomatosis. The only system of destruction that seems available to them is gassing. This at best is only moderately successful as there is some doubt as to whether the gas penetrates into the burrows sufficiently far to kill all the rabbits. But the most serious drawback to gassing, even if 100 per cent effective is that it only affects rabbits that are to ground.

I just don't believe these stories of rabbits that have turned to living on top of ground because of the gassing of burrows or myxomatosis. Large numbers of rabbits always lived on top of the ground.

At Our Expense

The only time these are to ground is when they are breeding, and then as their stops are usually in the corn or under other dense growth they are fairly invulnerable. In the old days the way to deal with these was by open gin trapping in the Spring. Now they just breed away happily to do more damage, and to provide the operators of the Rabbit Clearance Societies further employment at ours and the Government's expense.

All in all then the Societies don't seem to make much impression on rabbit

numbers. In fact, I would say that they do as much harm in preventing the spread of myxomatosis by making burrows uninhabitable as they do good. My experience is that rabbits always return, that their numbers increase gradually to a certain point and then there is a recurrence of myxomatosis and practical extinction.

Contrary to popular belief there is no evidence that the disease is in any way less severe, simply that as there are fewer rabbits about the spread is less effective.

Try Nature

In France, where myxomatosis first appeared in Europe nine years ago there has been practically no widespread reappearance of the rabbit in any number, and the disease reappears almost when required as numbers rise, without human aid.

I suggest that the best policy here would be to let the Societies lapse and see if nature can keep them in check.

With grateful acknowledgments to the author and the "Farmer and Stock-breeder".



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News



from the Sections

SOUTHERN

Chairman:
J. K. GLASS
(Thorpe Hall)

By W. Mason
Hon. Secretary:
18 Albert Road, Hendon, N.W.4.
Tel.: SUNnyhill 0245

ON BEHALF OF THE SECTION I would like to record a very hearty vote of thanks to Messrs. Sutton & Sons and their representatives, Mr. Rixon and Mr. Maxim, for a most interesting lecture on various grasses, which they gave on the 31st January. The lecture was illustrated with slides, and the many questions asked were answered in detail. It was very pleasing to see such a good attendance.

Owing to illness, our President, Mr. F. Chambers, was unable to be present and we would take this opportunity of wishing him a speedy recovery.

March Lecture

Our next lecture will take place on Wednesday, 28th March, at the Stirling Castle, at 6-30 p.m. This will be in the form of a "Quiz" with our Chairman, Mr. J. Glass, as Question Master.

Mr. A. E. Dash

We hear from Mr. A. E. Dash, who has now retired, that he received a cheque from his Club to mark the occasion which was given a very nice write-up in the local newspaper. We wish him good health and many happy years of retirement.

Appointment

Mr. P. Whitehead has been appointed Head Greenkeeper to the Rochford Hundred Golf Club. We send him best wishes for the

future. Private address: 2 Well House Cottages, Rochford, Essex.

NORTHERN

By J. Parker

Chairman:
G. W. MASON
(Halifax West End)

Hon. Secretary:
8 Goit Stock Terr., Harden,
Bingley, Yorks.

MEMBERS ARE REMINDED THAT the closing date for the return of counterfoils and monies for the Grand National Sweep is Saturday, 17th March. It is hoped that all tickets will be sold and so ensure the success of the Sweepstake.

Handicaps

The following adjustments of handicaps have been made:—K. Driver (8), F. Cox (15), F. Kenny (15), S. Bailes (20) and D. Scott (24).

Ties and Blazer Badges

I have still a number of Association Ties for sale at 10/6 each, also two Blazer Badges which I will be pleased to supply to any member of the Association on receipt of 30/-.

March Lecture

Our March Lecture will be held on Tuesday, 20th March, at 7-15 p.m., at the White Swan, Call Lane, Leeds. This will be in the form of a Film Show of two Penfold Swallow Tournaments.

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By F. Cashmore

Chairman:
G. HART
(Gay Hill)

Hon. Secretary:
76 Four Oaks Common Road
Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire.

MEMBERS WILL BE SORRY TO HEAR of the death of Charlie Fletcher of the Worcester County Golf Club on the 21st January. He will be sadly missed at our Tournament and other functions. On behalf of the Association I have expressed sincere sympathy to Mrs. Fletcher and family, and requested that they should let me know if there is any way in which we can be of assistance.

Tournaments

Our Spring Tournament will take place on Tuesday, 1st May, at the Tamworth Golf Club, by courtesy of the Committee. More details will be published next month.

Our President, Mr. Carl Bretherton, has fixed the date of his Annual Match for Thursday, 7th June, at Handsworth Golf Club. We may expect Mr. Bretherton to have a strong team, so the Greenkeepers must polish up their game.

Visit

Our thanks to George Wilson who has arranged for us to visit the Massey Ferguson factory on Wednesday, 28th November. The number of the party is limited to 30 members, and I am sure we can look forward to a very interesting day.

Subscriptions

There are still a number of subscriptions outstanding. As we are nearing the end of the financial year, 30th April, the Treasurer hopes that this reminder will produce results and so help to clear the books.

NORTH-WEST

By B. Ellis

Chairman
O. P. JONES
(Bramhall G.C.)

Hon. Secretary:
Romiley G.C.

IN THE JANUARY ISSUE OF THE journal, I stated that Mr. Watson is Chairman of the Greens Committee at Birkdale Golf Club. This is incorrect and I wish to apologise most sincerely for my mistake and amend as follows. E. H. Watson, Esq., 10 Kossal Road, Ansdell, Lytham St. Annes (Chairman of Greens, Fairhaven Golf Club).

We welcome, also, the following new Hon. Associate Member: J. W. Parker, Esq., Great Lever & Farnworth Golf Club, Bolton (Chairman of Greens).

Spring Tournament

Our Spring Tournament will be held on 2nd May at the Bramhall G.C., by kind permission of the Council.

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By J. O'Gorman

Chairman:
M. GEDDES
(Royal Porthcawl)

Hon. Secretary:
12, Cornerswell Road,
Penarth, Glam.

THE SPRING COMPETITION FOR the President's Shield will take place at the Pennard Golf Club, near Swansea, on Tuesday, 3rd April, by kind permission of the Captain and Committee.

The Competition is over 27 holes, 9 in the morning and 18 in the afternoon. Will members who intend taking part please let me know a fortnight prior to the date as arrangements have to be made for catering. I hope we have a good attendance and a fine day on this beautiful course on the Gower Coast.

EAST MIDLAND

By S. T. McNeice

Chairman:
S. TALBOT
(Wollaton Park)

Hon. Secretary:
40 Edward Road,
Clarendon Park, Leicester

OUR SPRING TOURNAMENT WILL be held over the Sherwood Forest Golf Club, Mansfield, on Wednesday, 9th May, by kind permission of the Captain and Committee.

MISCELLANEOUS

PROFESSIONALS AND GREENKEEPERS having stocks of used golf balls contact Sparkbrook Golf Ball Co., 295 Highgate Road, Stoney Lane, Birmingham, with a view to filling export orders.

HON. SECRETARY'S NOTES



Book Review

Readers of the Greenkeeper will be familiar with Mr. David Bowen's long range weather forecasts which appear in alternate months last year. Now he has written a do-it-yourself guide for short range forecasters who like to interpret local indications. "How to tell the weather" (Sunday Times Book Publications 3/6.) has twelve pages of text, alternating with twelve pages of admirable photographs and charts which will give assurance and precision to those who must govern daily tasks in part by quick assessments of the sky.

A description of cloud formations and wind factors lays the basis of a forecasting method and sections on weather sayings, natural phenomena, and the barometer fill in curious and useful detail.

It is comforting to learn that the author does not consider that even electronic computers will ever make weather forecasting an exact science and that your local verdict may well be more useful than the regional forecasts prepared by the experts. Even so, you will do well to keep in mind the broader picture which their charts reveal.

This is a bright attractive little booklet. Perhaps the layout of the reading matter suffers from the fact that every other aspect of the production is such excellent value, but who will grumble at that if waterproofs are at hand when the raindrops fall.

F.W.H.

F. G. HAWTREE MEMORIAL FUND

The Trustees of the Fund have two reservations for the Autumn Course of Instruction to be held at the Sports Turf Research Institute, Bingley, Yorks., in 1962, and invite applications from Greenkeepers for these places. Unfortunately there is no further accommodation for the Spring Course, and members are advised to make early application for Autumn, as there is a growing demand.

Applicants should state whether their Club can make a contribution to the expenses and registration fees. Head Greenkeepers are asked to bring the scheme to the notice of promising members of their staff. Age, experience, and any relevant details should be given. The fund pays all or part of all travel and living expenses.

C. H. DRX.

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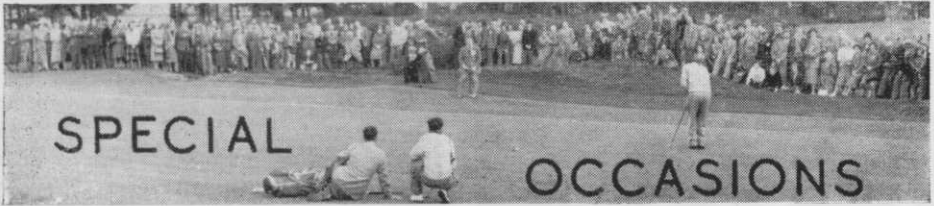
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MARCH

- 8th East Midland Section, N.A.G. Film Show, Blue Boar, Southgate Street, Leicester.
- 9th Southern Section, Annual Dinner, Talbot Restaurant, London Wall, E.C.
- 20th Northern Section, Film Show, White Swan, Call Lane, Leeds.
- 22nd East Midland Section, N.A.G. Lecture, Blue Boar, Southgate Street, Leicester.
- 28th Southern Section, Lecture, Stirling Castle, 6-30 p.m.

APRIL

- 3rd Welsh Section, Spring Competition, Pennard Golf Club, Nr. Swansea.
- 26th Northern Section, Spring Tournament, Otley Golf Club.

MAY

- 1st Midland Section, Spring Tournament, Tamworth Golf Club.
- 2nd North West Section, Spring Tournament, Bramhall Golf Club.
- 9th East Midland Section, Spring Tournament, Sherwood Forest Golf Club, Mansfield.

JUNE

- 7th Midland Section, President's Match, Handsworth Golf Club.

AUGUST

- 13th, 14th and 15th B.G.G.A., A.G.M. and Annual Tournament, Pyle and Kenfig Golf Club.

NOVEMBER

- 28th Midland Section, Visit to Messrs. Massey Ferguson.

THE SCOTTISH GOLF GREENKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

EAST SECTION

A LECTURE WAS HELD IN THE Free Gardeners Institute on Thursday, 18th January. The speaker was Mr. J. D. Joss of the S.T.R.I., who gave a very interesting talk. A vote of thanks on behalf of the Section was proposed by our Chairman, Mr. H. Smith.

A. HUISH, *Secretary*.

NORTH AND MIDLAND SECTION

SOCIAL EVENING — TICKETS MAY still be obtained for our Social Evening to be held in Nicoll & Smibert's Rooms, Dundee, on Saturday, 17th March, at 7 p.m., from members of the Committee.

New Member

We welcome Mr. R. Scott of Arbroath Golf Club to our Section.

W. RITCHIE, *Secretary*.

SITUATIONS VACANT

JAMAICA — GREENKEEPER with top qualifications wanted for new 18 hole Golf Course at Montego Bay. Knowledge of tropical grasses an asset. Single man preferred. Living accommodation and board provided. Salary £1,200-£1,500 according to qualifications. Passage paid. Write fullest details to Box No. 363, "British Golf Greenkeeper".

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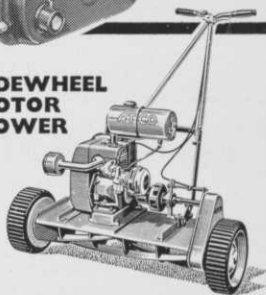
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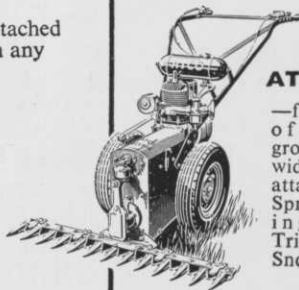
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