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GREENKEEPER

HON. EDITOR: F. W. HAWTREE



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Greetings



From the President

Best wishes to all members of the Association and I hope that 1971 will be a good year for the B.G.G.A.

Carl Bretherton.



From the Chairman

I wish all our members and their families a most enjoyable Christmas, with the best of luck and good fortune in the New Year.

A. Robertshaw.



From the Hon. Secretary

To every member of the Association I would like to extend my very best wishes for a Happy Christmas and a Bright and Prosperous New Year.

C. H. Dix.

TEE SHOTS



by the Editor

Work has begun on a new 18-hole course in Suffolk at Stoke-by-Nayland. It is being built by Mr Bill Peeke and his wife, Devorah, who own the 130-acre Hill Farm at Boxford. . . . At Chelmsford, not far away, the Town Council's plans for 18 holes in Hylands Park produced strong reactions. The following are samples: "I suggest anyone who does not want this lovely place cut in half should write in the strongest possible terms to - - -, also print their own car stickers "Hands off Hylands": "I would suggest that Hylands Park, which appears to be a white elephant, should be sold and the money used to repair the footpaths in the town before many more people are injured by falls caused by uneven paving stones and potholes": "When I think of all the restful hours I—and yes, hundreds of others—have enjoyed in this enchanting park, my stomach turns at the prospect of this tranquility being broken": "Surely, in a world increasingly built up and noisy, there should remain a few places where quiet prevails": "A golf course would be the thin end of the wedge and I know scores of people who want Hylands left as it is": "I would not be at all surprised if protesters dig large holes in the greens once the golf course has been created": "My blood boils at the way the ratepayers' money is being used by people who behave like millionaires with our cash." Eventually, the Finance Department turned it down. . . . Coventry City Council's Recreation Committee is considering developing land at Allesley for an 18-hole municipal golf course but work would not start before 1975/7976. . . . Bedford Town Council welcomed an £86,000 scheme for a municipal golf course at Mowsbury Park. Estimated cost is £52,510 for the course plus £4,000 for pop-up sprinklers. . . . Brian Collins writing in the West Lancashire Evening Gazette quotes a letter from the professional at the Ikoyi Golf Club, Nigeria, where the Nigerian Open is to be played: "This week I have to counter an incorrect statement that players were put in prison in Nigeria last year. This happened in Lusaka not Nigeria." . . . Grimsby Rural District Council approved in principle a scheme to purchase 130 acres of land for a golf course at Immingham and then lease it to the North Lincolnshire Golf Development Association at a rental which would cover the total cost of the land. . . . A delegation from Minchinhampton Golf Club met Mr Eldon Griffiths of the Ministry of Environment in London last month to urge grant aid for establishing a new course away from the common. They reported "a very good hearing." . . . Maltby Urban Council, near Rotherham, plans to ban golf on open spaces in the town in order to safeguard children playing nearby. The Councillor who raised the problem, himself a golfer, said: "We do not wish to deny anyone the pleasure of this sport, but when they take an almighty swipe, anything can happen." . . . Leeds Golf Club has had to sack its 30 caddies on Government orders. Those under 14 are too young to work legally. . . .

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NOW THINGS ARE SMOOTH

By PATRICK SMARTT

In an article under the title of "When the Going was Rough" I closed with some remarks hinting at a reactionary outlook.

In the care of courses there used to be two schools of thought: put nature back to nature, or the chemically minded. The first school, the diehards (of which I am one), are now but voices crying in the wilderness. One should never be didactic about anything in golf, whether it be the swing, course design or the nurturing thereof. It can however be educational to discuss the conflicting ideas.

In these days there is a tendency to over-emphasise the idea of making grass grow upwards. That remark is not so strange as it looks. As with trees, plants, vegetables, so with grass, it has to grow *downwards* first: roots. Let me give an example.

There was a heath and heather course set high on a hill, and so exposed to all the bedevilmments of our climate. It had been the custom to mow the greens very close. Dry spells in summer (there was no water laid on) resulted in brown, almost grassless surfaces—putting over which could produce a nervous breakdown.

A new broom has to proceed warily with established customs. After a while when the head greenkeeper had been struck down by illness and succeeded by his No. 2, grudging permission was extracted from the green committee to raise the mower blades. Then came a suggestion that shocked them deeply. It was that the grass roots did not go deep enough, and so the greens had not the bed from which to withstand any prolonged drought or heat. This was disbelieved. The precaution had been taken to remove a plug of turf with the hole-cutter. This was placed on the table for all to see. The roots were negligible.

The proposal was put forward that it was necessary to reverse the old saying to "What goes down must come up." To bring this about it was mooted that all forcing chemicals treatment ceased, except where a green was "sick," and old, seasoned beech leaf mould would be mixed with grass cuttings to form a compost heap. The committee reluctantly agreed to a year's trial, and headed for the bar to seek solace from having a maniac on their hands.

The beech leaf mould, heaven knows how many years old, was obtained from the great woods of a nearby estate. After a year of "nature back to nature," a plug was again exhibited and it was conceded there was a remarkable root growth with consequently healthy, weather-resistant greens. The proof of the pudding.

That was 15 years ago. The regime changed and back came the chemical dressings—they were necessary for the course had suffered from insufficient attention for some years. So let us look at that method in general, and not in particular to the course we have been discussing, which is in excellent condition.

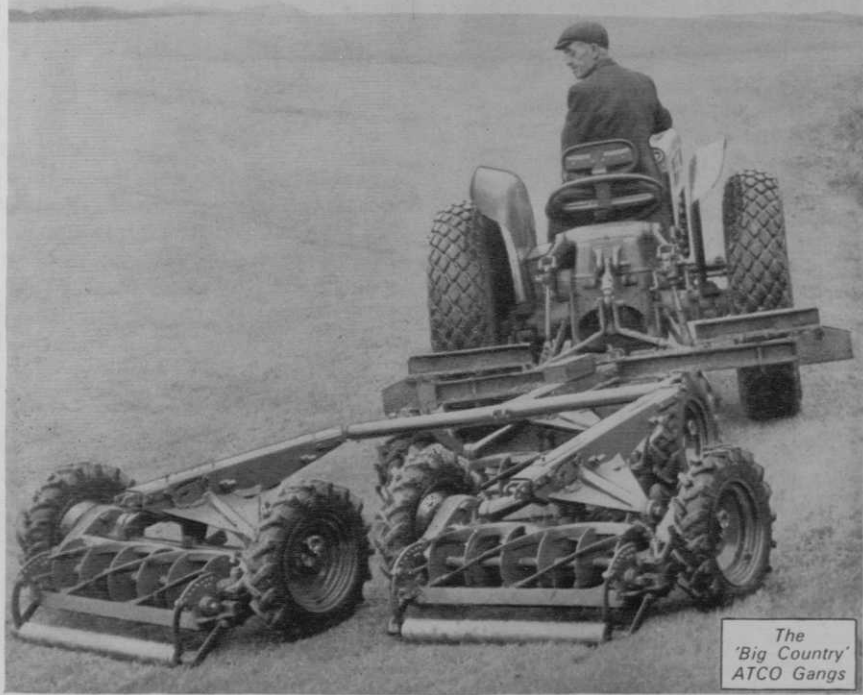
My personal inclination against chemicals, except where a tonic is obviously needed, stems from several reasons. I have seen several instances of misapplication. Greens burned or disfigured by insufficiently diluted dressings. There are printed instructions supplied with the fertilisers, but this is putting the secretary or greenkeeper much in the same position as a qualified chemist making up a doctor's prescription. I have experienced the equivalent in the garden. My hobby is roses. Unable to get good manure any longer, I have to use packaged fertiliser—so

(Continued on page 6.)

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(Continued from page 4.)

many ounces to so much water to be applied to the square yard. This calls for care in preparation and then, even with the powder forms, a loose estimate of a square yard. I must say the roses have been co-operative.

Undulating greens present a special problem. A rainstorm will wash a powder dressing into the hollows, leaving the ridges (shaved anyway by the mowers) unfed. I think watering comes in here. No matter how light the spraying the hollows must benefit to the detriment of the rises. Further, it is unlikely that it is soft rain water. It will be argued that the ingredients of fertilisers are concocted, and this is acceptable, to feed the roots. Is it not easier for them to sink through the broken earth of a flower bed than the firm terrain on a golf course?

Another personal regret. The change wrought in the nature of courses. I belong to a generation which believed in tackling different conditions on different types of courses. Now we have fairways on heathland, and some links, that used to be found on park courses. Fairways that hold water are wormcast.

It has to be acknowledged, again in general terms, that with heavy machinery and the increased foot traffic (the explosion of golf) a good carpet of grass is desirable. The Old Course at St. Andrews for instance. And yet, there are times when one wonders if this reasoning is not as specious as

Winter Rules—allegedly invoked to save the course from being ravaged by divots—when everyone knows it is to give players better lies. How often is a crowded course to be seen from Mondays to Fridays, even when a visiting society is playing?

Members pay ever-increasing subscriptions, and are entitled to the conditions they wish. We have and shall continue to have lush fairways. When you consider the cost of machinery, the fuel for them, and the price of fertilisers, no wonder subscriptions go up.

It is no good sighing over days gone by, it is also as useless to fix the mind rigidly on the present. A glimpse forward leads to the conclusion that this desire for a strong growth of grass is going to settle the vexed question of the small or large ball. It will have to be the latter, for the same reason that the Americans use it. It sits up, instead of burying itself in a luxurious carpet.

Note: Shortly after completing this piece, I was much entertained by a discussion on T.V. arguing that fertilisers on farmland were slowly creating an arid desert. The farmers were all for putting muck on the land.

ASSOCIATION VICE-CHAIRMAN

The East Midland Section have elected J. Carrick, Esq., as Vice-Chairman of the Association for the ensuing year.

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25th



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Bedlingtonshire Urban District Council

APPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT GREENKEEPER

Applications are invited for the post of First Assistant Greenkeeper at the Golf Course under construction at Bedlington.

The salary will be in accordance with the Miscellaneous Grade V scale of the National Scheme of Conditions of Service, namely £1,089, rising by annual increments to £1,188, the commencing salary to be decided according to experience and qualifications.

Applications stating age, qualifications and experience together with the names and addresses of two referees should be sent to the Clerk of the Council, Council Offices, Bedlington, not later than the 12th December, 1970.

J. W. FIRTH,
Clerk to the District Council.

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FIRST YEAR OF RETIREMENT

Stan Morton has now enjoyed his first year of retirement after fifty-five years of greenkeeping. He started as a boy at Camberley Heath in 1915, but the urge to join the forces took him into the Royal Marine Artillery, known as the Blue Marines. Between duties on convoys from Scapa Flow the skipper from H.M.S. Collingwood used to get him to go ashore to look for their nine-hole course. Back at Camberley Heath in 1919 women were still mowing greens. His first chance came in 1925, when his greenkeeper introduced him to A. G. Barry, Amateur Champion in 1905. He wanted the last nine holes constructed at Tidworth, a tall order for a young man of 26 years, but he made a very good course and then moved to the Biddenham course at Bedford, with his wife as stewardess. At Bedford he met Henry Longhurst, at that time only a schoolboy. They became great friends—Stan had got down to a handicap of 1—and they played a lot together. The Golf Greenkeepers Association had a very good team in those days, fielding a side of twelve at 5 handicap and below. Henry Longhurst arranged a fixture for the Greenkeepers' side against Cambridge and got Oxford to do the same. These were always very close matches, Stan's partner in all foursomes was the late Bert Berry, the best golfer the Greenkeepers' Association ever had. The match which stands out in his mind, apart from beating Henry Longhurst and his partner, was against Robert and Charles Sweeney of Oxford at Beaconsfield, never more than one hole in it and finished a halved match. One well remembered experience with Henry Longhurst was on an outing to Letch-

worth—not a very hard course for a scratch and a 1 handicap. Henry started with two threes, holed a full brassie at the long sixth for a 2, goes to the seventh tee and holed his tee shot at the short seventh—out in 29. Not surprisingly Stan was six down at the turn.

Stan was appointed to Formby Golf Club in 1934, just two years before the death of his old head greenkeeper at Camberley. After fourteen happy years at Formby, on to Royal Portrush in 1948. Portrush was looking for an English greenkeeper as there was some talk about the "Open" going to Ireland for the first time. This came about in 1951 and until 1969 was the last time an Englishman won it. The Ladies' "Open" followed in 1955. He finished his fifty-five years on golf courses and links at Old Ford Manor, near London. Since joining the Association in 1915, he has been chairman of the North-West Section, which he helped to form, also chairman of the Northern Irish Section, which he helped to get started.

He thinks it has been a grand life, rough winters at times but good summers make you forget them. He thinks the game of golf is about the best in the world to play, meeting, as he has, all sorts of people, professionals and amateurs from all over the world.

A presentation was made to him at the Old Ford Golf Club on Thursday, 5th February before the largest gathering of members seen at the Club.

"Stan is sitting one from the right in the front row of our picture, on opposite page, of the Professionals versus Greenkeepers team at Bedford in 1932.