

MORE BOOKS for GREENKEEPERS and GREENS

THIS occasional series, which started in July 1986, has attempted to suggest a reading list for those interested in golf course maintenance. The great difficulty is the need to have some understanding of a whole range of subjects. Concentrating on a narrow spectrum makes it impossible to cross boundaries and appreciate the difficulties of the other people involved, be they agronomists, architects or golfers. Many failures over the past eighty years can be attributed to the lack of wider visions.

A secondary objective has been to share with other book-lovers the joys of discovering interesting old books. Over the past five years, golf books have shot up in value and scarcity. People in the book trade recognise that golf is a specialised market and channel golf books to specialist dealers, where prices soon escalate. Today, it is rare to find interesting old golfing books in the hands of general dealers. This has taken much of the fun away from those of us who enjoy searching the shelves for rarities at bargain prices. It can still happen, of course, and I had such a find last summer. The small seaside town of Whitby has some interesting corners and passing, of all things, a knitting-wool shop, I noticed some shelves of books. I looked them over, not expecting to find very much, only to realise that amongst the romantic novels of the Thirties was *Golfing (1893)* by Horace Hutchinson, the first great golf writer who was golf correspondent to *The Times*, priced at £2.50! Indeed, the lady in the shop told me she was pleased to see it go as it had been there for years. The real value proved to be about £80 - so don't forget to look in every knitting-wool shop you pass! This book has some useful material about early courses and their play and fits neatly into my category concerning the philosophy of the game as it is played. Inability to understand changes in the game as it is played, then and now, leads to

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by Eddie Park

confusion in what we are being asked to provide for the golfer. During the past year I have managed to extend my collection without spending too much money. The largest item, both in price and size, is *The British Islands and their vegetation* by A G Tansley (1939). Sir Arthur Tansley was very much the "father" of ecology in this country in the days before the subject became such a political football. This magnificent tome, published nearly fifty years ago, is remarkable for the fact that it is still in print and is still a standard work of reference. So a secondhand copy at less than half the new price of £75 is good value. Think of any area of Britain or any habitat and you will find a detailed and easily understood description of WHY it is what it is. Knowledge concerning the influence of local soils and local climates on the vegetation is invaluable when the aim is to grow specific perennial grasses. Speaking of soils and their ecological influence, another volume in the "New Naturalist" series which caught my eye was *Britain's Structure and Scenery* by L Dudley Stamp (1946). This concerns the topography and soils of different areas and relates them to the geographical history. Now for two books with the same title: *Turf Culture* by Ian Greenfield (1962) and by Frank Hope (1978). Greenfield is described as "being specifically as agricultural adviser to a leading firm of chemical manufacturers". His views on turf nutrition would not meet with universal approval, but this is a comprehensive work containing much of interest. Frank Hope's book is aimed at the practicing groundsman (as opposed to greenkeeper) but again there are some very useful sections. Another book aimed at the same market is an American publication *Grounds Maintenance Handbook* by H S Conover (1953).

A very general reference book on golf is *The Shell International Encyclopaedia of Golf* by Donald Steel and Peter Ryde (1975), with excellent descriptions of courses and architects as well as of golfers. Now for something completely different - *Lawn making together with proper keeping of putting greens* by Leonard Barron (1906), a book published in New York which records the early difficulties experienced by Americans who tried to copy our fine grassed areas. A quote makes interesting reading: "As well recognise first as last the fact that the world famed lawns of Europe are impossible to the gardens this side of the Atlantic. Over there the grasses grow once they are established and reseed themselves with a facility that is surprising to the New World gardener. Here, with the problems of excessive and brilliant sunshine in summer, often coupled with spells of exhausting drought, and followed by extreme cold of our often rigorous winters, the grasses suffer strains which necessitate an entirely different method of lawn making. Hence the fine art of lawn grass mixtures has developed almost into a science and excites an amount of interest that is not paralled elsewhere." Indeed it was even worse than that when the attempt was made to make lawns and greens in even more unsympathetic climatic areas. Somehow, over the years we allowed ourselves to be persuaded that the Americans did it better than we did. The truth is that greenkeeping over there was much more difficult because of the climate and soils, but they had some success in solving their problems. Read the *Green Section Record* and you will see that many snags remain. As for us, we all fell for the line that by copying American methods we could produce something better. Studying books will certainly not teach anyone all there is to know about golf course maintenance, but it might make us all think before we jump out of the frying pan into the next fire.