

# ROUND UP AT TROON

## New Zealand Greenkeeper

Course management at Royal Troon had an international flavour this year with a twenty-three year old New Zealand greenkeeper as the team's twelve man for the preparation of the Ayrshire course for the 118th Open Championship.

Last year Morgan Henton, from Hamilton on the North Island, did a six month stint at Muirfield and expressing interest to become involved with an Open Championship came to an arrangement between the two Scottish clubs to join Norman Fergusson's staff.

He returned home for three months at the back end of last year and arrived back in Scotland with his wife at the beginning of the season.

Accommodation was impossible to find in Troon on a greenkeeper's wage so they moved down the coast to Ayr travelling in six miles each day on the bus, Morgan to the course and his wife to her job in the nearby Marine Hotel, so both were close to the action.

Talking to Morgan in the greenkeeper's sheds during his lunch break, he told me that New Zealand almost rivals Ireland in the number of courses per head of population. Every town has a golf course. His home town, Hamilton with around 100,000 people has five. There are no links type course, most are parkland based on the American design, with bent and fescue greens and some pennecross, though they also have their fair share of poa.

Training for greenstaff is a mixture of the British and American style. They serve an apprenticeship of 4,000 hours, combined with a correspondence course and block release at a technical college, extending over three years.

Each year the student has to sit two exams and pass before moving on to the next stage. The final examination will provide the trainee with a Trade Certificate in Golf Course Greenkeeping.

If successful there is the opportunity to study for an advanced course to qualify for a Diploma in Turf Culture.

Morgan said he started as an appren-

tice and when he left Hamilton Golf Club after four and half years at the course, he had obtained both his Trade Certificate and his Diploma.

He intends stopping on at Royal Troon for a few months after the Open Championship and then continue his working holiday in Britain until the end of the year, perhaps breaking his journey in New York where he spent a couple of weeks last year with an American Golf Course Superintendent.

For recreation he plays a little golf over the Royal Troon links and the adjacent Portland course. "Its mainly in the evening", he added, "keeping well clear of the members".

This young man is typical of the younger breed of greenkeeper now coming into course management. Ambitious, realising the advantages of world wide travel, he knows his experience in Scotland will pay handsome dividends when the time comes to settle back in his home country.

## Another recruit to 'Arnie's Army'

A lonely figure walking up the par five 16th carrying a single wood was recognised immediately as Arnold Palmer on his way to find a wayward shot.

As he passed a middle aged lady leaning against the fence, Arnold smiled, raised his hand to his forehead and said "Good Afternoon".

She looked in stunned silence for a second or two, then rushed across to her husband and said "He spoke to me - he actually spoke to me - Arnold Palmer said good afternoon!".

Arnold has made a great many people happy over four decades of competition. He has just added another fan for life.

## Smoothing the sand in the dunes

Greenkeepers from all parts of the country came to Royal Troon to assist with bunker raking. This year, on the drought stricken Ayrshire course their duties were totally confined to smoothing the sand, unlike last year at Royal Lytham when it was all hands to the pump to make the course playable, following hours of torrential rain.

It was so dry, at Troon the wispy rough was like a tinder box and it was inevitable someone would drop a lighted cigarette into the dead grass and start a fire.

When it happened at the Prestwick end of the course, spectators were quickly evacuated and the fire brigade were on the scene within minutes to bring the blaze under control.

## Cheers!

Events such as the Open Championship always produce a captive gathering of people with money in their pockets. Hand in hand there are those with the sole objective of getting it out.

Although one can understand the necessity of covering the cost of the stand rents charged by the R & A, the prices demanded by some of the food and drink suppliers were quite obscene.

No names, but the two organisations to whom we will raise our glass in a grateful toast are the Golf Club Stewards Association for their friendly welcome and bar prices equal to those charged in most clubs.

Coupled with those thanks is one to the members and committee of Royal Troon who also dispensed hospitality, without inflation, in the club bar.

"Gentlemen, in every sense of the word - Your good health".

J.E.L.