

## DEVON & CORNWALL

Hon. Sec: Bill Pile,  
33 Knowle Drive,  
Exwick, Exeter EX4 2DF.  
Telephone: 214053

Our Section were certainly blessed with good fortune on the day of our first meeting at Truro Golf Club on Wednesday October 16th. After several days of thick fog and mists causing havoc on the roads and delayed starts for golfing events, our day dawned clear and everyone had a good run down to Truro with the golf starting right on time.

Forty-two members attended the meeting and thirty went out on the course, kept in fine fettle by Dick (sorry, Richard) Parr and his staff, to contest for the Stanley West cup and Ransomes watch. The others were given a conducted tour of the course and work sheds which proved most interesting.

After a first class meal the cards were checked and the results were announced as follows:-

1st R. Whyman (Hcp 13)	40 pts.	Bude G.C.
2nd P. Bullen (Hcp 20)	20 pts.	Newquay G.C.
3rd C. Burgess (Hcp 18)	33 pts.	Droitwich G.C.

Keith Stuart kindly presented the prizes which had been donated by Stanley West Ltd.

The afternoon had been set aside for a discussion on greenkeeping practices, but although a lively debate took place it was on the various merits of the amalgamation of the B.G.G.A. with the P.G.A. and the alternative offer of assistance from the R & A and the golf unions. Our section were unanimous in support of more information on these propositions in the magazine. Certainly the P.G.A. offer should be printed in full also the minutes of all meetings with the R & A golf unions and other greenkeeping associations with any relevant comments from the B.G.G.A. executive.

## MID ANGLIA

Hon. Sec: L. Wakerell,  
26 Loxley Road, Berkhamsted,  
Herts. HP4 3PS

The Autumn Tournament was held over 27 holes at Verulam Golf Club on Tuesday 24th September.

Once again the weather was kind to the 33 competitors and Andrew Burden, a young assistant from John O'Gaunt Golf Club scored 23 points over the morning 9 holes and although steadying down in the afternoon with 33 points, the total 56 points was good enough to take the President's Watch and Trophy.

Second with 54 points (17 + 37) was Cyril Stevens, and third, playing his first Tournament was Steve Denton on 53 points, (17 + 36).

The morning prize was won by Bill O'Hanlon, with 18 points and the afternoon's best round (73 gross) for 43 points was easily good enough to win the Tea Set for young 'Loc' Millar, who we are pleased to welcome from the South West Section.

The course was in fine condition, and the greens absolutely superb, as they always are at Verulam thanks to Geoff Smith and his green staff.

We were delighted to have Mr. Peter Cooper, the Verulam Captain join us

# LETTERS to The Editor

You may be aware that I had the honour to speak at the 5th International Greenkeeping Conference at St. Andrews, on behalf of the B.G.G.A. on the 8th October. This 4 day event was very well organised by S.I.G.G.A., and I personally was very well received, as I am sure was the Chairman, and the two members of the B.G.G.A. who, along with two members from E.I.G.G.A. made up the England team.

I attended all events on all four days, including walking 27 of the 36 holes played by the team. The support of the E.I.G.G.A. board was very much in evidence, in fact one member caddied for 36 holes. It was my pleasure to add my support to the team. So you will understand my feelings on Conference day that the support of your Chairman was missing, preferring by all accounts to leave St. Andrews and play golf elsewhere. The two members of the team, who also went to play golf that day at least came to me and apologised later.

It was at this Conference that the offer from the R.&A. to all Greenkeeping Organisations in Britain was made, but was missed by the B.G.G.A. officials.

This Conference was an eye-opener. To hear the true facts of the proposed merger with the P.G.A. is just one example. Ask yourselves, what do we get out of it? The answer is, a better organised administration, which would be welcome. A central headquarters, again very much a plus. So what has the P.G.A. to gain? Greenkeeper training, so they can take over your jobs? Well, that has got to be a possibility. They get much more strength, for a greenkeeper is a very important member of a golf club staff, and one which is hard to do without, but a club can run without the professional. I am not suggesting it should, but you must see my point.

They point out that more cash will be available. This may be true, but you should also be aware that most of this cash will come from your pockets. So what are the alternatives? I would like to see us make a move to the R.&A. for help, which will be given, and not at the cost of jobs.

The information passed down the line to B.G.G.A. members, that E.I.G.G.A. and S.I.G.G.A. are no more than splinter groups and struggling to get by is rubbish. That was evident at the Conference where they were very well organised and represented.

I listened to many comments made by different members of greenkeeping groups, as well as the press, and one cannot help feeling that unless we are very careful, the B.G.G.A. could end up very much the poor relations. This must not be allowed to happen.

It is my view that the past must now be forgotten, and a big effort made to bring the groups together as soon as possible. I realise that personality problems exist, which are difficult to overcome but if we are to look after the greenkeepers of the future, we cannot afford to let them stand in the way. So I beg all of you to find the common ground that must be there, and end this mess before it is too late. Working with the R.&A. has got to be better than the P.G.A. and no doubt will be taken up by both S.I.G.G.A. and E.I.G.G.A. so just for once we must be together.

I do not apologise to anyone this letter may offend, because I believe that all members of the B.G.G.A. should know what goes on, and if it brings to life some reaction then my letter has done some good. By the time you read this, it may be that some decisions have been taken on your behalf. I only hope they prove to be the right ones.

G. F. CHILD

## NORTHERN

Hon. Sec: D. C. Hannam, 12 Moorfield Avenue, Menston, W. Yorks.  
Telephone: (0943) 72008

Our Autumn Tournament this year visited yet another of Yorkshire's golfing jewels; Alwoodley.

With conditions comparable with the ideal summer, a keen group of speculators sampled and thoroughly enjoyed the delight of Hugh Marshall's magnificent course.

Our thanks to Hugh, his staff and Alwoodley Golf Club for permitting and providing such a super experience.

As this was the final fixture in our 1985 golf calendar we offer thanks to all clubs and greenkeepers responsible for making our year's golf such a success.

for dinner in the evening and present the prizes. We were also pleased to see the Vice-Captain, Mr. Len Beardow, our President, Don Reeder, and indeed many of our Vice-Presidents throughout the day.

The meals were most enjoyable thanks to Veronica Bentham, while husband Ben had a good supply of liquid refreshment on hand for those in need.

We thank the Captain and Members at Verulam for the warm welcome extended to us and of course thanks to the prize donors:

Mr. Don Reeder, our President.	
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Another Section evergreen Tom Burns suffered a heart attack during September.

He lays the blame on stress, pointing out the needless tension created by people in "authority". Judging by what is known and heard, Tom could have a very valid point, worthy of further investigation. Who knows, perhaps our winter meetings might be better taken up by Yoga, Meditation or some other form of mind relaxation!

Tom, we are pleased to hear is on the mend.

Talking of winter meetings:-

November 14th  
The British Association of Landscape Industrial  
December 5th  
Thatch, Irrigation, Nutrition and Aeration  
From the S.T.R.I.  
Moor Allerton Golf Club, 7.30 p.m.



# UNDERSTANDING AMERICAN GREENKEEPING

## Part 2. Maintenance Practices

Martyn T. Jones Consultant Agronomist in Landscape & Leisure

It is common fallacy in Britain that 'American' golf greens are constructed of sand; are excessively irrigated, excessively fertilized, and that their surfaces are soft. Generalisations of 'American' golf greens cannot be made. The diversity in climates, maintenance budgets, construction methods, etc., results in a host of 'American' greens. The grass species on the greens may consist of *Poa annua* (Annual Meadowgrass); or *Agrostis palustris* "Penn-cross"; or a mixture of *Agrostis* and *Fescue*; or hybrid *Bermudagrass*; or even a blend of *Ryegrass* during the Winter months. The soils can vary from strong clays to coarse sands; from very acid to highly calcareous. The surfaces of greens can vary from soft and lush to hard and starved.

The popular notion of 'American' greens being slow, soggy, and plugging, is most easily rebuffed by exemplifying the firm, lightning-fast greens of the Augusta National Links, Georgia; those of Merion Golf Club, Pennsylvania; those of Pebble Beach, California; and virtually all the other tournament courses that are televised in Britain. Our own experiences tell us that the so-called 'typical American golf green' is not typical at all.

At one time it was probably fair to say that the majority of American greens were over-fed and over-irrigated but, nowadays, fertiliser and water usage is much reduced and the demands are for firm, fast greens. Britain and America share this same goal. After all, the U.S.G.A. Green Section has, for many years, been advocating a policy of reduced feeding and watering.

Ignoring the obvious inaccuracies of common generalisations, let us consider some of the maintenance practices currently in use in various parts of the United States and compare them with practices in Britain. Any comparison must take account of the differences in climate, a factor which can often dictate the need for certain operations. In many instances, an exceptional year in Britain, such as the drought of 1976, will offer some indication of the conditions that many American golf course superintendents must face year after year. In fact, the vast majority of American superintendents must cope with much harsher conditions than those. Winters, too, can be very much more severe than any that we may have experienced in the last fifty years.

Many people are familiar with the chemically-orientated greenkeeping systems of some parts of America. Fungicides, in particular, are widely used. In some localities and at certain times of the year, fungicides may be applied to the greens as frequently as every four or five days, and every seven to ten days on the fairways. By our standards, this is unthinkable.

Nevertheless, we are very fortunate in that our climate does not favour the rapid development of serious turf diseases. Even *Fusarium Patch Disease* is relatively mild in comparison with some of the diseases that are experienced during the hot, humid Summer weather of areas of the North-eastern States. Even so, our turf managers soon resort to the use of fungicides to control an outbreak of *Fusarium Patch*. Imagine their horror if their greens were attacked by *Pythium Blight*, a disease which is capable of killing a whole golf green in a matter of only a few hours.

Is it any wonder that some golf courses in the States use vast quantities of fungicides as a preventative measure against such an alarming disease? If our climate encouraged such diseases, we too would use any chemical at our disposal, and in equally large quantities. Areas of the States which enjoy a milder climate, more reminiscent of our own, use no more fungicides than we do. Like ourselves, they have no need to.

In some zones, insect pests such as *Awl*, *Sting* and *Stubby-root Nematodes*; the *Hairy Chinch Bug*, *Hunting Billbug*, *Sod Webworm*, *Mole Cricket*, and *Fall Armyworm* can create further headaches for turfgrass managers. The weather in some years can encourage their numbers to reach epidemic proportions; frequent and expensive chemical control over a large part of the golf course being necessary to avoid severe damage. In the case of *Mole Crickets*, the damage can be worsened by the digging activities of *Armadillos* which are predators of them.

Similarly, the use of fertilisers is often misunderstood. How often has it been stated that the Americans use vast quantities of fertilisers and that their greens are over-fed? Again, as with this Country, some greens are excessively lush but it is not a general policy. Indeed, the United States Golfing Association's 'Green Section', the principal advisory body in the States, recommends very modest rates.

As a guideline, Nitrogen applications for *Bentgrass* greens should be in the order of a half pound per 1,000 square feet per growing month. In an area such as Southern California, which can enjoy 365 days per year of growing weather, the total annual Nitrogen application, using Sulphate of Ammonia as the Nitrogen source, would be in the order of 32lbs. or more per 1,000 square feet. It sounds a lot, doesn't it?

However, when the same guideline is applied to areas of the north-west which suffer a growing season similar to our own, the total application of Sulphate of Ammonia would be approximately 1.5 to 2 ounces per square yard per annum. Even the most ardent critic of 'American' greenkeeping methods has to admit that such a quantity cannot be described as excessive. Indeed, it is far less than many British greenkeepers are applying to their greens.

Even the manicuring of some of the American courses is often misunderstood. Parkland courses on highly fertile soils in Britain require constant manicuring because the growth rates are so rapid. However, in comparison with the growth rates witnessed in the warm, humid areas of America, our parkland courses are very slow. Snakes are a common nuisance to golfers on many courses, with some clubs applying a local ruling of a free drop when a player's ball lies within a club length of a rattlesnake. If the rough were permitted to grow, lost members could well be a bigger problem than lost balls.

In Peninsular Florida, alligators basking in the sun on a golf green, or swallowing golf balls in the rough, are additional golfing hazards that provide a greater challenge than a mere sand trap. Severe rough would constitute a major danger to life and limb.

Most certainly some golf greens in America are over-watered and maintained in a rather soft condition, but the same thing can be said of many greens in Britain.

When judging the relevance or value of a maintenance practice, it must be related to the local soil type and/or climate. For example, the quantity of water needed to irrigate a sand construction in the arid climate of Arizona should not be considered excessive if it is compared with the requirements of a sandy loam in the high rainfall district of Lancashire. Just because an irrigation system is used more frequently in Arizona, it does not mean that the soil moisture content is any greater than it is in Lancashire. The grasses may be maintained in a similar state of drought stress, despite the enormous volumes of water applied. Evapotranspiration rates are so much greater in the hot climate of Arizona where daily temperatures can exceed 110 degrees in the shade that large quantities of water are required just to prevent the grasses from dying. In the



cool temperate climate of Lancashire, only a relatively small quantity of irrigation water is required to maintain the grasses in a similar state.

The total volume of water used does not, necessarily, indicate that irrigation has been excessive. The philosophies of irrigation can be exactly the same but the volumes of water required to achieve a similar result may be very different.

There is a fundamental difference between the best courses in America and their counterparts in Britain. Prestige is a vital ingredient of membership to some American golfers and cost of achievement receives little consideration. Resulting from this, because the better clubs charge astronomical fees to guarantee excellence, there is a proportionately higher cost for mediocrity. It is simply a difference in standards set by the golfers.

Similarly, golf course superintendents vary in ability. Competition is fierce. The better superintendents are extremely knowledgeable and, equally important, very professional. The majority of golf course superintendents are now university trained, most State Universities offering degree courses in turfgrass and golf course management. Salaries can range from as little as £9,000 per annum to above £50,000. A golf club that is willing to pay the high salary is, again, usually rewarded with excellence.

The most frequently quoted comparisons between 'American' and 'British' golf courses, and probably the least related, are maintenance budgets. There is considerable diversity in American budgets, with figures ranging from about £30,000 to over £250,000 per year. British greenkeepers and golfers often express consternation at, what appear to be, extravagant budgets but rarely is it noted

that the severe climates that prevail in many parts of the States make turfgrass maintenance, even to a relatively low standard, very costly.

All too often, critics in this country are only familiar with our own climate and management systems and are totally unaware of the problems in America. Certainly, some of the American clubs have luxury budgets but the vast majority experience similar financial constraints as their British counterparts, although the subsistence figure may be much higher. When more exacting standards are set and essential requirements are greater, the overall maintenance costs are bound to be higher.

Much of the golf course maintenance equipment currently available in Britain was designed in America for American conditions, but they have often proved invaluable to our own maintenance regimes.



*A view of the tree lined fairway at Pine Valley Golf Course, New Jersey, U.S.A.*

Creeping Bent and Bermudagrass, the turfgrasses which form the vast majority of putting surfaces in America, are vigorous species, prone to thatching and graininess. Verti-cutting units on triplex mowers were developed to retard thatch accumulation and minimise nap formation. They were introduced onto the American markets but prove to be just as valuable in Britain. Similarly, if used sensibly, integrated turfcare systems such as the Cushman, or automatic pop-up sprinklers, are very valuable maintenance aids. They are as relevant to Britain as they are to the States, their country of origin. The use of Sulphate of Ammonia and Sulphate of Iron are also introductions from America. Many of our accepted maintenance practices originated in the United States and they have, over the years, proved to be applicable to our climate, provided some allowance is made for our milder conditions.

The use of sand as a construction material is also an American introduction, although all our finest seaside links and heathland courses originated on such sands. Correctly, we should say that the use of sand as a construction medium is a re-introduction. Not all golf greens in America, however, are constructed of very sandy mediums. Many of the older, or lower priced constructions, are loams and display similar problems to those encountered in the U.K., although the severe climates usually result in more pronounced drawbacks.

The American construction techniques, management systems and maintenance equipment have evolved in response to climatic, environmental and social influences. We should not criticise their golf courses. Instead,

we should appraise them and their management techniques and, as we have done in the past, adopt whatever would be advantageous in our climate, and feasible in the British social structure, for the general improvement of our own golfing facilities. Perhaps the Americans will do the same with British golf courses! Most importantly though, we should maintain an open mind and remember that many of our present, accepted maintenance practices originated in the States.

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*Martyn Jones will be contributing further articles in 1986, on the development and maintenance of golf courses world wide.*

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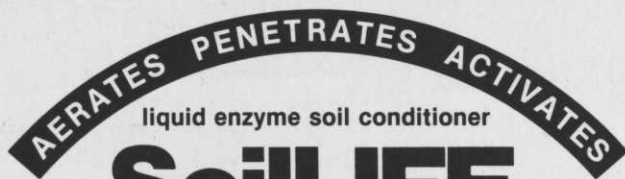
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