

How one Bournemouth business blossomed

WHEN John Charles Roffey settled in Throop, Bournemouth on an eight-acre holding in 1919, his market-garden enterprise steadily expanded and was the mainstay of the business until the outbreak of World War Two.

His two sons, Jack and Harry, joined him after leaving school and, when the founder of the company retired, they took over the business. It continued, initially, in much the same way until the mid-fifties.

It became evident, however, that the business had to find alternative outlets to remain viable. Eventually, among other things, there was a move into horticultural compost production and in the first year's trading the output was 90 tons.

Today, this total is often exceeded in a matter of hours at the modern manufacturing plant in Throop Road.

Over the years, the business gradually expanded and diversified, making topdressings for golf courses, bowling greens and cricket wickets. The company is well-known to greenkeepers in the south and is the distributor for several manufacturers of horticultural and sportsground fertilisers and chemical products. A contractor division offers specialised services to sportsgrounds.

In February 1984, Jack and Harry Roffey retired. The company was taken over by another two enterprising brothers, Michael and Graham Patrick, who have since applied their business skills to the project by enlarging the compost manufacturing plant - the covered production area covers 55,000 sq feet - and expanding the product range.

Although the business has changed hands, it still maintains a 'family tradition.' David Roffey, a third generation of the founder, is a company director and responsible for technical research.

He was instrumental for the introduction of Xylorganic topdressing in 1986. Popular with many greenkeepers, this material contains no peat and is, therefore, of great value where thatch accumulation has to be carefully controlled. It contains soil conditioners, is rich in trace elements and, because it has ion exchange properties, is invaluable on light sandy soils where leaching may be a problem. Xylorganic is a new concept in organic dressings, which will not seal or cap the surface to make it impermeable.

The latest enterprise concerns Notts Sports and Safety Systems, with which the company has developed Notts Compound,

which is used in conjunction with Notts Grass Reinforcement Carpet. This material is a loosely needled polypropylene fabric through which natural grass can grow.

It is best laid on to a prepared seed bed and, after further seeding and topdressing, a vigorous sward can be established. The root system is protected by the fabric, which allows the grass to recover after damage, thus reducing the need for maintenance by groundstaff.

NGR eliminates the effect of erosion on areas of intensive wear, which generally get muddy and uneven. This protective fabric maintains a firm level surface that needs no special treatment and it can be cut and spiked in the same way as unprotected grass. It has tremendous potential in literally hundreds of different applications among which are golf tees that often take a lot of punishment.

Roffey Bros has been appointed sole agents for Notts Synthetic Surfaces in Hampshire, Dorset, Wiltshire and the Isle of Wight. Further information on Roffey Bros can be obtained from the company at Throop Road, Bournemouth BH8 0DF. Tel: 0202 573752.

The expansive Roffey Bros plant.



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