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2 GREENKEEPER NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1984

\$150.00**

This issue

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1984

Front cover: The new Nimbus controlled droplet application (CDA) sprayer has been launched by ICI Professional Products and is invaluable to the greenkeeper applying herbicides to turf, paths and around buildings. It has been designed to give reliable and accurate distribution of ready-for-use, oil-based formulations of herbicides, using optimum droplet size and low-volume application. Unlike waterdiluted chemicals, there is no measuring, mixing or large quantities of water to carry. The hand-held sprayer is lightweight, so it can be operated for long periods and the system is simple to use. For further details and the name of your local distributor, contact ICI Professional Products on Farnham (0252) 724525.



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Three hearty cheers!

THERE has been recent acknowledgement, at long last, for the humble greenkeeper—now often referred to as a superintendent—from no lesser mortals than Bob Hope, Tom Watson and Arnold Palmer.

As the daughter, sister and mother of greenkeepers, spanning more than 50 years, I applaud this recognition in the Press. I have often wondered where, without the greenkeeper and his loyal band of greensmen, would the club golfer or professional be?

My father, brother and son, each in turn, have restored fading golf courses with hard work and expertise, for low wages (compared to the tournament-playing professional) and with hardly any recognition. Sadly, my father and brother are no longer alive, but my son carries on the family tradition.

A greenkeeper needs to be a human wonder and a breed apart—not only requiring a love of nature, but the brain of a scientist, accountant and mechanic. First and foremost, he needs a sense of humour, for it still seems that committee members think they know the job better.

I would suggest that anyone complaining about the condition of a golf course and 'know all' committee members spend some time out on the course working as one of the team.

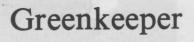
After days of getting soaked through and battling with the elements, they would realise that the greenkeeper does know best. Rarely, at the end of a hard day, is there a welcoming canteen offering a hot meal and there are often no showers for greens staff and only makeshift toilet facilities. It is no easy life—a greenkeeper has to be dedicated to his work.

Thank you, Messrs Hope, Watson and Palmer for bringing to light the fact that, without the genius and hard work of the greenkeeper and his staff, many of golf's pleasures would be lacking.

Remember, golfers and committee members everywhere, your greenkeeper and his staff are your most important assets, so get them to the top of the salary scale now!

Three generations later, I still see the greenkeeper being treated as lowly. Surely, as these three great men of golf have said, it is high time the greenkeeper was regarded in a different light and received praise according to the work he does? *Mildred Scruton*

• Mildred is the daughter of Stanley Smith, formerly head greenkeeper at Halifax Ogden and Alwoodley; sister of Raymond Smith, formerly head greenkeeper at Bloxwich and Stourbridge and mother of Gary Scruton, who has worked at Bloxwich, Scarcroft, Moor Allerton and is now the head greenkeeper at Otley.



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The reclamation of indigenous turf

Eddie Park continues his series

NEWS that the STRI is to set up a specialised golf and bowling greens section with the active support of Jim Arthur has cheered all those with the true interests of golf greenkeeping at heart. The fact that Dr Peter Hayes and Jim consider their recommendations are so similar as to render closer collaboration essential is no great surprise to their friends.

Jim is in the direct line of descent from the old Board of Greenkeeping Research and received his postgraduate training at Bingley from R.B. Dawson and R.P. Libbey. Similarly, Peter is a botanist who has specialised in ecology of grasses and now inevitably finds himself reaching the same conclusions as to remedial treatment of damaged golf courses.

With this formidable array of expertise being mustered, there can be no excuse for clubs seeking or adopting less soundly-based advice.

Those who, like me, take an interest in vintage books on golf courses and their maintenance might recognise this extract from a book written by Norman Hackett in 1928. 'Are we in this country on the eve of an almost entire change of opinion and practice in regard to the production and maintenance of the finest turf? One of the advantages of the chemist and the scientist over the theologian is that the former are able to prove or disprove their theories. Within a comparatively short time their fellow scientists are able to confirm their hypothesis; it may be months or years but the truth is finally established.'

In passing, it has to be said that anyone who tracks through the history of greenkeeping will be amazed at the frequency with which matters have been discovered and then apparently discarded and the same old mistakes made again. Perhaps we shouldn't be though. A distinguished physician said to me recently that the extraordinary thing in human life is the way people fail to do the obviously right thing.

However, back to Hackett. He, of course, lived in Bingley and played a

very large part in the establishment of the Board of Greenkeeping Research, of which he was the first secretary. He also played a prominent role in formulating the treatments that helped to pull so many clubs out of the 'agricultural' disasters of liming and fertilising, which so characterised the 1920s. How quickly these things are forgotten!

It is clear from other articles in early editions of the board's journals that Hackett firmly believed that if experiments furnished proof that certain practices were harmful to fine turf, then people would cease to use them. Sadly, things have not worked out like that. There has been a general move, equally evident in farming and gardening, to the belief that, with new technology, man could master nature. The corollary to that belief was that golfers could order up whatever conditions they desired, regardless of ecological facts.

Attitudes

We may now, again, be at a point in history when a corner has been turned—at least in terms of attitudes if not achievements. We would do well to take stock and act wisely to ensure yet another false dawn does not occur.

I am frequently told what a pity it is that no good text book exists on greenkeeping. Perhaps early editions of Dawson and Sutton still have some merit. The last three years of the *Bingley Bulletin* provides up-to-date and sound information. The *Bingley Annual Journal* is, I suppose, symptomatic of the poor support golf has given the STRI. Bags of research on soccer and amenity grasses, but little of practical use to the golf greenkeeper.

We still hear talk of 'alternative theories' and the need to hear 'all sides of the argument' at seminars. A bit of democracy is all very well, but if it is a device to permit salesmen in disguise to extol the virtues of their system, machine or chemical it can go too far. That is not to say everyone should hold identical views. There must be room for innovation, but we should be very clear that little is really new. Most good practices were discovered by experience nearly a century ago and had been investigated and checked 40 years ago.

Continuity, however, seems to falter in places like golf clubs. People hear of new theories, new chemicals, new machines and with the average golfer's view that course maintenance is really a pretty simple affair, the door is open to the latest gimmick. The salesman is in and although he may know nothing about the basic sciences of the subject, his job is, nevertheless, to sell his product.

There is now a real need for events to follow the course that Hackett was so hopefully predicting 56 years ago—that is for methods of management to be soundly based in plant ecology, as well as soil physics and soil chemistry and for new methods, new machines, new chemicals to be properly investigated by reputable research bodies <u>before</u> they are unleashed on unsuspecting consumers.

I believe the case against target golf in Britain, with resultant problems of Poa Annua, thatch and cost, has been made in full by Nick Park in his *Golf Monthly* series. I do not propose to repeat the arguments, but rather to work on the assumption that you agree with us that in fescue/bent greens we can have, in this country, the finest golf turf in the world.

Many greenkeepers and club officials have been kind enough to share their experiences with me and it is my present task to present an analysis of the state of the art in the reclamation of fine turf. I meet and hear from many people who are convinced this is the right line to take, but have come up against the difficulties. Many have trodden a lonely path for too long and a sharing of views is always beneficial.

There are some other encouraging

factors, as well as the new alliance between Bingley and Jim Arthur. Most notable has been the splendid effort to get St Andrews back to its old self and we should congratulate Walter Woods and his staff on their success. takes real courage It and determination to produce a course like that. The reward comes not only in praise, but in the knowledge that for the millions watching TV across the world it was a most thrilling spectacle.

After hours of boredom and watching (or, more probably, not watching) some of the events on the PGA European Tour, it was magical. Much the same could be said of the Panasonic European Open at Sunningdale. American commentators rather scathingly, refer to real British golf (the original game!) as 'bump and run.' I would rather play and watch it than 'fly and splosh.'

Research

There is already some activity on the golf ball and equipment front. Thanks to the research department of a British manufactuer, we have been able to try some golf balls of lower weight and compression on fast, firm greens. Subjectively, I found them more enjoyable and easier to play but, no doubt, scientific research will follow.

The R&A is showing real interest in these matters and is to be congratulated for using some of the cash from the Open to promote higher standards in course maintenance. Money has already been allocated for research and training and other projects are being considered. At last, there are club officials considering their priorities in expenditure and moving course maintenance to the top. Thus, we have made an encouraging start to the real necessity of educating golfers and I can report that that will continue-not least in Greenkeeper.

So the future may be looking brighter, but we must look harder at the problems of the present. I am inclined to think that there has been too much argument and time wasted over policy setting and not enough on the difficulties of implementing policy, while satisfying golfers at the same time. Much of this will eventually be solved by the provision of adequate finance both to train and reward qualified course managers.

In the meantime, it is important for both clubs and advisors to realise that the present position is far from satisfactory. The annual advisory visit may produce an excellent diagnosis and treatment plan, but implementation in the face of totally ignorant golfers and commitees is too often doomed to failure or only partial success. Examples abound of demands for overwatering and overfeeding, as well as requests for "don't slit this week—we have a medal on Saturday."

Some golfers are now more difficult to fool. There is a great thirst for knowledge about course maintenance and in almost every club there seems to be talk of "getting rid of that meadow grass," etc. But clubs continue to be rather insular institutions and correct information takes time to get around. Committees continue to try to get away with phoney excuses, but increasingly they are being rumbled. The quite appalling conditions on some courses once the wet weather sets in can be so bad I am astonished that anyone wants to play.

It is now some years since I went to a course where, in winter, they played off temporary tees into the rough (the fairways were so wet they couldn't be cut even in October) and from the rough (having teed up again) on to temporary greens. They purchased their first fairway slitter 15 years ago, but is has stood and rusted ever since. Anyone who has to pick up the bits after perhaps many years of this sort of devoted mismanagement deserves all the encouragement he can get.

To return to my theme—you can't fool all the people all the time... I remember looking at a series of annual reports of a club where conversion of grass types to Poa annua both on greens and fairways resulted in an almost annual series of misfortunes. Drought damage, soft wet greens, disease—you name it, they had it. And in 18 out of 21 annual reports, they actually claimed there had been 'exceptional' weather. In England?

Twice this year we have seen Press reports of neighbouring courses staging tournaments where one is closed after showers, but the other stays open and play continues. You do not have to be too clever to guess where the aeration is defective. And not all punters are fooled when a course is described as being in 'marvellous condition' when they can deduce for themselves by the behaviour of ball meeting turf that the real condition is well scarified meadow grass growing on wet thatch.

That word 'condition' is not conducive to keeping my blood pressure down. It seems to me to be the word used for a totally subjective judgement by a man who cannot recognise what he is seeing! I'm not very happy, either, to be told a course is well manicured. Manicurists belong in beauty salons, not on golf courses. Far too often, through ignorance, a committee will force a greenkeeper to use too great a proportion of his work scarce staff time on unnecessary trimming jobs when he knows the real requirement is for time spent on good husbandry-aeration, hand treatment of problem areas, top dressing, etc. They don't realise such jobs even exist. This obsession with manicuring at the expense of good husbandry is one of the chief barriers erected by clubs to make the reclamation of indigenous turfluxury turf—impossible.

People often say to me "what do you use to thicken up turf density in reappearing colonies of bent and fescue?" Well, the answer is not to be found in a bag or a hosepipe. It lies in getting the sward into the best possible health—structurally, bacteriologically, pathologically and chemically.

At Golf Course '84, we heard a great deal about American methods. Perusal of an American or Canadian greenkeepers' magazine and its adverts is, for me, a frightening business. I appreciate how well they have done in managing to grow 'golf' turfgrass at all in the face of their varying difficult climates and soils. I recognise the value of some of their basic research. Just so long as they do not try to inflict their methods on us as so many are totally irrelevant to our climate.

Golf originated and prospered in the UK precisely because nature had endowed us with perfect turf for the game. In praiseworthy attempts to improve it, we must be careful not to spoil it altogether.

Mistakes

For those faced with undoing the mistakes of the past, a prime difficulty is the mania for what I call 'gradualism', which requires you to say: "let's try to get through this nasty business smoothly-there must be a middle way." We are dealing with nature—a brutal mistress and we are relatively powerless for all our modern technology. Next time you are in a bookshop, take a look at a new book by David Bellamy called The Queen's Secret Garden. It is a beautiful book about the 49 acres of Buckingham Palace gardens. In such a place, with such resources of money

Continued on page 15...



John Campbell Golf Course Consultant

TURF PROBLEMS

A technical advisory service is offered to deal with turf problems and raise the standards of course upkeep.

Inspection tour made of the course and a detailed report prepared for future guidance.

COURSE ALTERATIONS

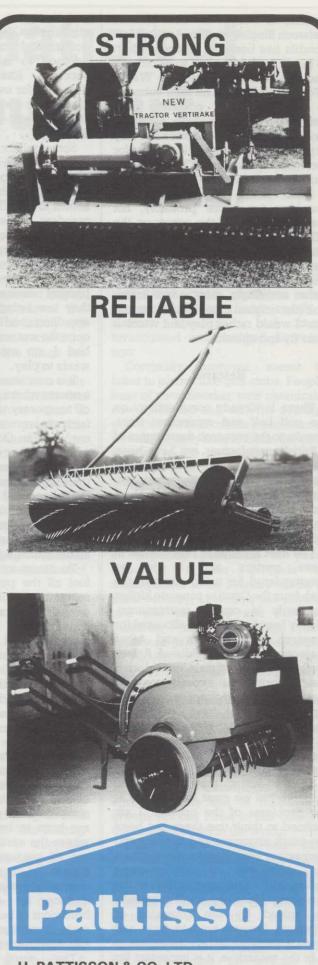
Advice given on course alterations and the remodelling of greens, tees and bunkers to improve the general playing conditions and facilitate more economical course maintenance.

BUNKERS

Many courses are over-bunkered and such hazards involve a lot of labour to keep them tidy — topping them up with sand is also expensive. Course surveys can be carried out to advise on bunker strategy and eliminate those that are out of play.

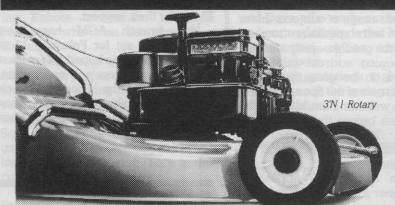
Full details of this personal advisory service can be obtained by contacting:

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News & Views



Headquarters News

You will all doubtless be pleased to hear that I intend to keep my end-ofyear HQ news fairly short! Details of EIGGA's forthcoming educational conference are given on this page. I am pleased with the way plans for the conference are progressing and look forward to it being an exciting and successful event.

In my notes last Christmas, I reflected on 1983 being a gratifying first year for EIGGA. Everything had galloped along at such a pace and it was pleasurable to look back on the achievements of a few short months. This year has been different, but just as satisfying. The pace has slowed somewhat, which was inevitable, but I feel the association has broadened its outlook and attitude and has matured as a result.

I occasionally hear people ask "What is EIGGA doing for its members?" The answer is "Everything in its power." The process of change is painfully slow and arduous, but we continually strive to effect change and improvement where necessary. I agree that it is most frustrating for members when they are not aware of the efforts being made on their behalf. Sometimes a degree of confidentiality has to be maintained in order to assist the achievement of our aims, but I can assure you that, although the wheels of progress turn somewhat slowly, they are turning constantly in order to make EIGGA a strong and powerful voice in the industry.

With the festive season almost upon us, now is the ideal time to purchase EIGGA clothing! I will do my best to get orders delivered as soon as possible. Blazers are navy, feature the EIGGA emblem and cost $\pounds43.50$. Ties are also navy with a gold emblem and cost $\pounds3.75$. Pullovers, supplied to us by a top manufacturer, come in navy, bottle green, camel and wine and cost $\pounds15$.

Finally, I wish all members and their families a merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year. Danielle Jones, General Adminstrator.

EIGGA Annual Conference

Notice of the association's annual conference to be held at Warwick University from March 22-24 is being distributed with this issue of *Greenkeeper*. The conference will have a wide range of subjects under discussion with speakers from all aspects of the greenkeeping industry.

The opening address on Friday afternoon is to be given by Dickie Jeeps, chairman of the Sports Council. Delegates will then be addressed by 13 speakers before the association's AGM on Sunday afternoon. The president and one of the trustees will be elected at the AGM and nomination details will appear in *Greenkeeper* together with a formal notice covering the meeting.

It is hoped that as many members as possible will attend the conference, giving demonstrable support to the association.

London

David MacIndoe, who was chairman of the branch during its formation, has left West Herts and moved across the sea to Ireland, where he takes charge of the two courses at Killarney.

We all wish David and his family every success. He will be missed by his many friends and I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for all his time and effort in ensuring that the branch found its feet. I'm sure his enthusiasm has rubbed off on many of us.

David's successor as chairman of the branch is Tom Low of Hartsbourne and no doubt we can all learn from his wealth of experience.

The dry summer had to end eventually and it did just that on the day of our autumn meeting at Porters Park. Over 40 members and guests enjoyed their golf on a course prepared by Martin Smith and his team. It was, as usual, in excellent condition.

Barbara Norton and her staff made sure everyone forgot the miserable weather by preparing a superb meal. Mike Peters, Norman Exley and Tom MacDonald organised the cards and competitions and my personal thanks go to them as I was unable to attend. Tom Low presented the prizes and entertained the audience with his debut address as chairman.

The results were: 18 hole

Stableford, 0-14 section—C.Slater, who won the Parker shield and Rigby Taylor decanter; 15-28 section— A.Grew, who received the Pattisson trophy and the fourball better-ball medal—C.Barker and R.Cameron. The branch's thanks also go to Kingston House, Synchemicals and King's for their support.

The branch AGM has been provisionally set for February 12 at Aldenham and it is hoped that at least two guest speakers will be present. On behalf of the London branch committee, I wish all EIGGA members a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

David Low.

Surrey

Branch activities for the winter include a lecture by Honey Bros on chainsaw safety, at the RAC club, Epsom on Monday November 12 (7.30pm); a talk by Martyn Jones at Malden GC on Monday December 3 (7.30pm); a turkey trot also at Malden on Monday December 17 (11am); a presentation by Lloyds of Letchworth at Walton Heath on Monday January 14 (7.30pm) and a talk at Woking GC on PGA course presentation on Monday February 11 (1.30pm).

The branch AGM will be held in March on a date to be arranged details will be published in *Greenkeeper*. Application forms for competitions from Ken MacNiven, 5 Warren Farm Cottages, Guildford Road, Effingham, Surrey. Ø Bookham 54312.

East Anglia

When a golf tournament was arranged for Bury St Edmunds, we all knew it would be a good day, but I don't think anyone thought it would be so good. Everyone made us feel welcome, none more so than the captain and chairman of greens.

The food definitely proved the way to our hearts and a special mention goes to Sterlie for organising the players and preparing the course so well—a job he can do with his eyes closed.

The results were: 1st greenkeeper, 0-18 section, winner of the SISIS trophy—P. Sylvester, 39 points; 1st greenkeeper, 19-28 section, winner of the Rushbrook salver—Steve