

under the care of professional arboriculturalists, would have been thinned and brashed and managed, left to their own devices so that only the peripheral trees could develop to any satisfactory state, and one-sidedly at that, while the inner trees are mere etiolated beanpoles, with a tuft of foliage at the top, if not dead?

I am saddened by the opposition of a sizeable proportion of the conservation world to the establishment of new golf courses on the grounds of disturbing natural environments. By most people's management and standards, fairways today no longer receive granular, inorganic fertilisers; massive applications of lethal cocktails of insecticides, herbicides and fungicides are not applied on a routine basis and positive management ensures the survival far more efficiently of the very habitat conservationists fear will be destroyed by pollution or traffic.

Golf courses, in fact, make excellent conservation areas and, indeed, many of the hundreds that I have advised take positive action to look after special local fauna and flora under threat, whether this be natterjack toads or rare orchids. Badgers, incidentally, are safer on a golf course than anywhere in Britain, though, thankfully, mass gassing and eradication as part of a campaign against recurring bovine T.B. has hopefully stopped.

The rough of any golf course is probably only bettered by one other environment regarding the absence of disturbing humans and that is motorway verges.

What is more important is that golf courses both prevent agricultural exploitation of our heathlands and reduce trespass and disturbance. I often think the greatest enemies of birds are bird-watchers — especially the army of twitchers who descend on some previously unspoilt habitat, or even someone's garden, to merely say they have seen some rare vagrant!

Of course it is assumed that such golf course construction will not involve total destruction of a site to create an 'identikit course', with the 1st taken from some US course, the 2nd from a Spanish one, the 3rd from Scotland and so on.

In fact, the greatest architects always used the land they were given to its best potential, but with modern earth-moving on a massive scale making recontouring rather more feasible than in the days of horses and wagons, you wonder if, in the absence of this restraint, the same

principle would have been adhered to!

Conservation-minded head greenkeepers often work closely with officers of the nature conservancy, as well as the local county naturalist trusts. Rarely is it necessary to spray herbicides on even semi-rough and, in any case, the weeds in close-mown turf are usually common or unremarkable and not the rarities you find around the rest of the course.

Conservation programmes can be formulated to ensure survival of endangered flora, either by positive protection or indirect encouragement. A good example is the controlling of water tables. Many courses I advise have established small conservation areas, not left to their own devices, but managed properly, primarily to keep out people!



BY JIM ARTHUR

Positive management programmes in woodland clearance have created more attractive environments for flowers and birds. Thinning out — and, indeed, coppicing in some cases — has produced kaleidoscopic carpets of spring flowers in place of dense, shaded, bramble-infested, smothered woodland. You do not get too many birds in the dense pine wood, or even in smothered birch scrubs. They live and feed on the perimeters. Mown grass between controlled, open rough attracts a far wider range of wildlife than dense scrub.

Water features, if built naturally (please no lakes halfway up hills!) are a great attraction to all wildlife.

I do get a little aerated when

sensible management is stopped because of the ill-thought-out, if well-intentioned, objections of those who are, the worst enemies of their own wishes. Dead elms due to be felled on one course were (temporarily, I am glad to say), reprieved 'because they would attract woodpeckers.' Has anyone ever seen a woodpecker tackling iron-hard, dead elm, which would resist a pneumatic drill? Dead willows, perhaps. Elms, no!

Anguished screams greet the felling of any tree yet, within a few weeks, no one can remember what it was like. Sensible removal of shallow-rooting, totally unsuitable, quick-growing *Leylandii* is resisted to the last ditch, yet when they are cleared (assuming they have not blown down), the improvement is the subject of favourable comment.

All I ask any conservationist is a truthful answer to five questions.

● Why is the present condition more worthwhile preserving than, say, the open habitat of 30 to 50 years ago?

● Do you accept that all trees grow and have you thought whether the ones you want to preserve will have the room to grow to maturity unless you remove others nearby?

● Why do you want to preserve trees, misguidedly planted years ago, that are not natural to the environment of your course — for example, poplars, *Leylandii*, flowering cherries, etc?

● Would not a more open course of heather or gorse be more attractive than dark, unrelieved avenues of alien conifers, dank and dark in winter and fly-ridden in summer?

● Do you accept that golf is a game associated with open spaces and does not need to be screened from either public gaze or fellow golfers?

If the answers indicate that members prefer to play up dark avenues of ever-increasing swamping trees (the weak ones dying on their feet) and do not like open heathland or links, then I cannot help them, but I suppose everyone is entitled to their preferences. It would be a dull world otherwise.

My aim is, however, to make sure protestors know what are the inevitable results of their adopting an ostrich-like attitude to a constantly developing ecology and to understand both the benefits of timely action and costs of repairing the inevitable disasters caused by procrastination!

Next month the theme will be the link between sensible conservation and natural management.

Out ● On ● The ● Course

Bill Lawson



John Campbell met EIGGA chairman and Heswall GC course manager Bill Lawson.

HESWALL is one of those delightful and interesting courses on the Wirral peninsula. It overlooks the Dee Estuary to the Welsh coast beyond and this contributes to an impressive panoramic backdrop.

Although it cannot be termed a

seaside course, it has all the essential ingredients, with a whiff of the ozone and gently undulating terrain. The exposed nature of the course layout and vagaries of wind and weather all combine to convey an illusion of links golf at its best.

The testing course's trim and tidy condition bears testimony to all the dedicated efforts of the articulate and likeable course manager Bill Lawson, 48, and his enthusiastic greenkeeping staff. "I'm a Liver-

Continued overleaf...

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The Dee Estuary and Welsh coast provide the backdrop as a Hydromain works the 18th green.

puddian," Bill said "and came to Heswall Golf Club 20 years ago with my wife Wyn because we liked the area." The couple now have a 16-year-old daughter Kirsty.

Bill is undoubtedly a knowledgeable and engaging personality who has the interests of his profession at heart. As chairman of the English and International Golf Greenkeepers' Association, his administrative ability and ambitious drive make him an ideal candidate for such a responsible position. Under his leadership, EIGGA is bound to progress in the right direction.

I'm pleased to say Bill is an avid reader of *Greenkeeper*. He added: "I would like to see a little more emphasis towards the younger greenkeeper. It pleased me to see a contribution from one of my staff in a recent issue. More young men in the business should be encouraged to write for the magazine — it's the ideal way to communicate."

But back to the man... How, I wondered, did he break into the profession?

"I came into it straight from school because I relished the challenge of an outdoor life. I started off working for a landscaping company building golf courses in the Merseyside area and was involved in the construction of Lee Park Golf Course on the outskirts of Liverpool, where I eventually became head greenkeeper. I moved to Heswall in 1965.

"Maintaining a golf course on its estuary is not an easy task — there is little shelter and we are often buffeted by the elements. The soil on the course is mainly heavy and the prevailing wind keeps it cold until well into the growing season. Therefore, spring growth is usually late with us. By comparison, there are tree lined courses of great quality, such as Sandiway and Delamere Forest, nearby and unfortunately golfers sometimes try to compare us with these sheltered courses where growth response is much more rapid early in the season.

"Another problem we have to contend with is the amount of weeds that move around the estuary. There are areas on my course where I must keep the rough under control. If I don't, weeds like spartina will quickly invade the turf. So I have to be constantly on the watch for any infestation of marshland weeds. Species such as toadrush, mat grass, etc, can quickly take over."

Prospects

Bill has some interesting views on the prospects for young men coming into greenkeeping. "If a lad likes to work out of doors in all kinds of weather, I would recommend greenkeeping as a career, but I would like to see clubs give him

every opportunity right from the start of his employment," he said. "Education and training are important, so he should be allowed to attend the nearest and best college with the facilities and syllabus to teach the science of turf culture and other related subjects.

"Young lads should not be merely regarded as a source of cheap labour for a few years and then cast aside. This is a difficult time for greenkeeping — a lot of people don't understand a lot about our business and have too much to say about it. If a young man can stand the pressures, I would have no hesitation in advising him to take up greenkeeping. He has to be aware that a lot of diplomacy and tact is needed, for we have to deal with all kinds of people.

"Few greenkeepers could honestly say that criticism does not affect them. If it doesn't, then I am not too sure they think enough about the job. While we should be prepared to accept constructive criticism, there are times when we have to listen to unfair opinions about the course's condition after a golfer has had a bad round. One has to be thick-skinned at times to shrug off ill-timed remarks that are unjustified. We constantly tread a difficult path and it would be true to say that most greenkeepers worry about their jobs.

"I think greenkeeper training at present is as good as its ever been

and by saying that I don't mean it is perfect by any means. The educational facilities in Scotland are by far the best. But now that we in England have arrived at the stage of picking out four or five colleges with the right type of syllabus and lectures, educational training now is going forward and standards should gradually rise as this is reflected in better quality maintenance.

"The only thing that worries me is the difference of opinion over the type of greens we want. Golfers tend to forget that greenkeepers will produce what they can to the best of their ability. It is difficult for young men attending colleges to be told the way to prepare a golf green and then get other opinions through the media preaching something entirely different.

"I have been associated with greenkeeper training for the past 15 years and am involved with the Cheshire College of Agriculture. We have a close relationship with the English Golf Union and the liaison committee, as well as working closely with the trade. We are well in advance of most colleges now, but the thing

that concerns us still is the diversity of opinion in the media about greenkeeping practices. I think there should be uniformity of teaching on this subject, so there is no confusion in the minds of young men being trained.

"Greenkeeping experts, such as Jim Arthur, Peter Hayes and yourself are the only competent people with the length of experience to voice an opinion and I'm not sure about anybody else.

Experience

"Once a head greenkeeper has had five years plus experience on his own course, he should have acquired enough local knowledge to allow him to adapt his skill and training to keep the course in satisfactory playing order to satisfy the membership. However, there are occasions when we have problems and it makes sense to bring in a properly qualified agronomist to give an independent, expert opinion. He can also help when it comes to getting an essential item of new machinery, for his advice may influence the committee on the

necessity to make the investment."

"We now have very efficient, sophisticated equipment for mowing, but I would like to see some improvements in the methods of aeration from shallow to deep penetration without causing quite so much disturbance to the playing surface of greens. I wouldn't deny that the modern machinery for this task does a good job, but this is one phase of maintenance that seems to upset a lot of golfers. There are times of the year when they accept that this kind of work has to be done and they are prepared to put up with a certain amount of inconvenience. But some of this work is completely unacceptable to them and I am inclined to agree.

"I would like to see improved methods of aeration for golf greens, whether it be hollow or slit tining, etc, at the depth we require with the minimum surface disturbance. The modern machinery for aeration is good, but I am concerned that it is getting bigger. It causes upheaval and does do a certain amount of damage to the turf. Only time will tell what the long term effects of some

Continued overleaf...



Heswall's clubhouse occupies a commanding position.

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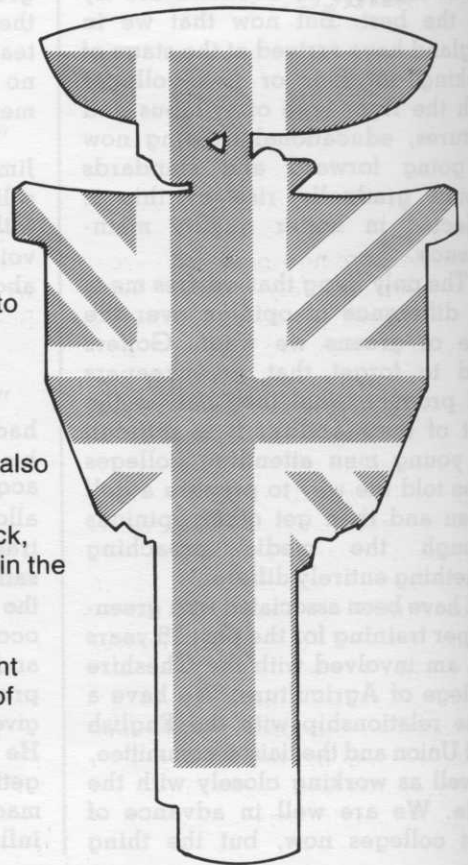
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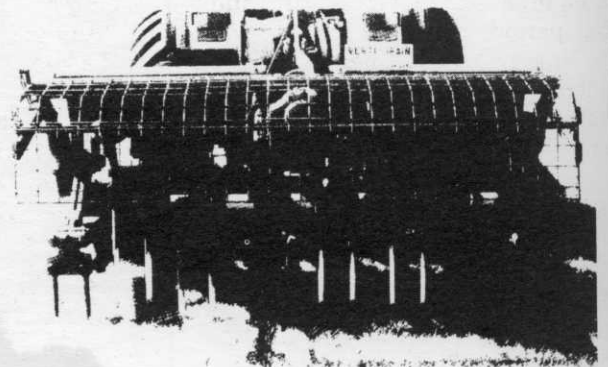
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Out ● On ● The ● Course Continued...

of our greenkeeping methods are going to be."

"Vandals are now part and parcel of modern society and greenkeepers have got to expect some intrusion at times from them. Their favourite game is to damage turf on the greens — having a reserve of quality turf can help restore good playing conditions as quickly as possible. I remember one occasion when we had some of our greens vandalised overnight before the Cheshire Championship. Huge lumps of turf were gouged out of the greens and it was a dismal sight, but we were undaunted.

"By patiently gathering up all the displaced bits of turf and painstakingly replacing them like pieces of a jigsaw, we were able to get the greens back into reasonable shape for play.

"Security at our isolated equipment sheds on the course is a problem that has become more serious over the last 18 months. We have had three break-ins in succession within that period and on each occasion the thieves took the petrol tanks off machines. The price of petrol makes it a much sought after commodity by villains and it is not a pleasant experience to open up your sheds in the morning and find all the petrol tanks gone, particularly when you have a heavy mowing schedule planned. I know from bitter experience that new petrol tanks are not easy to get in a hurry.

"We plan to increase security by fencing in the whole equipment compound and fitting the sheds with a burglar alarm and lights. Some of the machinery is now kept near the clubhouse."

With a keen interest in greenkeeper training, Bill has specific points on how to deal with staff. "The type of training I prefer to give a young lad from the first day he comes is, first and foremost, to make him part of the team and let him know that he is not being employed just to rake bunkers.

Sophisticated

"I like to put him with other members of the staff handling sophisticated machinery. I don't mean that he should be using the equipment from day one, but once he has become familiar with the course, it is good for him to get acquainted with all the machinery at an early stage by talking to the operators and seeing how servicing is done.

"Any young man with enthusiasm and a keen interest soon picks things up and quickly learns some of the tricks of the trade. By patiently coaching him along and studying his attitude to the job, you soon find out when he is ready to handle expensive items of sophisticated equipment.

"Over the years we have trained seven young men who have had the ambition to succeed and they are

now all skilled greenkeepers in various parts of the country. One of them, I am pleased to say, has got himself a job in Delaware, USA. I have enjoyed the privilege of helping to expand their practical knowledge on many aspects of course maintenance and the club has always taken a keen interest in their training and education."

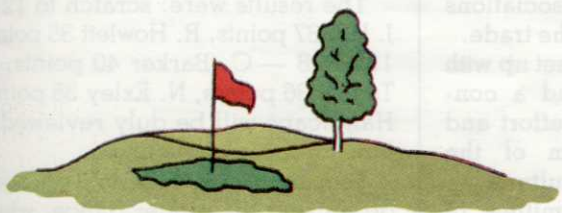
Bill remembers particular individuals who were a great help to him in the early days of his career. "I recall how helpful Tom Bridges, head greenkeeper at Royal Liverpool, was and also Bill Bridges of Wallasey Golf Club. They were men you could go and talk to because they had been in greenkeeping a long time. I also had lots of good advice from Duggie Pate at Royal Birkdale.

"I have always considered Heswall a beautiful site to work on and I'm fortunate in that respect. The clubhouse is in a commanding position overlooking most of the layout, so I can't afford to have an untidy course. At the same time, we don't pay too much attention to the ponds on the course, for we like to preserve a natural look to them. We do some work on the edges to keep them opened up for the wild duck that visit us from the river, but we don't keep them groomed like they do on American courses.

"Most of our rough can easily get very thick, so we have to keep it cut short. I like to look upon Heswall as the kind of course that all players will enjoy and, as far as I'm concerned, that is the object of the exercise. The pattern of greenkeeping on any golf course is largely up to the man in charge and it is up to him to maintain a standard of upkeep that will please the membership. That has always been my policy."

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Dear Sir

The following letter was sent recently to the editor of *Golf World*.

We note with great interest in Peter Alliss' column in your April issue there is to be a National Putting Competition sponsored by Mentzendorf Kummel. The proceeds of the competition are to be divided between the Golf Foundation and the British Golf Greenkeepers' Association, the latter to be for a 'centre for agronomy learning,' a sort of huge nursery where young and old greenkeepers could come to lectures and listen to the latest ideas on golf course maintenance, machinery, etc.

Apart from the fact that the British Golf Greenkeepers' Association represents only a section of greenkeepers in the UK, a centre for learning and advice already exists nationally in the form of the Sports Turf Research Institute which, although recently having received funding from the R&A, has been severely short-changed by golf, as a game, in the past.

We wonder what the competitors in this excellent competition will get for half their money?

The Board of Management, English And International Golf Greenkeepers' Association.

Peter Alliss replies thus:

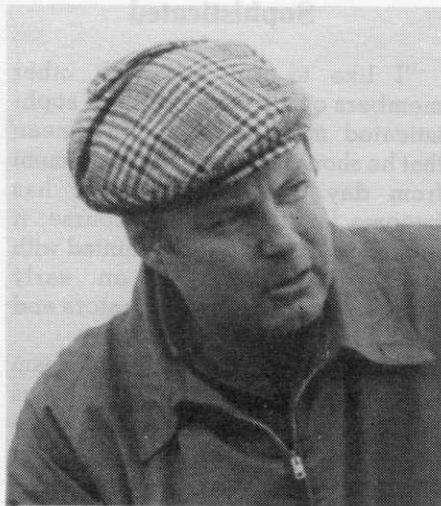
I am delighted that the instigation of our putting competition has caused such a stir in your world. Along with the Sports Turf Research Institute and a couple of other notable agronomists, the dust is really flying. I couldn't be more pleased.

One of the problems, as I re-read my article, is that perhaps every 'Y' hasn't been crossed and every 'I' dotted, but I can assure you that it is our intention to make sure that any monies from the competition will be devoted to the furtherance of golf, either by paying for equipment

to get young golfers started, or in some way to further the cause of greenkeeping and grounds-manship.

I feel that one of the main problems in golf, over the 35 years or so I've been watching it closely, is that too many people have gone off in too many directions. There is an enormous amount of jealousy, envy and non-sharing of secrets. Any suggestion that someone from another part of the world could teach our so-called experts anything is beyond comprehension.

Once again, let me assure you that whatever monies come into the 'kitty' will be put towards furthering golf. Whether they will end up on your table, the STRI's table or somebody else's table, I know not.



Peter Alliss.

North West

The first meeting has taken place of the Cheshire College of Agriculture liaison committee. The committee's function is to work with the Greenkeeper Training Committee and the college tutors in order to help prepare a suitable syllabus for the City & Guilds golf greenkeeper courses.

Represented on the committee are the golf unions, secretaries' association, greenkeepers' associations and representatives from the trade.

The committee has been set up with advice from the GTC and a considerable contribution of effort and time by Dennis Mottram of the Cheshire College of Agriculture.

The North West committee of EIGGA is at present establishing

a winter programme of seminars and lectures — the first being a one-day seminar at the Cheshire College of Agriculture in October. The date and programme still have to be finalised, but one of the speakers will be from the STRI. Members will be informed of the final arrangements at the earliest opportunity.

We would like to hear from members with requests for speakers at future lectures and seminars and their views on last winter's programme of events. Contact me on 051-606 9856 or Terry Adamson on 0978 832908.

In future would members please contact me or Terry Adamson if they have any queries or want information on any subject regarding EIGGA or the North West branch, as our chairman Bill Lawson, you will appreciate, has a heavy work load this year.

The chairman's shield was contested at Chester Golf Club between the North West and a team from Chester GC. The result was a win for EIGGA. Thanks go to everyone concerned at the club for a very enjoyable evening's golf and dinner. *Raymond Hunt.*

London

It has not been much of a summer so far, but at least it stayed dry for our evening outing to the Hartsbourne Country Club.

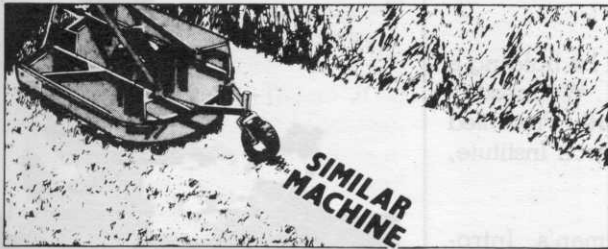
As usual, Tom Low and his staff had the course in excellent condition and his wife Joyce prepared a lovely supper. We are also indebted to the artisans for the use of their clubhouse, which they are hoping to extend by next year. I'm sure we will have contributed in a small way to their bar profits!

It was nice to see Peter Brimmell and Alan Moffat of T. Parker & Sons once again giving their support. Congratulations are due to Alan on his recent marriage. Good luck, Sue.

The results were: scratch to 12 — J. Hill 37 points, R. Howlett 35 points; 13 to 28 — C. Barker 40 points, A. Taylor 36 points, N. Exley 35 points. Handicaps will be duly reviewed in time for the next event.

Tom and Anne McDonald are again organising the dinner-dance, which

Continued on page 20...



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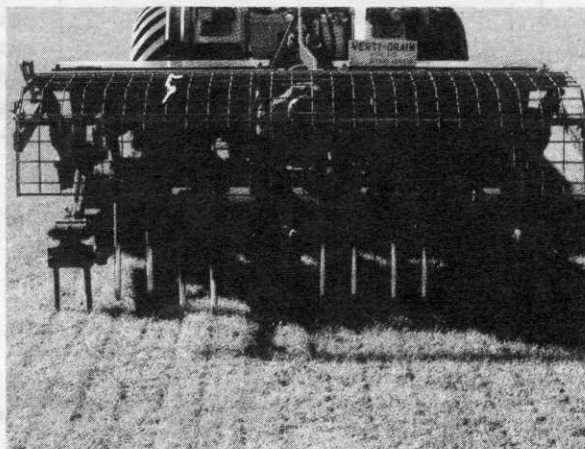
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will be held at the Post House, Heathrow on Friday November 15. Please phone Tom on 01-950 7469 or me for details. To avoid the drink/drive problem, mini-buses can be arranged from different areas.

Finally, remember to advise the branch if you are coming to the autumn meeting at Muswell Hill on October 3.

David Low.

East Anglia

We've had two tournaments this year and they have both been excellent. Newmarket, where 'Uncle Mick' nearly got a prize (not the booby either), was great. The course was in great shape. Well done the keeper — I didn't catch his name, but I'm sure we will all remember his course.

First greenkeeper in the 0 to 17 handicap section and winner of the SISIS Trophy was Trevor Manning, who is the first assistant at Newmarket. Trevor won on a countback from D. Wells, who had 37 points. In third place was Larry Coytie (Romford) on 35 points.

In the 18 to 28 division, the Atco Cup went to Steve Freestone (Eaton) with 35 points. M. Jones and J. Barnard were placed second and third. D. Freeman won the guest prize with 37 points, while the booby prize went to P. Barrigan.

Thanks go to SISIS, King and Supaturf for some of the prizes and to Newmarket for a great day.

Paul Bertenshaw could not be at Newmarket as he was helping his wife have a baby. It was also good to see John Young up and about after serious illness. Let's hope it's not too long before he makes a complete recovery.

Mick Lathorpe.

Surrey

The Surrey branch will be holding a one-day seminar on Wednesday November 27 at Wentworth. Presented by the Sports Turf Research Institute, the format will be:

9.30

Assemble and Chairman's Introduction.

10.00-11.00

Principles of Golf Course Drainage (i.e. greens, tees, fairways and bunkers)

11.00-11.45

Construction of a Golf Course

11.45-12 noon Discussion

12.00-12.30

Grasses and Special Reference to *Poa annua*

12.30-1.30 Lunch (£7.25)

1.30-2.15 Turf Diseases

2.15-3.15

Problems of Maintenance

3.15-3.45 General Discussion

3.45 Disperse

Please remember, club secretaries and greens committee chairmen are welcome and the charge for the day will be £9.

Surrey would like to offer its best wishes to G. Watt who has retired after 29 years as head greenkeeper at Purley Downs. Mr. Watt is returning to his home town of Edinburgh, where we hope he will enjoy many years of golf. His replacement is D. Andrews.

M. Hale, Administrator.

Book Review

MOTOR LAWNMOWERS 2

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Owners Workshop Manual



The success of the first *Motor Lawnmowers Owners' Workshop Manual*, published by Haynes Publishing, has led to the introduction of a companion volume for a new generation of motorised mowers. Makes and models covered are: Atco, Commodore 14, Flymo TL Micromo, Hayter Hobby, Honda HR17 and HR194, Mountfield Emblem and M3 Power Drive, Victa Silver Streak and Webb 14.

All have been stripped down and rebuilt in the company's workshop and the text includes step-by-step photographs.

This manual will also be of help to those whose mowers are not listed, but have a Tecumseh or Briggs and Stratton engine or, in the case of the Flymo, a Kawasaki two-stroke engine. The first manual related to some of the earlier Atco, Flymo, Ginge, Qualcast, Suffolk, Victa and Webb models — both cover only pedestrian-controlled mowers and not the ride-on type.

Motor Lawnmowers 2, by J. Parker, costs £7.50.

Fisons are putting on