

Martyn Jones replies...

I WOULD like to respond to Jim Arthur's article 'My patience is exhausted' in the June issue of *Greenkeeper*, in which he viciously attacks me and the contents of an article I wrote for *Golf Greenkeeping And Course Maintenance* (May) entitled 'Where is the tradition in Golf Greenkeeping'. I have provided details of the article, so that readers can obtain a copy of it and familiarise themselves with my message. This is necessary because Mr Arthur, as usual, has completely distorted the facts and attempted to mislead the reader by misquoting, omitting important and relevant points and introducing fallacious statements. On occasions, the distortion is so ludicrous that, if it were not for the fact that some greenkeepers may misconstrue the statements as educational, it would be laughable.

One such statement is that he has "refrained from criticising" me. Does he really expect anyone to believe this ridiculous claim? Greenkeepers and members of the trade who have regularly attended conferences and seminars are familiar with Mr Arthur's outbursts and scurrilous attacks on me and other people. It is considered to be almost a 'trade mark' of the man.

In my article, I did not decry any maintenance procedure. I did not comment on whether they were good, bad or indifferent. However, I did suggest that many of the practices currently claimed as 'traditional' are NOT traditional and that many of the criticisms of 'American' greenkeeping are unfounded and inaccurate.

Mr Arthur states that some form of worm control has always been practised. True, but does he really think that we should, therefore, consider all worm-killers to be similar and ignore the impact on the environment of such toxic chemicals as Lead Arsenate and Chlordane? In their turn, each has had a significant effect on the turfgrass environment and cannot, and should not, be lightly dismissed in this way. Chlordane is not a 'tradition' in greenkeeping and environmentalists are very concerned about its continued use. But then Mr Arthur may dismiss these people as a 'manic minority,' a term he is fond of using about people who do not entirely agree with him.

Similarly, Mr Arthur implies that deep, frequent slitting during the winter months is traditional because some form of aeration has been practised for many decades. Such a claim is as illogical and irresponsible as a claim that a motor car is no different from a horse-drawn carriage because they are both forms of transport.

While on the subject of aeration, Mr Arthur misquotes me, as he so often does, whether deliberately or unintentionally, and informs the reader that I state that "soils should never be aerated unless they are absolutely dry." Unfortunately, space does not permit me to discuss the question of aeration in detail, but clients who are familiar with my advice will know that I place great emphasis on aeration and that I go to great lengths to explain the timing and methods that should be adopted.

I doubt that Mr Arthur's dogma would ever permit him the time to listen to what I say and, therefore, I am not surprised that he misquotes me. However, I find it laughable that he should patronise the reader with a comment such as "No one disagrees with the fact that details and even methods are a matter for personal choice and debate."

I do not accept that many of the so-called 'traditionalist's' claims and methods are traditional. I believe that such claims distort the truth, misinform and confuse the reader. My article was not aimed at any individual but, if Mr Arthur has decided to wear the cap, then he should debate the point by demonstrating that his methods are traditional. Instead, he concedes that "there has always been a cyclic pattern, since greenkeeping began." It is illogical to claim that traditions have been established in cyclic patterns.

Irrigation is an excellent example and Eddie Park clearly supports my view that there has not been a tradition because, in his article in the same June issue, he provides a comprehensive history of irrigation 'theories,' with all the changing opinions.

If Mr Arthur has constantly advocated his present thoughts on irrigation, they must have been in conflict with his superiors at Bingley because, as Eddie Park points out, "R.B. Dawson was recommending as much as four gallons per square yard two or three times per week." Tradition cannot be established when such conflicting opinions abound.

One statement in Mr Arthur's article I strongly refute is that, at one course where I advise, my methods have resulted in a 100 per cent annual meadowgrass sward and that, if it were true, I have stated that it "does not matter." I consider *Poa annua* to be a most undesirable and pernicious weed species but, possibly unlike Mr Arthur, I am sufficiently patient to adopt a process of gradual elimination, while ensuring an acceptable turf density during the eradication period. I do not agree with inflicting an extreme attack of 'Arthritis.'

Mr Arthur does not name the course he claims is now 100 per cent annual meadowgrass but, if he is implying that it is the Wentworth Club, it is a gross distortion of the truth. It is true that, prior to my advising the club, the greens were virtually 100 per cent *Poa annua* but, in response to treatments and over-seeding, *Agrostis* is now very much in evidence. Although Mr Arthur was advisor to the Wentworth Club before me, I have never implied that the 100 per cent *Poa annua* greens were the result of his advice! However, the club was dissatisfied with the condition of the greens and, therefore, they sought alternative advice.

Wentworth stages two major tournaments each year, has a very discerning membership and many hundreds of visitors. I believe that it is the advisor's and the club's responsibility to provide all players and sponsors with good putting surfaces. In this respect, the course has been highly praised and all agree that the surfaces have greatly improved, all the year round.

If Mr Arthur considers me to be "outrageously different" because I insist on factual education without clouding the issue with wildly inaccurate, misleading and dogmatic claims of being 'traditional,' I will continue to be outrageously different. It is not a matter of being 'noticed' or of being pernicky, it is a genuine concern for the future of greenkeeping and a deep-felt desire for good, honest and informative education so that greenkeepers can advance to a highly professional status. I am a great advocate of unbiased and factual education, as opposed to dogmatic and inaccurate indoctrination. I am surprised that Mr Arthur should accuse anyone of trying to be noticed by being outrageously different.

As a response to similar outbursts and attacks from Mr Arthur, Peter Alliss wrote "Get off my back Jim Arthur." Perhaps Mr Arthur heeded the request but, like a hungry leech, he seems unable to survive without attacking someone. Currently, I must be The Flavour Of The Month.



Surrey

Branch members enjoyed one of the few days of summer so far this year when they played the superb and, as always, immaculate New Zealand Golf Club course for the Cresta Cup. This was a Stableford competition played over 18 holes and the winners were: R.Stone 41 points (Epsom GC), R.Able 39 points (Hoebridge GC), P.Crouch 39 points (Silvermere GC) and C.McMillan 38 points (Sunningdale GC).

The Surrey branch would like to thank the New Zealand club for extending the courtesy of the course and our appreciation goes to James Leddington and his assistants for all their hard work on the course and to Mrs Johnson for the catering.

A reminder regarding diary dates: Friday August 9—McMillan Trophy, Sunningdale GC, Monday September 30—McGillivray Shield, Richmond GC, Wednesday October 30—Autumn Meeting, Berkshire GC, Monday December 9—Turkey Trot, Worplesden GC and a one-day seminar on Wednesday November 27 at Wentworth, for which there will be a charge of £9.

In addition, it is hoped to arrange winter seminars at the RAC in January, Maldon Golf Club in February and Walton Heath in March.

Please advise your club secretaries and greens committee chairmen about these seminars as they will be very welcome to attend.

M. Hale, Branch Administrator.

East Anglia

Our first meeting of the year got off to its usual good start, thanks largely to the efforts of Steve Noye and the efficient way he handled the AGM. Bob Cheshire of SISIS was unanimously nominated vice-president and all other officers were re-elected.

Bungay Golf Club was the 'battlefield' of the day and our thanks

go to the captain Mr G.Moore and the members for their hospitality.

Prizes went to: 0-17 section—Roger Plummer 35 points (Parker Shield), S.Sylvester 34 points and Mr.Bradazon 32 points, on countback. 18-23 section—Steve Freestone 40 points (Rushbrook Salver), Martin Jones 36 points and Richard Mitchell 34 points. Mrs.B. Maidstone won the ladies' section with 34 points and Bungay took a clean sweep of the guests' prizes.

Our congratulations go to Mick Meen for the fine condition of the course, the steward and stewardess for the excellent meal and May & Baker, SISIS, Town & Country and Supaturf for the prizes donated.

Last, but by no means least, thanks Bungay and Waveney Valley Golf Club for two magnificent carriage clocks as prizes.

Mick Lathorpe.

London

The spring meeting, which included qualifying for the Kubota Challenge, took place on a rather cold and windy day at the Aldenham Golf and Country Club. Our thanks to Alex Low and staff for presenting the course in such fine condition. A relatively new course, it is maturing well.

I must mention the co-operation and support we received from the owner of the course David Phillips. His catering staff did him proud and it did not take us long to warm up with a



Three great minds got together for quiz time during the EIGGA conference at Warwick University. Stan Ellison, Michael Coffey, publisher of *Greenkeeper*, and Jonathan Harmer were suitably rewarded for their efforts.

hot meal and a few beers—not necessarily in that order!

David presented the prizes and, as a mark of our appreciation, branch chairman Tom Low asked him to accept an association tie. Our friends from the trade again gave their support, both in person and prizes. Alan Moffatt (T. Parker) and Roger Bowles (Rigby Taylor) provided an audience when we teed off and David Craig (H. Patisson) welcomed us at the 19th.

My personal thanks go to the branch committee—Michael, Tom, Derek and Chris—for all their efforts.

The winners were: scratch to ten—1. J.Teixeira (Kubota qualifier). 2. N.Bennett. 11-28—1. J.Hatton. 2. A.Grew. 3rd equal T.Low and D.Merrills.

Our next golf outing is to Northwood on Monday August 19 at 4pm. Arrangements are being made to visit the Lely works at St Neots and J.Mann's factory at Saxmundham, where the TORO Reelmaster 350D is assembled. Details will be announced at a later date.

To end this month's notes, congratulations to Alan Lewis of Pinner Golf Club on his recent marriage.

David Low.

Berks, Bucks And Oxon

The branch held its spring meeting at Southfield Golf Club recently. It was a fine day for golf on a fine course—thanks to Jack Brierley and team. The clubhouse staff also made us feel more than welcome.

The winners were: best gross—B.Holt 73; first year—D.Butler 106; best net—P.Kwight (on best back nine) 66, D.Parrish 66, J.Binney 67, A.Collis 70, S.Schmitz 72 and J.Brierley 73.

I thank all the members of the trade who went to Southfield and gave their valued support.

On August 22, the Jacobsen tournament will be held at Burnham Beeches GC. Members will be notified by post about this competition. And, on September 4, there will be an invitation day at Sonning GC.

Maxwell Hart has kindly donated some money to branch funds and I would like to thank the company for all its help.

W. McMillan, Chairman.

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- W. Lawson—Heswall Golf Club.
- G. Brown—Croham Hurst Golf Club.
- B. Hall—Hexham Golf Club.
- P. Davies—ex-Rhuddlan Golf Club.
- D. Archer—Whitchurch Golf Club.
- J. Brennan—Limerick Golf Club.
- D. Wilkinson—Selby Golf Club.
- M. Townsend—Bishop's Stortford.
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- A. Clarke—Gorleston Golf Club.
- T. Adamson—Wrexham Golf Club.
- G. Cannings—Heswall Golf Club.
- R. Hunt—Heswall Golf Club.
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- K. Burt—Rhuddlan Golf Club.
- N. Barton—Kilton Forest Golf Club.



Conservation On Golf Courses

Do we, as greenkeepers, do our best for conservation? When the greens committee requests that the long rough grass behind a certain green be cut to semi-rough and kept like that, do we automatically say: "if that's what you want, that's what you'll get," or do we try to argue the case for leaving the area natural from a conservation point of view?

To the majority of golfers that area looks like a bit of rough ground. To someone interested in nature, it is home to a multitude of insects, moths, spiders, voles, etc. Quite often, these natural rough areas are so far away from greens that they rarely interfere with play, except for the fellow that tries to land a full-blooded three-wood in the middle of the green during a summer like last year and then complains that the green isn't holding and he lost his ball in the rough 30 yards behind the green.

There are acres of natural rough grassland being cut down on courses all over the country for the sake of giving a course that manicured appearance. One of the funny things about golfers from inland courses is that when they go to play on seaside courses, they invariably come back with great praise for the condition of that course and probably quite rightly so. They never mention the acres of wild natural dunes, which could never be manicured!

More and more on inland courses, the members want this man-made look, which means we are under pressure to tidy up these rough natural areas.

We have all read and heard of the large scale destruction of millions of acres of forest all over the world and now scientists tell us that it must be stopped before damage is done to the environment. Different species of animals and birds are being threatened with extinction because their natural habitat is being destroyed daily. On a much smaller scale, we are doing the same thing on our golf courses when we cut down this and clean up that to give the manicured look to our courses.

I am sure that word manicured, when talking about golf courses, is another American import and now that we are making great efforts to return our greens to natural British golf greens, hopefully we will also consider the natural look for the rest of the course whenever possible.

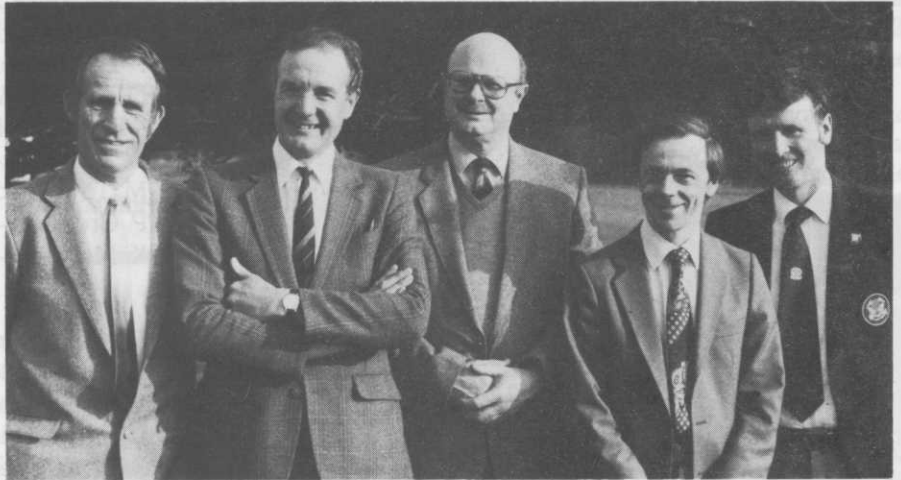
We should all look carefully at these areas of natural rough and before making the decision to cut it down and tidy it up, we should ask ourselves: Is it

absolutely necessary? Does it come into play? Does it really look untidy or does it look natural? If it is untidy looking, is it possible to hide or cover it by means of shrubs or trees?

Remember, you could be destroying the habitat of thousands of living beings.

Elliott Small, Central Secretary and Treasurer.

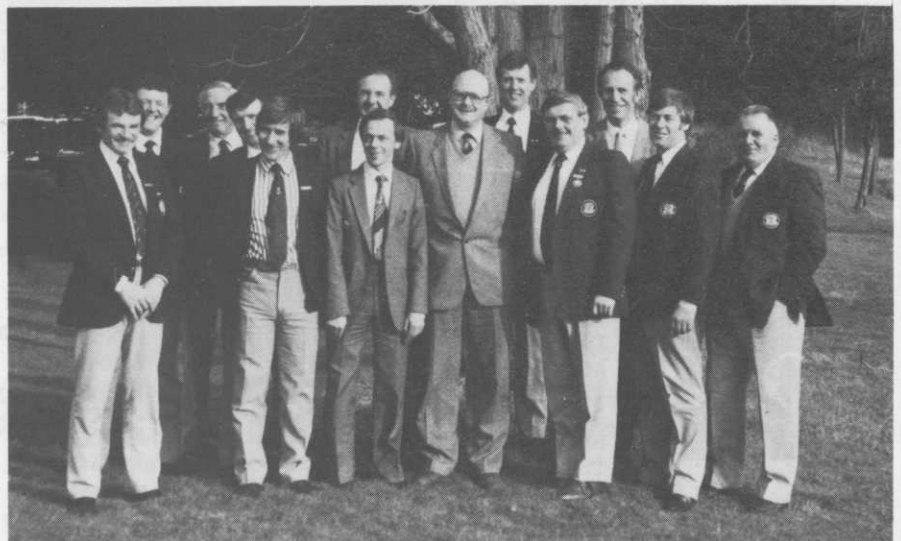
Some Gathering!



A highly successful early-season seminar was held by the Central and East sections, in conjunction with the Sports Turf Research Institute, at Dunfermline Golf Club. An excellent day was enjoyed by some 130 head greenkeepers, assistants, apprentices and club officials.

Four speakers from the STRI—Gordon McAdam, David Boocock, Dr Peter Hayes and Roy Woolhouse, pictured above with Elliott Small, who organised the seminar—covered all aspects of golf course work, from construction to maintenance and the problems of poa annua and disease.

The group shows: John Crawford (Central Secretary), John Philp (St Andrews), Joe McKean (SIGGA general secretary), Elliott Small (Central secretary and treasurer), Sandy Brown (Central chairman), David Boocock, Roy Woolhouse, Dr Peter Hayes, Jimmy Kidd (Gleneagles), Jimmy Neilson (SIGGA president), Gordon McAdam, Willie Blair (East secretary) and Jimmy Paton (East chairman).



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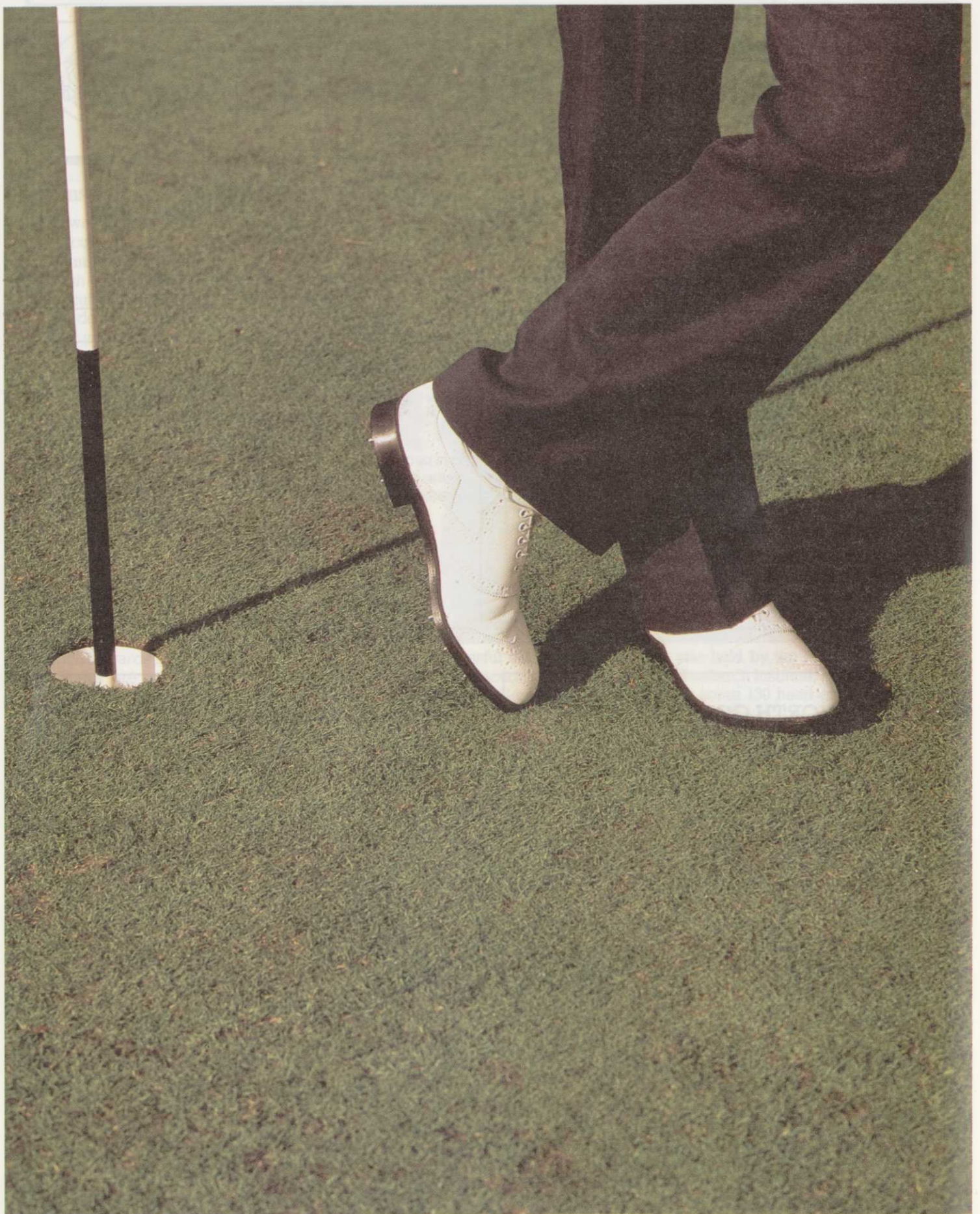
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HEATHLAND

Maintaining the balance and balancing the maintenance.

By Kevin Munt, course manager at Hankley Common Golf Club, Surrey.

HOW MANY of you feel that you are balancing on a tightrope in your efforts to maintain the correct environmental conditions in which agrostis and fescue grasses may thrive?

All of you!

Well, that's good news for greenkeeping and golf alike. Of course, you never stop the balancing act, even if you have 100 per cent agrostis/fescue greens, tees, approaches and fairways. Maintaining that Utopian course requires constant vigilance and skill. No matter how skilled the tightrope walker, one lapse in concentration and it's a long way to fall.

If we now widen our view of the golf course and take a look at its whole ecological system and environment, we will find that it is not just our playing surfaces that need close attention. The areas of land we are in charge of, or are working on, are under constant change. This process of change may be very slow in some environments—eg linksland—or very fast in the case of heathland, where, if man does not intervene, nature will take its course and create a forest.

I often feel that we spend a lot of time hunting the demon *Poa annua* and providing firm fast playing surfaces without giving consideration to the surrounding habitat.

In one man's all-too-short lifetime, he can have a major effect on his environment—whether it be just in the back garden or changing the world. Most of us wish to leave our mark on the planet, hence man's love of gardening.

Sunningdale has had four men in charge during its history, each one has left his mark or, in Jack McMillan's case, is leaving his mark. I once read in a Jim Arthur report (a man who has certainly made his mark) that 'preservation is not conservation.'

We must conserve our golfing environments not preserve everything that grows on them, which leads me on to the subject of conserving our precious heathland golf courses for the enjoyment of generations of golfers to play on and greenkeepers to work on.

It is often said that linksland was laid down by the Lord for man to play

golf on. Well, I happen to believe that, on his day of rest, he layed down some heathland and moorland so we wouldn't have to trek down to the coast to find a good test of golf.

This was converted into fine golf courses by men such as H.S. Colt, Willie Park, Herbert Fowler and James Braid. The open rolling aspect of this heather-covered land was a great attraction to them. They found free-draining and sandy soils that supported the bents and fescues found on the links from whence they came.

Many of these courses have changed a great deal since they were first laid out in the latter part of the last century and early part of this one. Many of these changes concern the vegetation now found surrounding playing areas. The planting of trees and shrubs has completely changed the landscape that would have first greeted these course architects.

Heathland

I wonder how many of the courses described in golf course guides as heathland can be found on true heathland? To answer the question we must first define 'heathland.' And to take a leaf from Eddie Park's article in the January/February edition of *Greenkeeper*, what is the 'case history' of heathland?

Heathland is found in lowland areas of Britain on poor dry soils, mainly on land once covered by glacial activity or rivers. These soils are sandy and free-draining. The soils have become podzolised due to the leaching out of the soil's nutrients and minerals. These are often deposited lower in the soil's horizon making an impermeable pan known as iron stone (iron salts). This leached soil is very acidic.

There are exceptions to all rules and Walton Heath could be described as the exception to this one, as it is on a much richer soil. It is a characteristic of heathland that it has a very restricted range of flora and fauna. This is the key point to remember when maintaining the balance on heathland. The soils offer little potential for most plant life.

Just as we do not encourage a

diversity of grasses on our playing surfaces, we should not encourage a diversity of plant life on our heathland. In fact, as soon as we do, we can no longer describe the area as true heathland.

Another important point to remember when dealing with heathland is that it is a man-made environment. It is land that was claimed by man from forests for grazing his livestock. This land was then retained by burning and grazing to keep down trees and scrub.

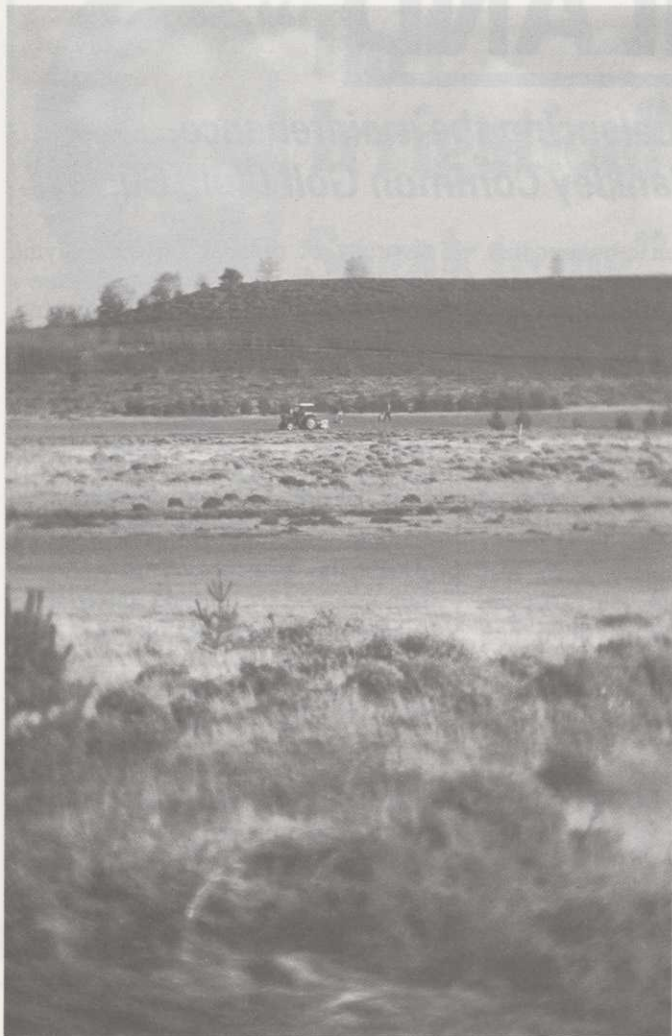
Today, casual grazing is not widely practised as it is uneconomical. Thus, much of our heathland is lost as natural succession takes over and the heaths revert to woodland, or grazing is improved by encouraging lush pasture with the use of fertilisers and lime. This is where the main paradox of heathland lies. Whereas most other habitats and ecosystems are interesting due to their large diversity and the diversity is often greatly encouraged, the correct management of heathland should seek to avoid diversity and fertility.

From this description and definition, how many courses in Britain could be described as true heathland? If you know of one, let me know, for I would love to see and play it.

Fire is a most important factor in the heathland ecology. On the grouse moors of Scotland, thousands of acres are burnt in managed fires to ensure a succession of new heather growth. The fire will prime the dormant heather seed to induce growth and will destroy the competitive vegetation.

Due to urbanisation and forestation, even the controlled burning of heather on a golf course is not possible. We have to use mechanical and chemical methods to maintain our ling (*calicina vulgaris*). This can create a problem as the build up of cut material can interfere with plant regrowth and provide nutrient to the soil.

The cutting of heather is a highly sensitive subject at most clubs. It is vital if the plant is not to become leggy and very woody. Cut it too low too often and you create open spaces between the plants, which will be



The open heathland across Hankley Common's 10th and 12th is typical of golf course land that is fast disappearing.



The 1st fairway where Kevin Munt aims to maintain a balance between heather and Scots pine.

invaded by grasses. Even agrostis and fescues are not desirable among heather.

The aim should be to provide a succession of dominant heather with more mature plants growing in the deeper rough providing seed and a habitat to support some more interesting wildlife. I would suggest that a cut in the early spring rather than autumn so that the ling has a chance to seed fully.

As most heathland courses try to maintain the almost impossible balance of Scots pine, silver birch and rowan growing alongside heather, we create another problem.

We are encouraging a change in the environment towards woodland. Litter from deciduous trees provides organic material to the soil, thus supplying nutrients that will encourage the whole chain reaction of invasion from undesirable plants.

Scots pine and silver birch saplings are a major problem in themselves and it is a constant fight to prevent them from getting the upper hand. Ling has adapted itself to an open dry

habitat. Trees give shade and their litter retains moisture, thus the heather will recede due to an undesirable environment being created. At this point, natural succession has the upper hand.

Many of the wooded areas around golf courses are neglected due to a lack of money, labour and even care, which is hardly conducive to maintaining the heathland nature of courses.

Encouraged

Some years ago, it was decided that trees should be encouraged on heathland courses—the reasons for which are many and would require an article of their own. The heathland manager now has to cope with the legacy left from these plantations. I am not suggesting that Sunningdale Old Course would be better without its majestic setting provided by Scots pine and silver birch, or that it should fit the true definition of heathland. I would, however, like to be able to

hear Willie Park's view of the present vista.

Golf traffic and the use of trolleys and motorised buggies, plus the use of mechanised greenkeeping equipment, has caused another major threat to heaths. Erosion, due to the sandy nature of the soil with little organic matter to cushion wear, has led to large tracks being worn through lovely swathes of heather. Permanent single routes through heather for golfers and machinery should be encouraged. An appreciation by golfers educated in the complex and unstable environment that exists under their feet would also go a long way to ensuring that the heathland golf course, in its true environ, will be retained for future generations.

In writing this article, I would hope to encourage users and managers of heathland to look at their lovely environment on a broader scale. Four per cent of Britain's heathland is lost to bracken alone each year. We who

Continued on facing page...