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EIGGA goes to Royal St George's

THE English And International Golf Greenkeepers' Association will have its own hospitality marquee at the Open Championship next month, continuing the R & A's courtesy SIGGA initiated so successfully at St Andrews last year. EIGGA's marquee, in the tented village at Royal St George's, will be opposite the R & A members' pavilion and will be open from Monday July 15 to Sunday July 21. The marquee itself, sponsored by *Greenkeeper*, will be open to all greenkeepers and those connected with the golf course maintenance industry. It will offer a bar, light refreshments and closed-circuit television. The main feature will be a display of EIGGA activities, covering educational opportunities, the annual conference and other aspects of association membership. Two members of the EIGGA board of management will be in attendance to answer visitors' questions and act as hosts to guests.



• The Open tented village at Sandwich during the 1981 championship.

This issue

JUNE 1985

Front cover: The SISIS Hydromain System is a complete system with about 30 attachments for the maintenance of turf and hard porous surfaces. Two tractor units are available: The Hydromain Fourteen has a 14hp engine and a unique patented weight transfer system to apply pressure to the implements when necessary, increasing their effect without the addition of weights. Extra wide tyres reduce marking on fine turf. One man can change the various attachments in minutes, without tools. The Hydromain Seventeen has a 17hp petrol engine or can be supplied with a diesel engine. The Seventeen retains all the features of the Fourteen, but also offers a safety cab, conventional steering wheel with powered steering and full braking system. Lights enable it to be taxed for use on public roads. Among the attachments are an aerator with interchangeable tines, deep slitter, rakes, brushes, rollers, sprayer, mole plough, turf cutter, scarifier, grass cutter, top dresser, tipping trailer, drag mat, sweeper and seeder, making the Hydromain System the most versatile on the market.



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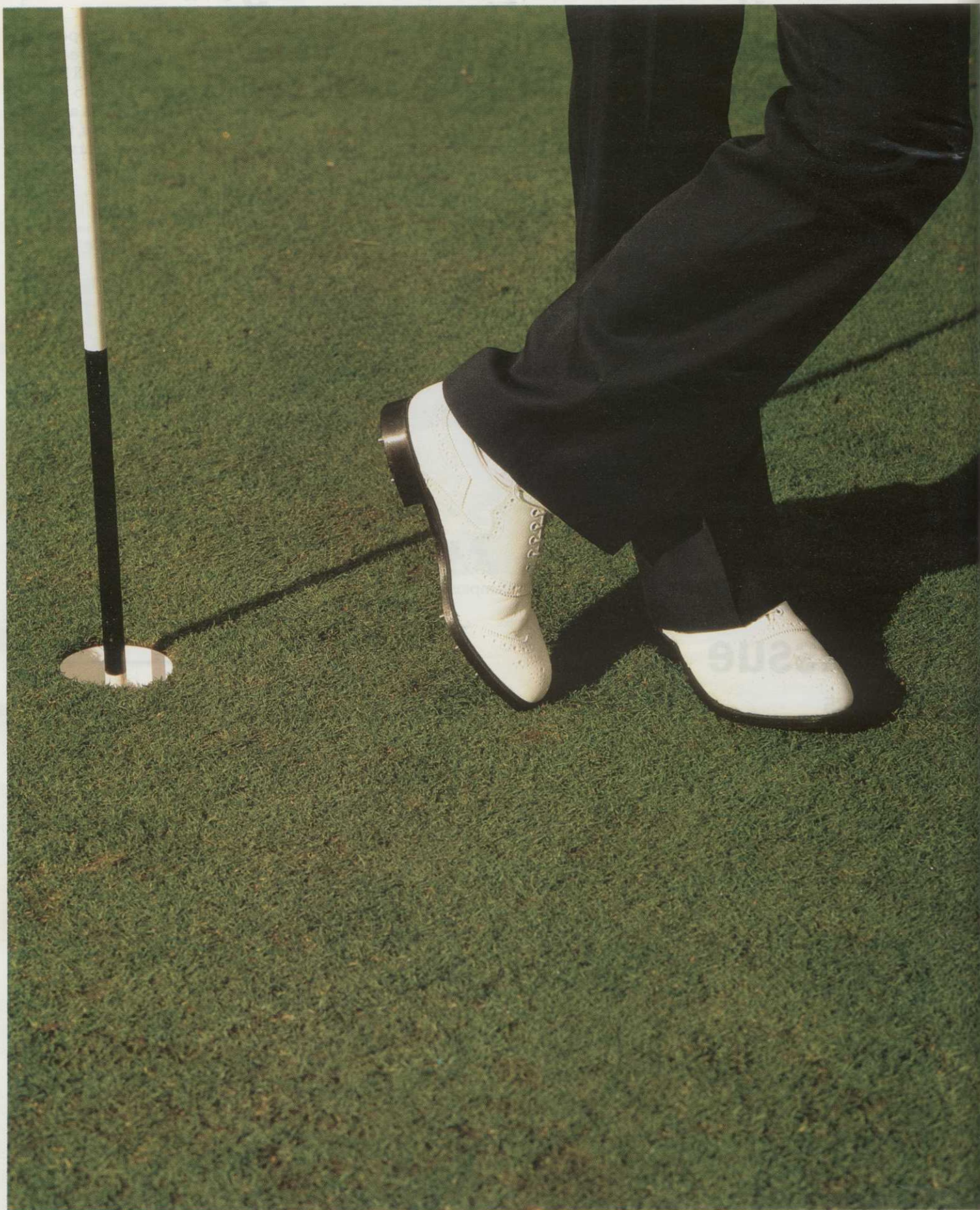
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EDGEA goes to Royal St George's



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My patience is exhausted—

says Jim Arthur

THE silly season is upon us! It always seems to coincide with the US Masters at Augusta and with adverse comments by club members at the end of a very long winter on the state of their greens, upon which they have played almost continuously (barring times when snow closed the course), making invidious comparisons with neighbouring clubs where the greens have been out of play continuously all winter and where members played to temporaries until Easter.

It is an example of the old greenkeeper's comment: "If we could only keep the dratted golfers off the course altogether, we could always have it in perfect condition!"

"Why can't we have the greens as good as Augusta's?" I was asked by one man who had just returned from Georgia. But you can, I replied, if your winter temperatures rarely fall below 50°, the course is shut for far more than half the year and, in the words of a regular visitor to Augusta, "It is probably the most underplayed major course in the world—a rich man's plaything."

Oh, of course, in addition you need money. Maintenance budgets well in excess of a million dollars a year are not exceptional.

We cannot even get many of our clubs to pay modest fees for their greenkeepers to attend seminars, such as the excellent EIGGA one at Warwick recently—culprits, please note that the weekend is to be repeated next year, so no excuses then. Many of these same clubs also begrudge the cost of residential courses at £80 for three weeks, including board, for greenkeeper-training courses. Words fail me! All other industries gladly pay vastly greater sums to keep executives up to date.

Attacks

I am getting increasingly tired of the thinly veiled attacks in talks and articles by Mr Jones on my advice. I have refrained from criticising him because the job has been done for me so much better by experienced greenkeepers.

I must, however, specifically refute some of the contentions made recently in a magazine in which he decries traditional greenkeeping and basic principles, dismissing them as:

"Mere theories by extreme protagonists."

We are asked to consider how many of the practices, claimed as traditional, have been continuously practised for 30 years. Such comments are particularly unhelpful at the very time when the majority of advisory work is becoming more and more unanimous. It is confusing to less-informed greenkeepers and even less well-informed committees and secretaries to listen to a minority view, however plausibly expounded, when it criticises basics that should be above argument. No one disagrees with the fact that details and even methods are a matter for personal choice and debate.

Let us look at these basics, which he decries as individual theories. I have preached and practised them for nigh on 40 years, as can be proved from my reports to golf clubs in the 1940s. I was taught them by, among others, old greenkeepers as well as botanists who had, in their turn, been taught them by their elders. There was, therefore, nothing new about them then and they were established practice by the better greenkeepers.

One basic principle, which I have consistently advised, is the elimination of phosphates (and, generally, potash) from fertiliser mixtures. The link between phosphates and annual meadow grass invasion and dominance was first published as a research paper by Dr C.M. Murray in 1903. Surely, this makes it traditional? Even Mr Jones must approve, I hope, of that, especially as the research was confirmed in America by the Washington State University trials of 1966-74.

We can discuss how to aerate greens, etc, forever—specific problems demanding specific methods. But the need for aeration, while never greater than it is today, was still urgent 40 years ago. I have reports from that same period stressing that: 'Aeration is the most important routine treatment for all golf greens and it must be intensified. Once a year is not enough!'

SISIS, the pioneers of turf aeration machinery, with which I have worked in harmony and without personal reward, for 40 years, started in the slump of the 1930s and would never

have succeeded if the company had not been filling a need to replace a man with a fork by a machine to enable more aeration to be carried out. SISIS was criticised before the war for not making a machine that would go as deep as a man could pierce (thus stressing that depth was even then regarded as vital), but the fault again lay with parsimonious committees refusing to pay the cost of heavier motorised machines which, today, we all take for granted.

Even the Verti-Drain—in danger of becoming the latest fad, invaluable in the right conditions, but capable of causing problems in the wrong ones—is nothing new. It merely mechanises the old-fashioned traditional break forking, commonly practised long before the war.

Of course, we need to aerate more, since we play much more golf and especially on wet soils in winter with consequently greater resultant compaction problems.

I read in more than one article or report that, according to Mr Jones, soils should never be aerated unless they are absolutely dry as this damages them. Even fairway spiking is advised for the summer months only. When, in the name of heaven, are soils under British greens dry? Even in the worst drought we are irrigating them. In fact, we stop slitting greens in the early spring when slits may open in dry weather, but it is too soon to start watering—when, no doubt, Mr Jones would regard conditions as being ideal.

A moment's thought will show the fallacy of such theories. In summer, soils on fairways are often far too hard to penetrate; tractors and staff are tied-up with gang mowing, etc; disturbance and slits opening will inevitably be greater than in winter and healing is at a minimum just when play is at its greatest. If this were done, members would be in instant revolt against all aeration.

It has long been a fundamental basis of greenkeeping that we cannot live with casting earthworms. This dates back to the early 1920s. Yet, Mr Jones professes to love some earthworms, as if we can distinguish between casting and non-casting species. In his article, he condemns the use of mowrah meal as it

Continued on page 12...

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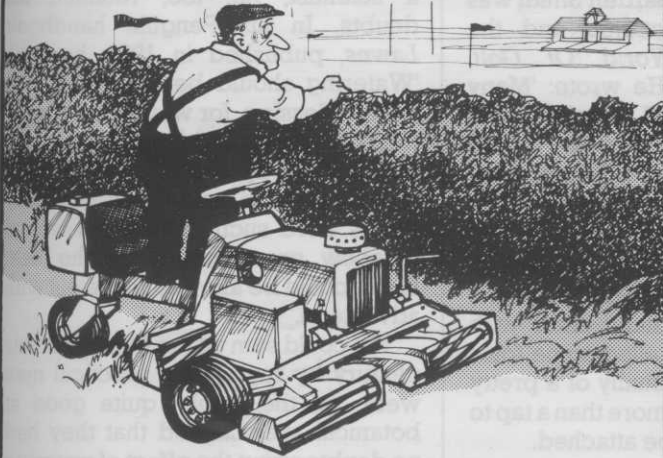
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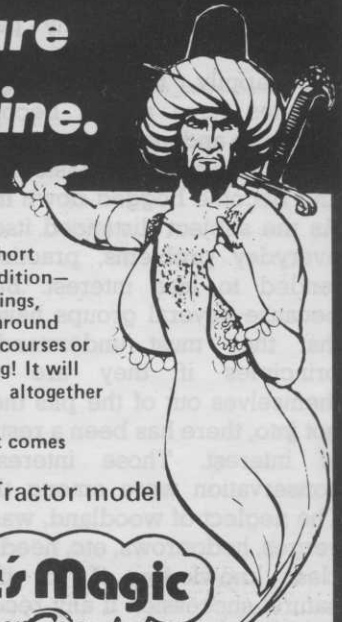


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The reclamation of indigenous turf

Eddie Park turns his attention to the vexed subject of how and when our golf courses are watered.

I SUPPOSE that for most people of my age scientific instruction began with a broad bean. This had to be put in wet blotting paper for a few days to sprout, then we had to draw it and label the different parts. Indeed, botany was a bit of a bore but, already, some were seeing a much more interesting side to the plant world. Simple and interesting text books explained the environmental factors that determined which plants would come to dominate any particular habitat.

Unhappily, the knowledge and theories have almost become too extensive and many recent text books have lost sight of the basic principles and become bogged down in detail. As the subject distanced itself from everyday problems, practical men tended to lose interest. But now, because several groups have found that they must understand these principles if they are to dig themselves out of the pits they have got into, there has been a resurgence of interest. Those interested in conservation were among the first. The neglect of woodland, wasteland, verges, hedgerows, etc, needs a very clear knowledge of, for instance, natural succession if any recovery is to be made.

Forty years, in which any and every method of increasing agricultural productivity has been used, have given farmers enormous problems, which can only be solved with basic knowledge.

And what of golf courses?

If we think back to the primary environmental factors—climatic, edaphic (soil) and biotic (other organisms and man himself)—we know perfectly well that we have tried to bend conditions to suit our whims. The downhill slide in standards, especially to *Poa annua* domination and thatch, should tell us we have gone up some blind alleys.

I am going to take a close look at just one factor we have chosen to tinker with—moisture—not that I will pretend to know all the answers, but simply to point out what has happened. It may seem strange, in view of the enormous expenditure by clubs on irrigation equipment, that the requirements for watering golf courses in the British climate have never been scientifically established.

Water has been applied to golf greens for well over a century now, but for most of that time many have expressed doubts. Garden Smith was editor of *Golf Illustrated* and the author of *The World Of Golf*, published in 1898. He wrote: 'Many greens are now well supplied with water, which has been done by the sinking of artesian wells. This is a very costly arrangement and the results of artificial watering are doubtful.'

In fact, doubts were frequently expressed for the next 60 years, during which time many clubs with sufficient money installed some form of watering. It was usually of a pretty primitive nature, not more than a tap to which a hose could be attached.

Liming disasters

The considerable drought of 1921 gave events a push forward and the liming disasters of the 1920s, which converted many courses to *Poa annua* (this died off in a short drought), produced an even bigger incentive. But still many of the older and skilful greenkeepers remained doubtful.

A.J. McSelf in *Lawns And Sports Greens*, first published in 1930, said: 'Avoid watering—some warnings will be disregarded, no matter how frequently they are reiterated. Two such are: don't water and don't roll.'

By 1930, Bingley had been established and its prime aim was to undo the havoc of the previous decade by frequent top-dressing with sulphates of iron and ammonia. Excellent stuff, but dangerous, especially on links courses when a drought supervened. In fact, that is just what happened and, in his first book published in 1938, R.B. Dawson was recommending as much as four gallons per square yard two or three times a week.

The other great guru of that era Martin A.F. Sutton concurred, saying: 'Where intensive fertiliser treatment is practised, watering in dry weather is an absolute necessity.' Yet, I can remember in the early 1950s a greenkeeper/pro, who was over 70 and had marvellous fescue greens cut by hand-propelled mowers, telling me that it was necessary to dry out his greens every summer to kill off shallow-rooting meadow grass. The greens turned slick and brown, but

came quickly back to colour with the first rains of autumn.

To be fair to R.B. Dawson, who was a scientist, he, too, retained his doubts. In his Penguin handbook *Lawns*, published in 1960, he said: 'Watering should be regarded as a mixed blessing, for while it may keep the lawn green and flourishing in dry weather, it is apt to encourage certain types of weed and it undoubtedly keeps alive such grasses as annual meadow grass, which on the best lawns could be allowed to die out with advantage.'

We could sum up the first half of this century by saying that practical men were, on the whole, quite good at botanical analysis and that they had no doubts about the effect of watering on the composition of vegetation. Most of them recognised that *festuca/agrostis* turf was the only option for golf greens and after the fiasco of the '20s they were keen not to destroy it again.

The scientists had gone even further. In Leach's *Plant Ecology*, first published in 1933, it says: 'The experimental modification of existing edaphic conditions often produces striking corresponding changes in vegetation. For example, Farrow (1925) found that on grass heath with *Festuca Ovina* and *Agrostis Tenuis* as co-dominants, artificial increase in the soil water by irrigation caused the *Agrostis* to become completely dominant with the result that *Festuca* was crowded out.' Presumably, the converse happened if the soil was kept dry.

Let us break off from this historical survey and wonder how and why we have gone from the situation I have described to wall-to-wall green, lush, soft carpets.

Sandy Tatum is a highly respected ex-president of the United States Golf Association and in 1980 he said: 'Maintenance, generally, is deteriorating. The problem, simply put, is one of too much water! This has been endemic to this country for a long time. As the game here came more and more to be played in the air with bounce and roll negligible factors, heavily watered golf courses became easily justified. As a related factor, we seem to care more about how a golf course looks than about how it plays. The lush green look has