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From National Headquarters

After an initial approach by the PGA at the Open Championship, discussions are taking place regarding a proposal made by the PGA to form a new greenkeeping association, to be known as the Golf Greenkeepers' Association, based at the Belfry. Similar proposals have been made by the PGA to SIGGA and the BGGGA and a joint meeting at the Belfry is planned for early November.

T. Parker & Sons generously donated a fertiliser spreader to support the EIGGA's attendance at the Open Championship. The spreader has since been sold to a bowling club and the proceeds placed into the association's funds. Our thanks go to Peter Simpson of Parkers for the company's much appreciated and continued support.

North West

Members are reminded that the branch's one-day autumn seminar will be held at the Reaseheath College of Agriculture, Nantwich. By now, members will have received a newsletter giving the timetable and programme of events. Please support the organising committee and, more importantly, improve your own knowledge.

Members are asked to contact the chairman Bill Lawson on 051-648 4047 if they have any constructive comments to make on the discussions presently taking place with the PGA.

Kevin Wroe, head greenkeeper at Rhuddlan Golf Club and his assistant Keith Berk, would like to hear from members in North Wales interested in setting up a branch of EIGGA. Kevin can be contacted on 0745 591140.

The North West welcomes Dave Lucas and his assistant,

Continued on page 14...

A Letter To The Greenkeepers Training Committee...

Dear Mr Coffey

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the training scheme and I would answer, referring only to England and Wales, as follows.

a) The Greenkeepers Training Committee prefers block-release rather than day-release and this forms the basis for approved colleges.

b) There are four approved colleges at the moment - Askham Bryan College, Askham Bryan, York; Cheshire College, Reaseheath, Nantwich, Cheshire; Plumpton Agricultural College, Lewes, East Sussex and the Somerset College of Agriculture and Horticulture, Cannington, Bridgwater, Somerset.

c) Modification to the syllabus takes place on a regular basis, but major alterations are likely to result after consultations with the City and Guilds.

d) The Greenkeepers Training Committee has formed an education sub-committee to handle consultation with the City and Guilds.

The committee appreciates that there is no direct action it can take if other colleges wish to offer courses, but it wishes to

see prospective trainees channelled to the approved colleges in England and Wales. W.N.S. Bissett, Administrator and Secretary, The Greenkeepers Training Committee, York.

Dear Mr Bissett

In order, once again, not to contribute to misleading information, can you please clarify the GTC's position on education at colleges now that we are starting a new academic year? Can you please confirm:

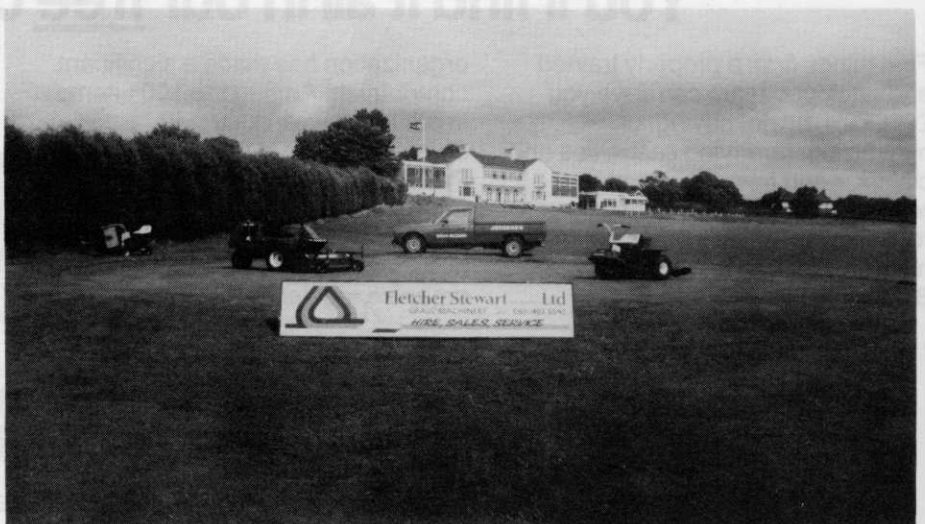
- a) That the GTC is backing block-release courses?
- b) That there are to be five approved colleges and name them?
- c) Whether there is to be any modification in the syllabus?
- d) If so, under what authority?

As you will appreciate, there is considerable interest from our readers in what the GTC recommends, although I equally understand several other colleges are going ahead with block-release courses for Phase III.

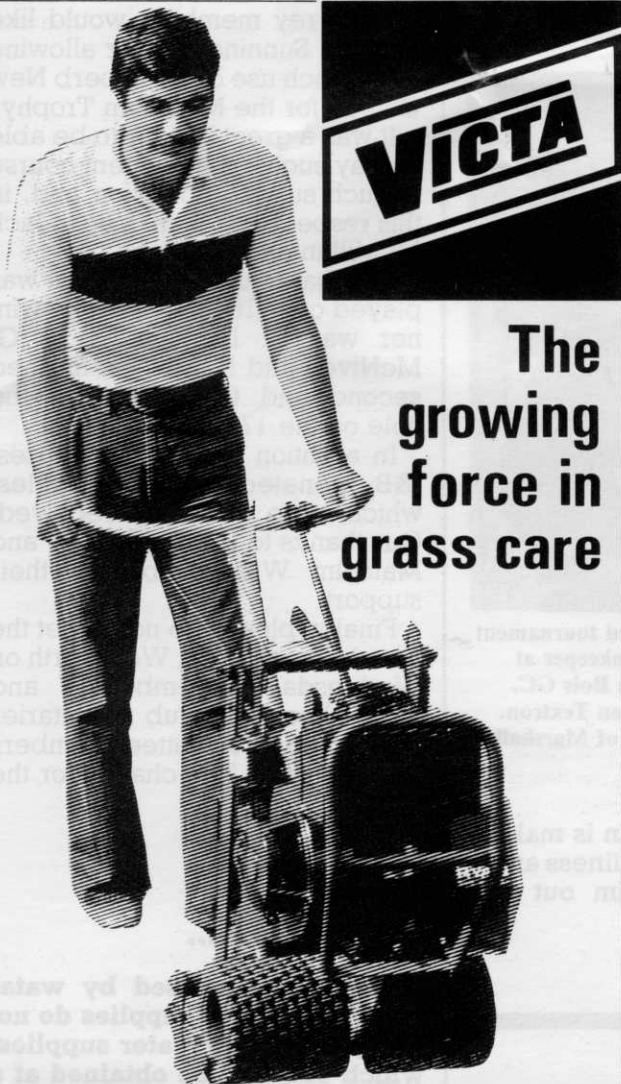
M.W.A. Coffey.

Heswall Selected For Stockport Company's Show

Fletcher-Stewart (Stockport) chose Heswall Golf Club, near Chester for a two-day display and demonstration of Jacobsen and Ryan machinery. Many EIGGA members boosted a good attendance from clubs and local authorities in the Wirral area. The company can be contacted on 061-483 5542.



Heswall's clubhouse provided a magnificent backcloth.



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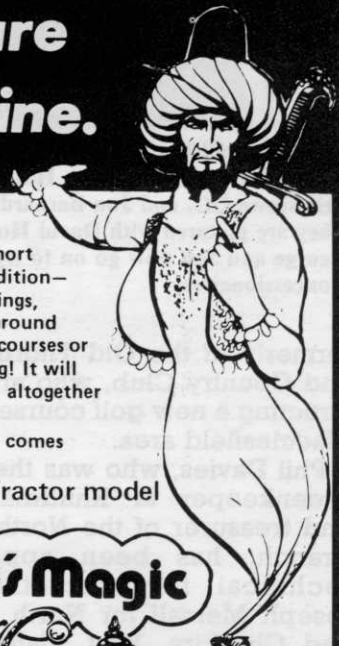


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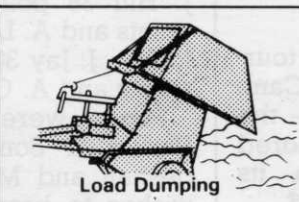
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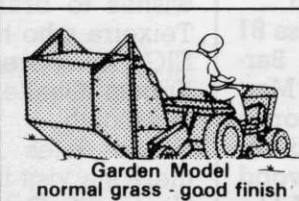
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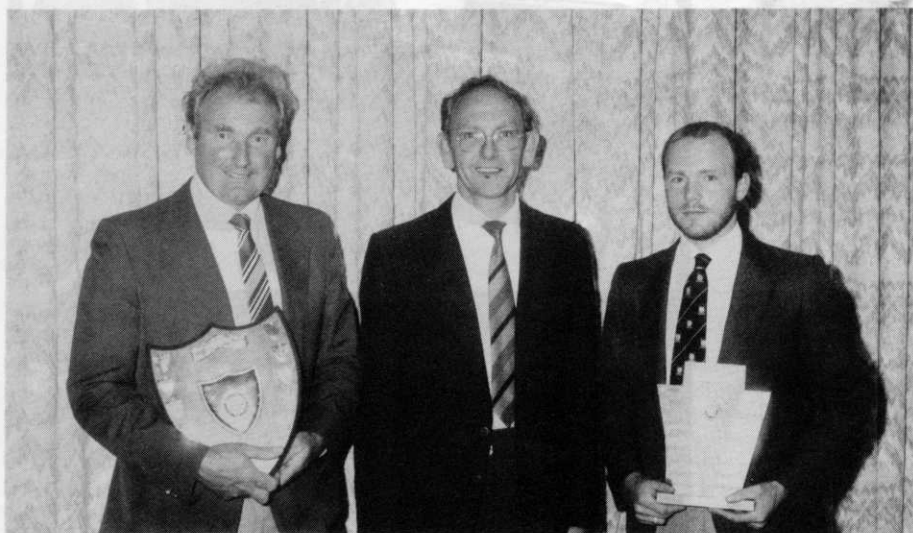
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EIGGA News & Views – Continued...



The two qualifiers from the East Anglian heat of the Jacobsen sponsored tournament held at the Cambridgeshire Hotel were George Newson (left), head greenkeeper at Felixstowe GC, and Jon Barnard, first assistant greenkeeper at Theydon Bois GC. They are pictured with David Holmes (middle), area manager of Jacobsen Textron. George and Jon now go on to try and win a trip to the States, courtesy of Marshall Concessionaires.

formerly of the Old Thorns Golf and Country Club, who are constructing a new golf course in the Macclesfield area.

Phil Davies, who was the head greenkeeper at Rhuddlan GC and treasurer of the North West branch, has been appointed technical representative by Joseph Metcalf for North Wales and Cheshire. Best wishes and good luck, Phil, in your new position.

Raymond Hunt.

East Anglia

The branch's first sponsored tournament took place at the Cambridgeshire Hotel recently – the Jacobsen Shield was sponsored by Jacobsen Textron via its dealers and over 50 attended.

George Newson had a gross 81 to take the main prize and J. Barnard had a net 69 to win the Marshall Trophy. Mick Lathorpe returned a net 71. First and second guests were H. Southwood (69) and A. Elvin (70), both of 11.

Our thanks go to young Eddie and the lads for a well-kept course, the hotel management for the hospitality and the trade boys, especially Ken Stern, for their effort.

Lastly, I must mention Mrs John Young, who donated a cake for

one of the prizes. John is making progress after a long illness and it was good to see him out and about again.

Mick Lathorpe.

London

As usual, the sun shone for the evening's golf at Northwood, a rare event last summer! Congratulations to Michael and his staff for the course's excellent condition.

The results were: scratch to 12 – J. Hill 38 points, D. Stenton 37 points and A. Lewish 32 points; 13 to 28 – J. Jay 30 points, T. Low 29 points and A. Coghill 29 points.

Prizes were donated by T. Parker & Sons, Kings of Coggeshall and Maxwell Hart. Best wishes to branch member John Teixeira who has qualified as an EIGGA representative for the Kubota Challenge at the Belfry this month.

Two dates for your diary – there's a visit to Lely Import at St Neots on October 22 and the dinner-dance takes place on November 15. The dinner-dance is not restricted to members, so bring some friends as it is an ideal occasion for meeting people, away from golf and the golf course.

David Low.

Surrey

The Surrey members would like to thank Sunningdale for allowing the branch use of the superb New Course for the McMillan Trophy.

It was a great honour to be able to play such a magnificent course in such superb condition and, in this respect, our thanks go to Jack McMillan and his team.

The Stableford competition was played over 18 holes and the winner was D. Lenham, while G. McNiven and P. Dawson finished second and third. Nearest the hole on the 17th was D. Jones.

In addition to the usual prizes, J&B donated several bottles, which were gratefully received. Our thanks to Henry Lorimer and Malcolm Withycombe for their support.

Finally, please do not forget the one-day seminar at Wentworth on Wednesday November 27 and remember your club secretaries and greens committee members are welcome. The charge for the day is £9.

M. Hale.

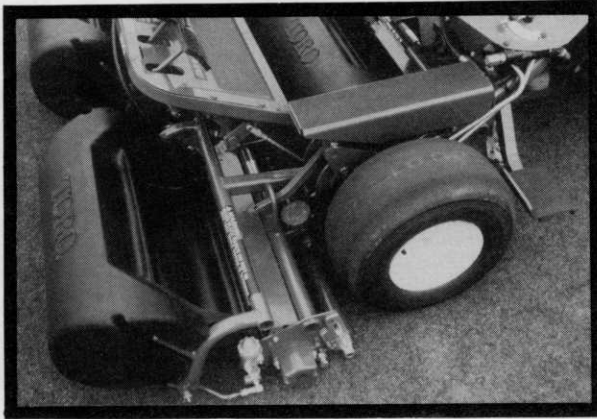
Book corner...

Restrictions imposed by water boards on mains supplies do not apply to private water supplies, which can also be obtained at a fraction of the cost of mains water. Therefore, *Finding Water* by Rick Brassington could lead to significant financial savings for many golf clubs, especially those that rely on their own springs, wells and boreholes.

The book examines who needs a private water supply, how much water is available and how to obtain the right amount from a source. There are also chapters on building new sources, water quality and treatment, water rights and the law, together with advice on which jobs can be tackled by non-specialists, when experts should be called in and how to maintain a water system once it is installed.

The book concludes with advice on further reading, useful addresses and a glossary of technical terms. Priced at £7.95 (including postage and packing), *Finding Water* is available from Rookery Books, 12 Culcheth Hall Drive, Culcheth, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 4PS. Tel: 092576 6754.

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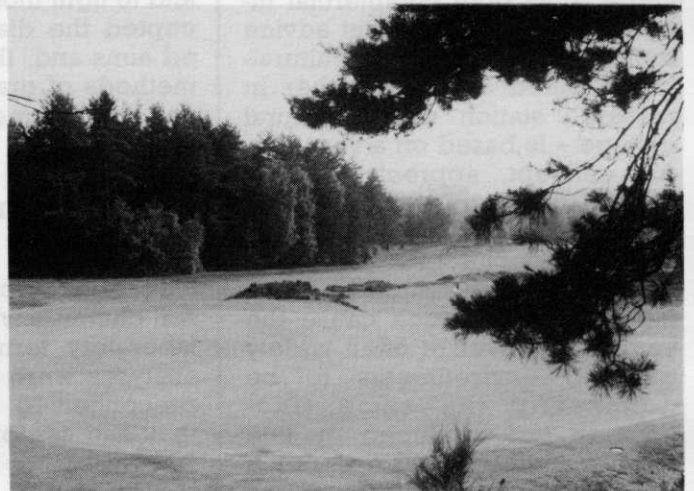
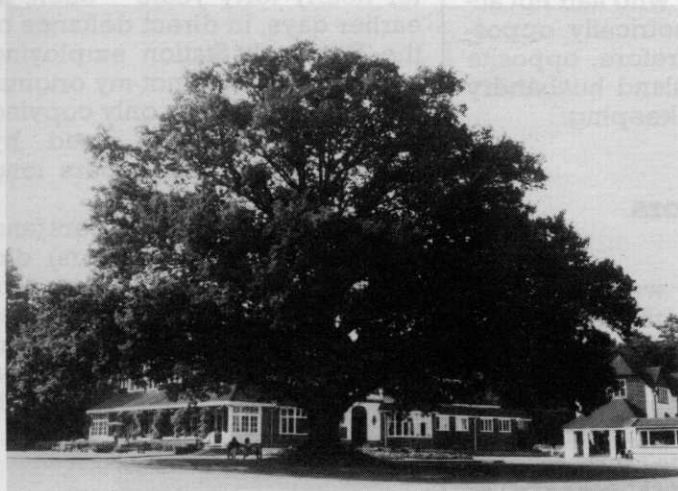
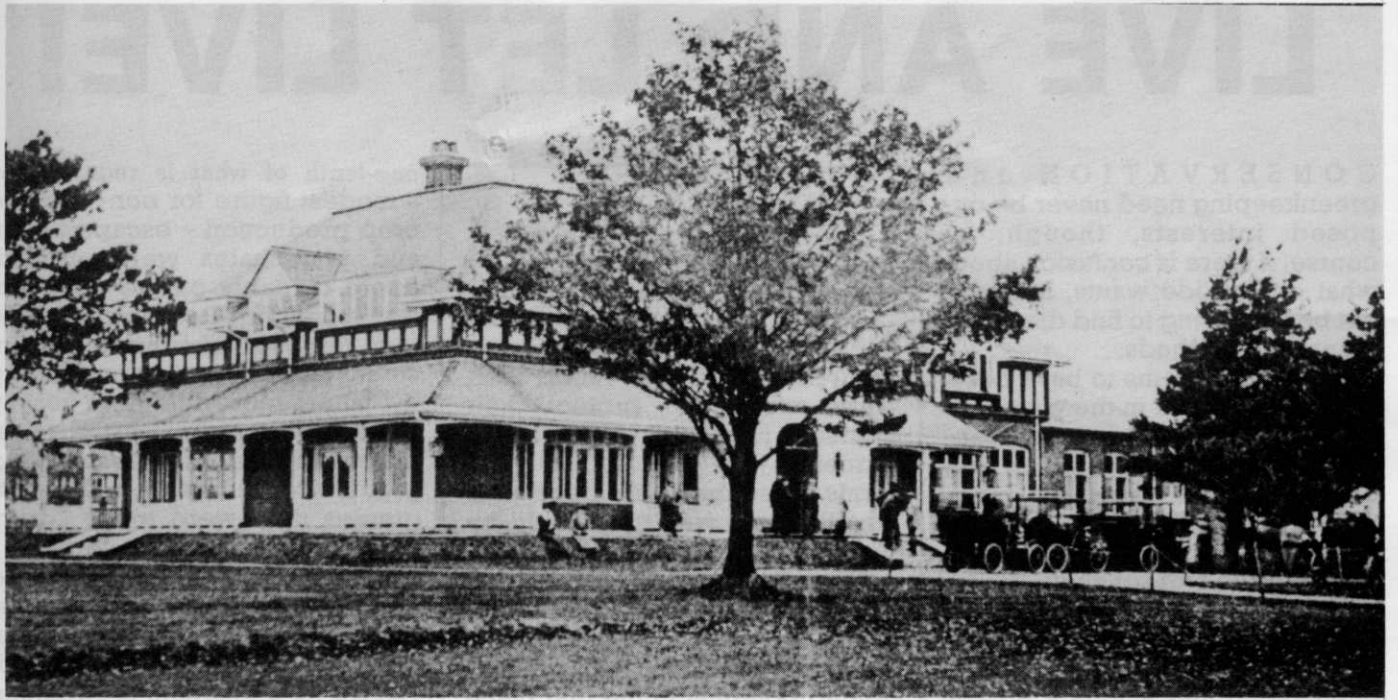
Sunningdale – now and then

As a fascinating lead-in to Jim Arthur's article (see page 18) on conservation, Greenkeeper has compiled this series of photographs, which illustrates admirably the development of a prime example of inland golfing territory. The earlier pictures were taken in the late 1920s – our matching views are this summer's vintage.



Above and left: the 4th green and 5th hole at Sunningdale, showing unrelieved, dark avenues of conifers encroaching.

Facing page: the two photos of Sunningdale's magnificent clubhouse and the famous oak tree could well be captioned 'from little acorns, mighty oaks do grow...' One Joshua Crane putts out on the 12th in the 1927 Seniors' Championship. This view shows golf in the open heath. Today, it's more like golf in a wood and where is the heather now?



LIVE AND LET LIVE!

CONSERVATION and greenkeeping need never be opposed interests, though, of course, if there is confusion about what either side wants, it would not be surprising to find disagreement over methods.

Much heat seems to have been generated earlier in the year over the term 'traditional greenkeeping.' Perhaps there would be less debate on fine points of interpretation if we divided greenkeeping into natural and artificial schools of practice.

The kind of greenkeeping I have consistently practised and taught for nearly forty years – often ploughing a lonely furrow and against both commercial interests and ill-thought-out advice by inexperienced or agriculturally motivated advisers, either in research station or agricultural college – is based on a very simple concept, appreciated long before the term ecology was invented!

This concept is, essentially, that if we copy those naturally occurring conditions which cause the vegetative cover of often widely differing environments to be dominantly the same fine-textured turf produced by fine fescues and bents (*Agrostis*), then those grasses will dominate the golf course. Whereas, if we alter those factors, then other, less desirable, coarser-leaved (more agriculturally productive) species will be able to invade and displace the fine turf grasses.

These factors have been known for a century, though not always by published research. They are chiefly low soil fertility and especially low phosphate and well-aerated, well-drained soil. Old Scots greenkeepers may not have even known what nitrogen or phosphates were, but they were using soot and sand as standard links management of greens a hundred years ago! Soot is a slow-acting nitrogen fertiliser!

The link between low levels of available plant foods and fine turf grasses is another long understood fact but, again, 'research' was merely providing a scientific justification for accepted practice, if not by all, then at least by thinking greenkeepers

By Jim Arthur

or enthusiastic amateurs who, even before the First World War, were striving to protect their courses from the heresies of farmers, who thought only in terms of feeding grass because it was the only way they could increase yields of hay and grazing.

Thus, the first conservationists were really 'greenkeepers', striving to avoid the destruction of those very factors that created golfing potential in the first place and to fight those who had not accepted the diametrically opposed aims and, therefore, opposite methods of grassland husbandry and sound greenkeeping.

Errors

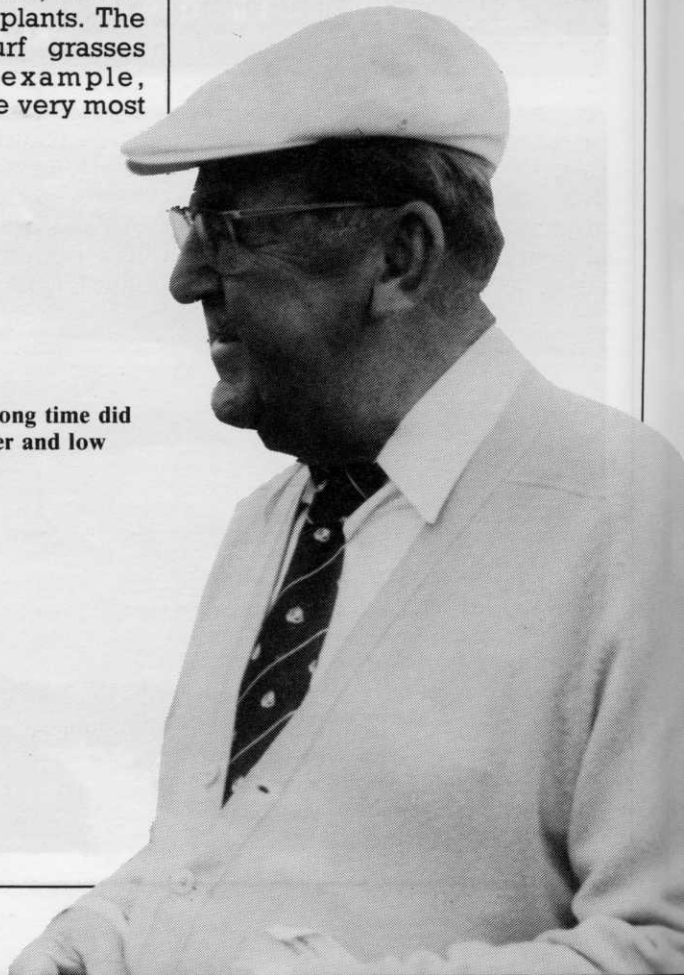
Terrible errors were made by soil chemists who thought only in laboratory terms. To them, low analyses were low in relation to preconceived standards, which they had set for crop plants. The fact that the fine turf grasses thrive on – for example, phosphate levels at the very most

one-tenth of what is regarded as a modest figure for *non-intensive* crop production – escaped them and phosphates were applied, (more culpably on the advice of the Sports Turf Research Institute than fertiliser firms since the Institute should have been guiding the latter), more and more heavily on a vicious spiral as the initial doses gave poorer results and predictably decreased the very grasses they were trying to encourage by other treatments.

It was not for lack of published work, let alone 'tradition,' that these errors were made. I can prove that I have consistently advised a no-phosphate programme for nearly forty years – often, in earlier days, in direct defiance of the Research Station employing me – and this was not my original thought, since I was only copying practices commonly used by good (links) greenkeepers long before the last war.

This heavy use of fertilisers (and even more so by farmers) did create enormous pollution problems and this is perhaps why it is so difficult to get planning permission against conservationist interests for new courses. Yet golf

Bobby Locke, who for a long time did not agree with low fertiliser and low irrigation regimes...



courses have probably the most stabilising effect of all in maintaining or conserving natural environments.

The link between poor soils and good golfing turf has been known since the start of published greenkeeping literature, but it would be foolish to claim it was never disputed. Even architects as good as Tim Simpson or golfers as expert as Bobby Locke did not agree with low fertiliser and low irrigation regimes, but time has proved them wrong.

There are many false prophets in current times and I fully accept that a major problem in course maintenance is that many golfers do not really appreciate good golfing conditions and worship The Great God Green. There are many references all this century to poor soils growing the best turf grasses. I quote a fairly recent one, from Dr H.W. Woolhouse, professor of Botany at Leeds University, in the journal of the Institute of Chemistry, *Chemistry In Britain*, dated February 1980. 'It may seem a trifle odd to suggest that some of the finest scenery in Western Europe owes its existence to a metal toxicity, but it is a fact that much of our heath and moorland exists on soils where the concentration of free aluminium would be toxic to crop plants. If this were not so, most of them would have been taken over for arable agriculture long ago.'

Later, he shows that only certain species - for example, *Agrostis*, heather, bilberry, etc - are tolerant of this aluminium toxicity and so dominate the vegetative cover as sole survivors.

In other words, the poorest

soils produce the best golfing grasses. The quote also explains the success of the 'acid theory,' especially on clay soils. The acidity releases aluminium and locks up phosphates and creates soil conditions that can be tolerated only by certain species. It is just chance that these happen to be ideal for golf, or is it a case of which came first - the golf or the grass on which it is best played?

Disaster can strike if naturally poor conditions are enriched or alien species introduced. Raising fertility permits 'alien' grasses to invade, or perhaps reduces the power of native fine grasses to keep them out, but such shallow-rooting species - for example, annual meadow grass - have poor drought resistance and so die with the first severe drought. This is quite apart from the fact that this ubiquitous species does not produce satisfactory golfing surfaces for many months of the year and has to be maintained artificially by water and fertiliser. Straight away, we are into a high-cost maintenance programme. Worse still, native flora are destroyed and an artificial cover replaces it.

Theory

For years, soil chemists have fallen for what I call the black-hole theory. They assume a constant loss of plant foods and imply that, without fertilisers, life on earth would cease, as plant foods become exhausted. They do not understand that such losses by leaching tail off and a level is reached that will always support some grass cover, outside tundra-like conditions, and there is not much golf played inside the Arc-

tic Circle! After years of no phosphate fertilisers, analyses still show modest levels, enough to more than support fine turf.

Naturally, there are many stresses to which golf courses are subjected today that are far more severe than they were even twenty-five years ago. The chief of these is traffic! It is unarguable that the prime cause of damage and destruction to coastal dune structures is pedestrian traffic and especially scrambling motor cycles.

The loss of dunes and threat to many of our famous links courses - such as Rye, St Andrews, Royal Portrush and Formby, which have been threatened with severe coastal erosion or windblown sand overwhelming fairways - are all caused primarily by pedestrian traffic or motor-bikes. The first step in such conservation work is to stop the traffic! It is no good just putting up notices though, on one occasion, a notice that read 'Nature Conservancy - Keep Out - Adders' worked wonders!

It is no good trying to ban traffic - it has to be diverted or nudged in the right direction, rather than prohibited. Traffic along or across dunes must be restricted to specific walkways and lateral trespass made almost impossible by means of transverse chestnut paling barriers and other obstacles. Then we can start planting stabilising grasses, protecting them, if necessary, with fencing or pig wire laid flat on the sand.

Such repair work has saved Rye and the St Andrews courses from erosion, but there are cases where the task is impossible -

Continued on page 29...

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