

Part 4
In which
Mr Lidwell sings the
praises of 'a visit
from the agronomist'

For a reason that I find difficult to understand, some chairmen of green and greenkeepers dislike the idea of a specialist coming to their course. They seem to think that if anyone has to give them advice, they have failed.

Actually nothing is further from the truth. The world outside of Golf Clubs operates on that very basis. The larger the company the greater the number of specialists employed. They take the sensible view that no one person can keep up with all the latest developments and that if they are to maintain their own standing in the business environment they must employ specialists to keep them advised.

Briefly, the STRI was established in 1929 under the title of 'The Board of Greenkeeping Research' to provide a service to Golf Clubs. It was re-constituted in 1951 as the 'Sports Turf Research Institute' and its work expanded to cover all sports played on a grass surface. Most of the major sport-controlled bodies of the British Isles are members through nominated representatives. Its affairs are administered by a board of management which includes representatives from the Royal and Ancient Golf Club and the Golf Unions, together with those from Association Football; Rugby; Lawn Tennis; Bowling; Cricket; Hockey; The British Association of Golf Course Architects and of course your own Association, BIGGA.

Many Golf Clubs like my own have joined the Institute and receive an annual visit from one of their agronomists. His visit takes the form of a walk-about. We select a route which takes in locations on our course that have received his previously recommended treatment and also includes areas where we feel in need of advice. We are always pleasantly surprised at his detailed knowledge of our course, it being obvious that he does us the honour of preparing well for his visit.

After our course walk-about, we retire to the board room for a cup of tea and a chat. This is a most valuable part of the visit, affording the opportunity to both check our notes and confirm recommendations which can be put in hand prior to publication of the report.

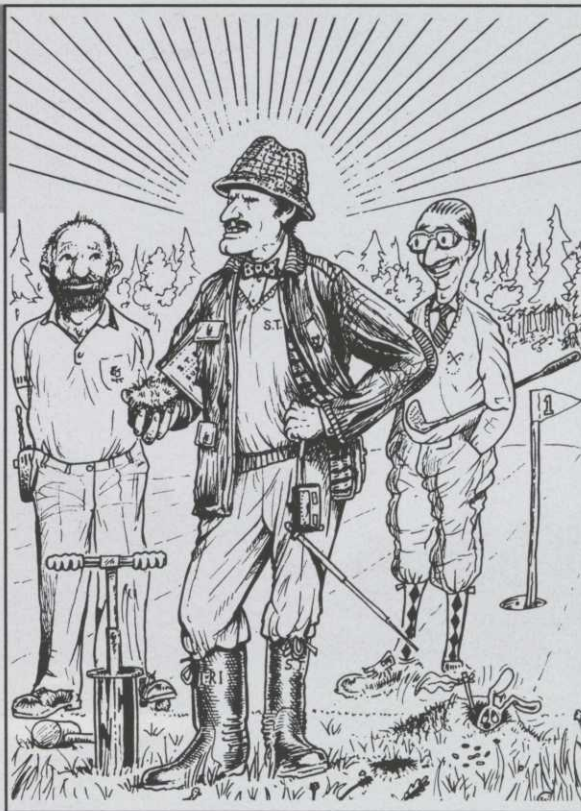
Shortly after the visit we receive his report which usually includes these sections:

- Introductory remarks: A brief survey of the general condition of the course.
- Course Survey; A detailed survey of those parts of the course on which the agronomist wishes to make comment, together with those where he was asked for advice.
- Recommendations: Discussed recommendations for course maintenance together with detailed treatments, quantities and rates of application.
- Other points: Comments, suggestions and recommendations as a result of the visit. Our own reports have included details on the building of a bunker with a revetted face, arboreal work, the extension of a green and the emotive problem of trolly use in winter.

As a definite policy, my committee arrange for a copy of the report to be displayed for all to see in the clubhouse. Naturally, the greenkeeper also receives a copy which he displays on the notice board in the mess room. When the report arrives I have an immediate responsibility to evaluate the cost of the recommendations, together with the effect such changes may make on the regular maintenance programme.

To obtain an overall view of the recommendations I prepare a large sheet of paper with the operations along the top and the work locations - Green; Temporary Green; Collars; Aprons; Tees; Fairways and Rough - down the left hand side. By working through the report and noting the details in the appropriate section I can be sure of making a full evaluation.

This type of analysis allows me to see at a glance the requirements at each location. The greenkeeper also has a copy for his notice board and uses it as a reference. It removes the need for him or his staff to spend their valuable time sorting through



THE
OTHER
SIDE
OF THE
GREEN

paragraphs of the report.

While I am obviously advocating the use of the STRI and a visit by an agronomist I have made no mention of their research facilities, which are concerned not only with sports turf but with all amenity grass areas and artificial turf surfaces. Some of their research is funded by outside bodies, but we all benefit when results are published. Their activities also extend from feasibility studies on potential golf course sites to the ecological and conservationist issues of established courses. We should all make use of their good offices.

STOP PRESS!

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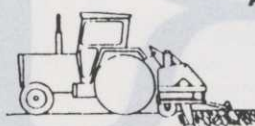
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