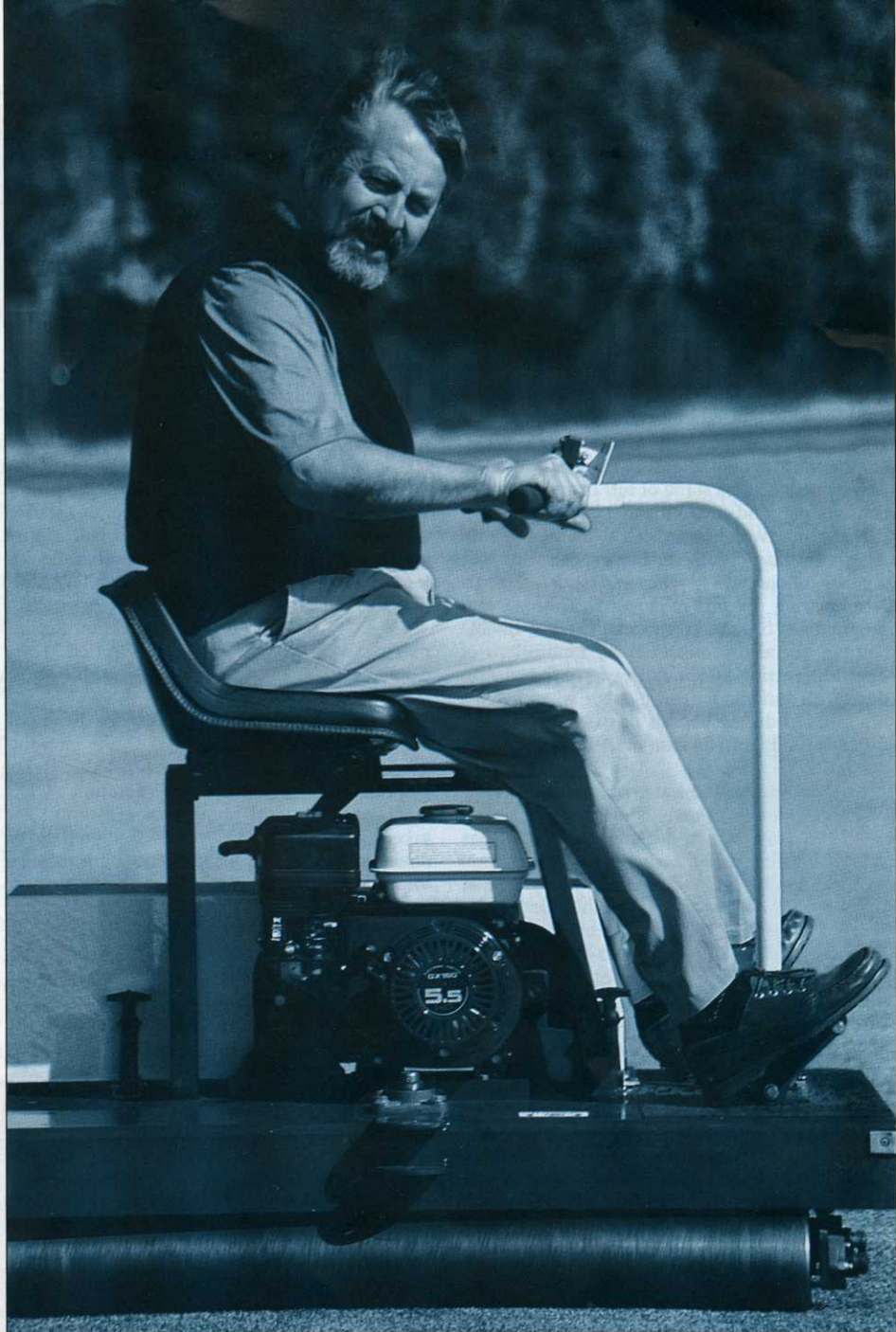


9 → view. These plans call for our involvement with the golf course as well as for the construction of new purpose built offices for ourselves. If these plans fail to come to fruition then, at some future date, we may need to seek an unwanted move from Aldwark Manor.

If uncertainties cloud our future at Aldwark Manor, then our future standing within the game looks much brighter than it did five years ago. We have created an impression, we are respected as a professional body that knows where it is going and, quite frankly, we are generally ahead of the game in our organisation, planning, administration, professionalism and indeed pure enthusiasm.

In getting ahead of the game, we do attract antagonism from time to time, but if progress and development attracts such antagonism then we have no need to be apologetic. We will continue to set standards and hopefully the game will react favourably. We shall certainly not be detracted from doing what is right for the greenkeeping profession and right for our members. We are not yet set on a firm base. We remain dependent on membership subscriptions and income from the BTME and 'Greenkeeper International' for our very existence and much more work remains to be done to ensure the security of our income from these three principal sources. In all three areas our marketing team faces formidable challenges.

Finally, my special and sincere thanks to our chairman, Roy Kates, for all he has achieved during his year of office. Like our previous chairmen, nothing had prepared him for his shock of becoming chairman of this vibrant Association of ours. It cannot be disputed that Roy has put himself about this past year on behalf of the Association. He has particularly had to cope with the 'politics' of the new education unit and his diplomacy during this period has been first-class. His employer at Wexham Park has given excellent backing and support, which was recognised by Viscount Whitelaw during BTME. The duties of chairman demand a substantial and ever-growing commitment and Roy has given freely of his time. I would conclude by thanking him for his steadfast support during the year. I am sure the experience he has gained will be utilised for the future benefit of BIGGA.



A spot of IRONING

DAVID WHITE (pictured) discovers how to increase putting speeds without stress

Eyebrows were raised, a murmur of disquiet droned across the crowded lecture theatre. Delegates at Keele were informed yet again that in America the greatest thing since sliced bread was not the stimpmeter, not the mower that grooms, trims and cuts grass lower than a gnats eye – and certainly not those unfamiliar strains of turfgrass suited more to desert conditions than the home counties of England.

No – the use of the piece of machinery known generically as the Australian Turf Iron is, we were assured, the course superintendent's best friend, currently winning great favour and influencing people in all manner of high places.

If you can believe that what America does today Britain will do tomorrow, the Turf Iron certainly deserves closer investigation, and it was with this in mind that I visited Went- ➔ 12

A spot of IRONING

'Don't knock it 'till you've tried it...'

11 → worth's newest course, the Edinburgh, the better to see a Turf Iron in action and to assess its capabilities.

The scenario at Wentworth is no different than that found at other courses around the country: players with low handicaps demand ultra-fast greens with nary a thought for the consequences. On the other hand, the golf course manager aims to provide a healthy stand of turf that will survive constant play and environmental extremes.

Never the twain shall meet might be the easy answer for many course managers, declaring that a golfer cannot have his cake and eat it – fast surfaces placing the turf in jeopardy. Granted that programmes of reduced mowing heights, double cutting, liberal use of groomers, applications of light topdressing and reducing fertility can produce such surfaces for a while, but when heights are lowered during periods of stress, greens can disappear quicker than cash invested in the Channel Tunnel!

Graham Matheson, head greenkeeper of Wentworth's Edinburgh course, is of the opinion that using the Turf Iron as a management tool has proved invaluable. Following a proper aeration programme, not only did he gain an increase in green speeds but he also found the iron invaluable on areas that had been returfed, the iron smoothing out minor humps and bumps with no visible signs of stress while assisting in bringing such areas into play quicker than hitherto. In addition, the machine has a place in day-to-day management after cultural operations such as

verti-draining, coring, top dressing etc. Above all, the greens on the Edinburgh course are healthy, reveal no signs of stress and are quick enough to satisfy all but the masochistic.

Simply stated, the Turf Iron is a motorised ride-on machine, its twin rollers controlled by a simple tiller device that is simplicity itself to use – indeed it is so simple that with just a few minutes tuition I was zooming over the turf in expert fashion. The makers claim no miracles, but insist that when properly used, the Turf Iron will change persistently bumpy greens into smoother, healthier and above all faster surfaces while raising mowing heights, not lowering them!

Quoting from a recent 'Green Section Record' published by the USGA Green Section, Larry Gilhuly cites a specific Turf Iron case history as follows:

"The first step was to reduce surface disruption caused by multiple aerations. With the introduction of water aeration this technique reduced (not eliminated!) standard core aeration while increasing the total number of aerations. The greens were smoother, yet the perennial *Poa annua* still possessed inconsistent characteristics. With monthly aeration to relieve compaction the superintendent began a programme of rolling greens on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The results were instantly positive as far as the membership was concerned and produced the following changes:

- 1 Reduced mowing frequency from seven to five days per week.

- 2 Discontinued all double-mowing practices.
- 3 Decreased labour time spent on greens.
- 4 A virtual halt to player complaints.

These positive results benefited the overall golf course maintenance operation. The growth and playing characteristics of the greens, however, have also changed:

- 1 An increase in mowing height from .15" (between 9/64" and 5/32") to .17" (11/64").
- 2 A consistent increase in overall average speed from 8'6" to 9'6".
- 3 An overall improvement in surface smoothness and a reduction in footprinting.
- 4 Improved daily consistency and surface firmness.
- 5 An apparent increase in rooting depth.
- 6 A slight reduction in pesticide use and a slight increase in bentgrass.

The programme described has been used for approximately one year and continues to produce outstanding results. One point that definitely rings true is that any programme that can potentially minimise pesticide usage, produce healthier turf, and provide desired putting green speed with good surface smoothness is worth a demonstration".

It seems to me that a practice of old, for rolling is indeed an old practice, in these enlightened times is surely worthy of consideration – on the premise 'don't knock it 'till you've tried it', ironing turf may well provide the answer to increasing green speeds without normally associated stress.

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