

his old clothes to Jack (please, not your old Arsenal shirt!).

Please call me if you have any news or views you would like put in the Section "Around The Green".

James Duncan

London

Since taking over as Course Manager at Hartsbourne Golf & Country Club, David Stenton and his team have undertaken project after project. During the winter of 1998/99, 3,500 metres of land drainage pipe work was installed on the Hunt Course and five greens were also drained. During the winter months, David also oversaw the planting of 5,000 trees aided by the Contractor, Eamon Wall. A small matter of eight tees were also built during this time. The summer of 1999 was a testing time as an aged and temperamental irrigation system was coaxed to perform for one last season, causing many hours of evening overtime.

September brought a welcome respite when David married Sue and whisked her off on honeymoon.

The programme for winter 1999/2000 is equally impres-

sive with forty bunkers having been reconstructed on the front nine of the Hartsbourne course, with the remainder on the back nine scheduled for next winter. There has also been another tee constructed.

A new irrigation system is currently being installed by Dave and Doug Mansell (DDM Irrigation Installations) on greens and tees with fairway hydrants, new controllers and pumps. To top it all, footings have been dug and the concrete foundations laid for a new machinery shed, again all undertaken by David and his team.

This in readiness for conversion of the old workshop into a buggy store.

The London Section Qualifier for the BIGGA National Golf Championship was held at Hanbury Manor Golf Club on Wednesday 22 March. The day was fine and sunny with temperatures unseasonably high, and the course was in immaculate condition. With a field of forty plus, play commenced at 10.30 am and with such favourable conditions, play was brisk and good scores were achieved.

Results for the day were: Lowest nett, Ian Semple, level par from Old Fold Manor GC. Lowest Gross, Richard Andrews, Highgate GC, Runner up, Rob Washbrook, Hadley Wood GC. Nearest the Pin, Derek Farrington, Regional Administrator. Longest Drive, Rob Phillips, Sandy Lodge GC.

Many thanks to Hanbury Major Golf Club for offering their magnificent facilities and also to the catering staff for a first class evening meal. Thanks also to Kneale Diamond, Hanbury's Acting Course Manager and his team for preparing the course and not forgetting the Tournament Sponsors, Charterhouse Turf Machinery and Scotts Fertilisers who are funding the Grand Final.

Also our best wishes to Hanbury's Course Manager, Kenny McKay, with his new appointment, taking over the Forest of Arden Course in Warwickshire.

Peter Hopkinson

Essex

Hellos, Good-Byes, etc: Firstly a belated congratulations to Deputy Head at Abridge Golf

Club, Steve Cox and his wife who gave birth to a baby girl last month, hope everything is going well for all three of you.

Secondly good-bye and good luck to Ian Mitchell who leaves the Essex Section to further his career in Austria, he will be missed by friends and work colleagues alike. Lastly a welcome back into the stress free, sun tanned life of greenkeeping to Mick France who has returned after far too long to take over at Ilford Golf Club. See you soon Mick.

New Members: Geoffrey Lewis, Orsett Golf Club, Adrian Darnell, Bentley Golf Club, Christopher Wright, South Essex Golf and Cricket Club and Gary Bullock from Briggens House Golf Club.

Golf Days: The annual Gentleman's Dinner and Golf Day at Walton Heath proved a huge success for the Essex section as three of its members finished top of their categories, Ray Clark who is Head Greenkeeper at Channels Golf club won the 10 - 18 handicap category and, not to be outdone, Malcolm Smith who looks after the 9-hole Regiment Way course at Channels won the 19



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- 28 category, these positions will come as no surprise to all those who regularly attend our golf days. Finally Carl Croucher won the combined score event of greenkeeper plus club official with his Greens Chairman. Congratulations to all those mentioned above.

A new date has been arranged for the Summer Tournament this year at Theydon Bois Golf Club, it has changed from Wednesday 14 June to Tuesday 13 June, details will be in the post shortly.

This report comes just too early for the Forrester Park qualifier but I trust everybody enjoyed themselves, results will appear just two months after the competition has been played and probably after the next round.

Education:

A busy last two months has seen greenkeepers attend a two day beginners course in Information Technology, (computers to the laymen) on the 15 and 16 February. Ken Richardson endured two days of teaching six of our guys, thanks. For those interested a second day has been planned, dates to be arranged. The second day of the Frank Newbury Management Course got under way at the Burstead Golf Club on the 21 March dealing with such matters as Stress Management, Employment Law and Issuing Contracts of Employment.

Thank-yous should not only go to Frank but to all the staff at the Burstead for the food and hospitality. An evening seminar held at Writtle College by Steven Bernard of Bernard and Co and sponsored by Grasshopper Limited was well attended, the subject title was "Should The Mower Really Murder Grass?" it elucidated the concept and benefits of flat grinding, keeping the blade sharp with no contact to the bottom blade. Further details can be obtained from John Sinclair.

Help, Write Back!: Thanks to the greenkeepers who replied in response to my article of two months previous, whilst most of them arrived too late to be answered this month I will endeavour to return your requested information as quickly as possible. Unfortunately I cannot reply to the letter asking for marital advice!

Steve Crosdale

Surrey

The date for the McMillan tankard competition at Sunningdale has now been confirmed as the 21 August and the venue we have all been waiting to play, the East Surrey International at Laleham is on the 28 September (only joking John!).

Good-bye to Simon Hayes who has left Purley Downs Golf Club as First Assistant to take up his new post as Head Greenkeeper at Skipton Golf Club - somewhere north of the Watford Gap!

The Surrey Artisans Golf Union individual knockout competition for the Bob Hall Trophy was won by Alan McDougal of Royal Mid Surrey Golf Club.

Congratulations to Alan and a request from me to all other members of Surrey Section to let me know about any events or information that can be included in "Around The Green"

Brian Willmott

Sussex

Firstly I would like to start on a very sad note, the passing away of a great stalwart of the Sussex Section, Mike Butrymowicz, who sadly passed away on Saturday March 28, 2000. I am sure I speak on behalf of every member of the Sussex Section in saying that Mike will be sadly missed and that our deepest sympathy goes to Violet, Mike's wife of 48 years, and son Alan.

Mike Butrymowicz was involved in greenkeeping for 25 years, starting at Cottesmore Golf club, then moving to Lingfield Golf Club where he helped build the course. His banter at the Golf Days will be sadly missed.

Anyone wishing to make a donation, please sent to St Peter and St James Hospice, Wivlesfield Green, Nr Haywards Heath, West Sussex, where Mike spent his last few days.

Now to the forthcoming golf events of the year. The first event of the year is the Spring meeting at Royal Eastbourne Golf Club on 4 May 2000. This is a 36 hole tournament.

AM-Medal with best gross and net scores to qualify for the National Tournament. PM is a Stableford. Summer meeting to be held at Copthorne Golf club on 11 July 2000, and is a four ball better ball.

Team challenge to be held at Cooden Beach Golf club on 16 August 2000 and is a Greenkeeper/Club Office team event.

Autumn meeting to be held at Worthing Golf Club on 27 September 2000. This event is a Stableford competition.

Turkey Trot to be held as usual at Littlehampton Golf Club on 15 December 2000 and is a Texas Scramble format.

Other dates for the diary are as follows: 25 and 26 September 2000, The National Championships to be

held at St Annes Old Links, Fairhaven Golf Club. Tuesday, 14 November 2000, the Regional Seminar at Thorpeness Golf Club.

November 2000, Sussex AGM at Haywards Heath Golf Club, date to be announced.

Finally, I would like to finish on a much happier note in congratulating Robert Short and his wife on the birth of their second child, a little boy

who was born on 31 December 1999, just in time for the new millennium.

Well done! All the best from everybody in the Sussex Section.

Don't forget, anything you want saying in 'Around the Green', please telephone me on 0378 189785 or 1903 218675. Remember it's your Section!

Gary Ogilvie

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South West and South Wales
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South West

Not too much to report on this month. However many people have shown an interest in learning more about computers, so I have provisionally arranged two

courses to be taken by Ken Richardson, Education and Training Manager from BIGGA. The first course will be a two day Introduction To Computers, focusing on getting started and learning the basics. This will take place at the beginning of November. A second course will be taken in the following spring and will be more advanced lesson. The cost of each course will be around £30.

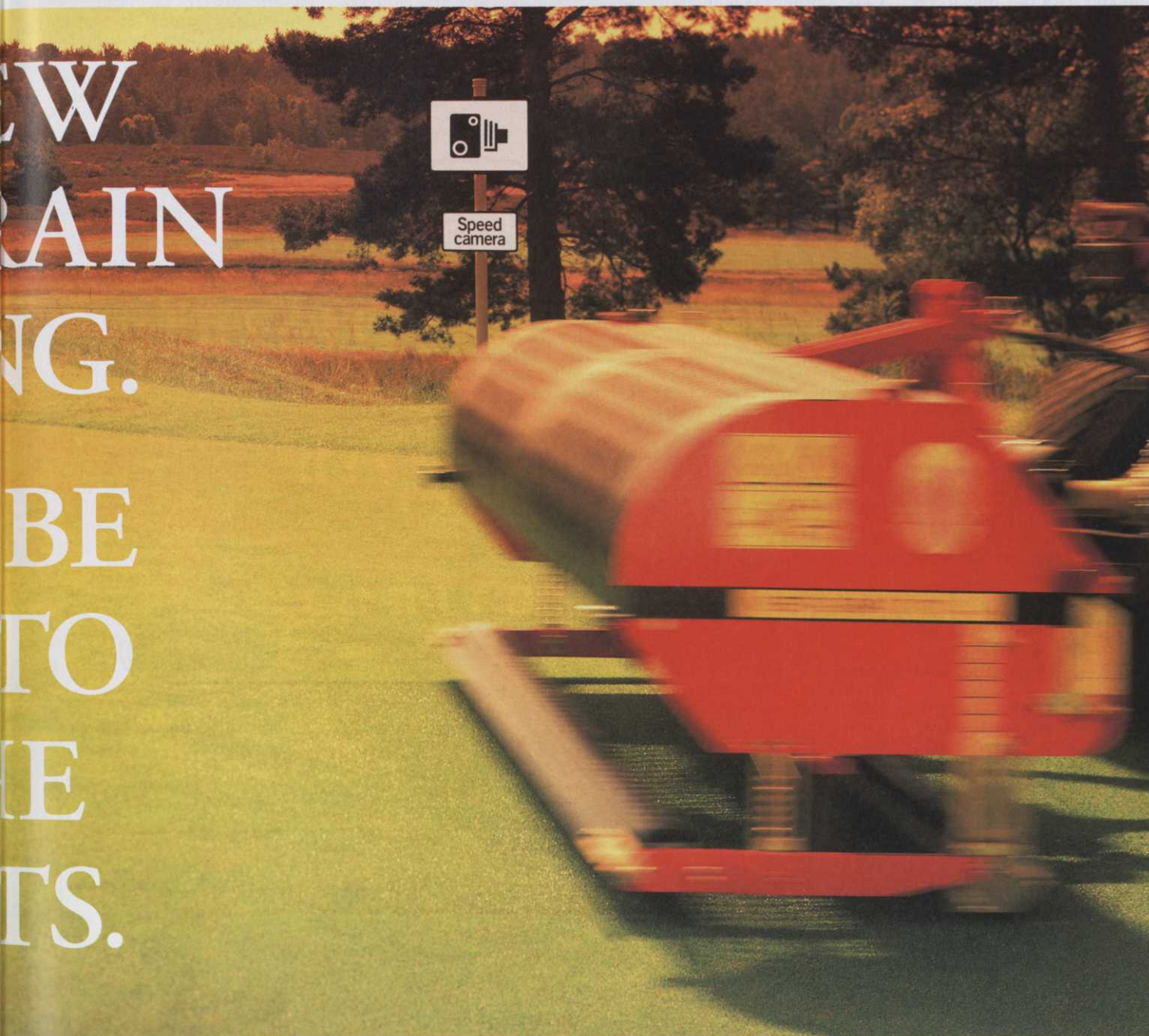
Other courses coming up shortly, include a PA1 Foundation Module Spraying Course on Thursday 11 May. A PA6 Knapsack Spraying Course will also take place on the 8 June.

On the 11 October we will be running another one day first aid course at the Southern Ambulance College, Chippenham.

To join the above courses, telephone me on 01249 783382 Paul Cunningham

South Wales

First of all, hopefully by now you all should have received your fixture cards which are sponsored by Ted Hopkins, with the events for the rest of the year. If not, please contact section secretary Peter Lacey and I am sure he will send you one hastily, otherwise I will do my best to keep you informed. It is worth mentioning it is important that 1999 trophy winners



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should return them 28 days prior to tournaments they won. Also, if you are wishing to play in events, please could you remember to bring along your membership cards and handicap certificates on the day of each tournament.

The next tournament is to be held at Ashburnham GC on 5 July, our summer tournament with a tee off time of 1.00 pm. Then, on 11 August at Tredegar Park GC, with the section versus the Golf Club Secretaries, again a tee off time of 1.00 pm.

Thinking back to 7 March, yet again a well attended and also supported by the IOG was our evening lecture we had Phil Davey, a Paramedic from the Welsh Ambulance service. Phil gave us a quick update on some new techniques and recapping on general first aid. I have to say that for a serious matter of first aid, which Phil did portray, he also had an ability to make it interesting and humorous with his stories. On behalf of the section, it was a very good evening. Thank you Phil and all from the Welsh Ambulance Service for their good work. Thank you also to all at Avoncrop for sponsoring the section again this year.

Next month's article I will bring you up-to-date with our final evening lecture, this year which was our annual quiz held on 5 April. Also on 12 April the goings on at Westurf. I finish by saying please contact me on 01656 742761 with any interesting news that can benefit other members.

Richard Hatcher

Devon & Cornwall

Yelverton Golf Club was the venue for the Aventis & Supaturf March meeting held on Tuesday 28.

Our golfing members competed for the Supaturf (Head Greenkeepers & Trade) Trophy and the new Aventis Trophy for assistants over the excellently presented Moorland course.

As usual our non-golfing members course walk left the club house at 10.30 am and enjoyed a most enlightening guided tour of the course by Head Greenkeeper Steve Peters.

After a superb lunch Paul Clifton (Aventis) and John Mullins (Supaturf) representing our sponsors for the day presented the golf prizes as follows:-

Supaturf Trophy for Head Greenkeepers & Trade (1) Terry Farkins (Dartmouth) 29 pts (2) Jeff Mills (Taunton) 27 pts (3) Cary Rawlings (Padbrook Park) 26 pts.

Aventis Trophy For Assistants (1) Martin Parrish (Holsworthy) 35 pts (2) Chris Bland (Dainton Park) 34 pts (3) Neil Williams (Stover) 34 pts.

Our afternoon educational talk rounded off the day, with Melvyn Taylor of Turfdry presenting his excellent talk on "Golf Course Surveys using Satellites" the section would like to thank Melvyn for his superb presentation.

Also the section would like to thank the days sponsors Supaturf & Aventis for their continued support and to Yelverton Golf Club for allowing the section use of their excellent facilities and to all of Yelverton's staff who made our day run so smoothly, with special thanks to Steve Peters and his crew who had the course presented in superb condition.

Richard Whyman

South Coast

An eventful month on the sunny south coast, we all thought spring was here!

Jeff Drake has resigned as our Section Secretary. Many thanks Jeff for your input over the last four years. After a committee re-shuffle, Fred Deamen has taken over as Secretary with Chris Sturgess moving into the role of Tournament Organiser. Fred will continue to run the Spring Event and the match against the Secretaries at

Basingstoke in June. From then on all entries to Chris Sturgess please (address at end).

Thanks to Crane Valley Golf club, venue of our March lecture sponsored by Swan Machinery Hire and supported by Avoncrop.

Forty-two members attended, many of whom played golf in the afternoon, followed by an excellent lunch.

Anyone interested in the Section Committee please let me know, preferably in writing. Entries for the Summer Tournament to Chris Sturgess at 40 Kinsbourne Way, Thornhill, Southampton, SO19 6HB. Telephone 0777 3138409 before 8.00 pm please.

See you at Alton!

Tony Gadd



I hope the weather finds you all well and that things are rolling at your course. What a month March was; it was very nearly sun-tan material, swiftly followed by a bitterly cold wind that would have cut time the first two weeks in April. Typical weather, I suppose, and we can't complain.

New members to the association this month are Justin Waddell from Fortwilliam and Sam Hall, Deputy Head Greenkeeper, also from Fortwilliam. Alastair Logan also joins us from Galgorm Golf Club. Once again lads, please feel free to come along to any event, as you are more than welcome.

The National Qualifier will be at Castlerock Golf Club this year on the 2 August. As our two sections have joined together we now have four places to fill to send over to the final, which will be at St Anne's Old

Links and Fairhaven Golf Club on the 25 and 26 September. Members are advised that they must play in the two Golf Days prior to the Qualifying Round. This not only keeps all handicaps correct but lets us field our strongest possible team.

Rather than paying your BIG-GA subscription in one go why not take advantage of paying it by Direct Debit. This will spread your payments and help ease the financial strain. BIG-GA also offer many helpful services such as free legal advice on any matter, car insurance and quotes (which are more than reasonable), a library which can be accessed over the 'phone, free magazine and now a new range of course clothing, so come on and pay that subscription.

This year's committee has tried to incorporate golf with education, keeping golf for the summer months and education for the winter evenings.

A seminar will be run by our Region in October/November on Turf Management and some of the finest and most interesting guests will be speaking. More details will follow closer the time.

Finally a plea to you all; if you have any information that you think may be of use to anyone else and not necessarily Greenkeeping news, funny stories or something unusual that's happened to you or your staff give either me a call on 0771 8914072 or Charles Edgar on 07771 5092972.

Iain Harrison



See you next month!



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Dressing for dinner

Most greenkeepers are very familiar with the work of topdressing but there is no harm in revisiting this topic for a timely review of the basics. Although I have aimed this article toward greenkeeping assistants I hope that the more experienced among you will look at this subject again, and perhaps ask yourself some questions about the topdressing policy on your course.

Spring is virtually gone now and summer is all but here which means that topdressing plans are now being pursued with a degree of urgency on many golf courses at the current time. Few misconceptions exist about the role of top dressing these days but as the readership of this august publication is wide ranging there is no harm in re-iterating what we mean by topdressing. Topdressing is the application of a bulky material for the purpose of improving playing surface quality. Although there may be some nutritional benefit incurred to the turf, topdressing should not be confused with fertiliser application since nutrition is not the primary objective of the exercise.

Like so many aspects of maintenance we should understand why we topdress our green, tee and perhaps even fairway areas. For the purposes of this article I have concentrated more on greens dressing than other areas, mainly because these are the number one priority for every course and also because the principles described here generally hold true for other surface types.

General Principles - Why topdress?

Topdressing aims to:

- Re-establish or improve surface levels.
- Improve soil characteristics / performance e.g. surface drainage, moisture retention, etc..
- Help to cover seed after renovations.
- Dilute thatch or aid its degradation.

Topdressing can also help to reduce artificial feeding, though this is not a primary objective.

Choices in topdressing Operations

Topdressing requires certain key decisions to be made before commencing operations. The main issues to be addressed are:

- Desired outcome
- Material choice
- Quantities
- Timing

Desired outcome

The specific desired outcome of topdressing your greens will depend almost exclusively on the site conditions on your course. Every course

will thus employ slightly different methods and/or materials but the overall objectives and desired end results from the work planned are usually the same i.e. firm, smooth and manageable greens. Unfortunately, it is easy to lose sight of these objectives, particularly when one considers that topdressing is one of those operations that is ongoing on the course. This is where a policy document (provided it is carefully used) can help to safeguard the course from detrimental changes in materials.

Material choice

The choice of topdressing material(s) will, of course, vary from site to site depending on the objective of the topdressing exercise. However, it is fair to say that sandy topdressings are generally the norm these days on most courses.

Traditionally, topdressings applied to most golf greens have been either a peat/sand/soil mix or a sand/soil mix (often a organic rich fen soil) In the past topdressing might have been described in terms of the ratios of mixing e.g. 3:2:1 which would equate

Dressing for dinner



to: 3 parts sand, 2 parts peat, 1 part soil. These days using peat is not so common. Although it is still employed, it is perhaps more likely that a peat substitute would be used instead though many mixes today do tend to be based around a sand/soil mix only.

Sand/soil mixes are generally quite sand rich, this usually making up around 70-80% of the mix with the remainder being the soil material, often with a relatively high organic matter content. However, the organic matter is so diluted by the sand that the final total in the mix is usually only 2-5%. In these modern times we tend to refer to topdressings as 80:20 or 70:30 for example, this referring to the mixing ratios of the main ingredients, sand and soil.

However, this description is a very loose one that tells us very little about the material itself. The sand could be very coarse, fine, or anywhere in between! Particles might be angular, spherical or somewhere between. The soil could be a organic rich fen soil or a heavy clay. Clearly the description of a material needs to be better

defined than a simple sand:soil ratio, it is important that the greenkeeper knows what it is he is getting. Failure to properly understand the significance of sand shape or size can lead to problems of poor drainage, inter-packing of particles (compaction), etc.

Fortunately, there has been a good deal of research, especially since the 1960's both in this country and abroad (particularly in America) to tie down more accurately the characteristics of rootzone materials. This has a direct impact on topdressing materials since these ultimately become incorporated into the rootzone. There is not space to go into detail here about the research findings but the USGA rootzone criteria sum up the essence of current thinking quite accurately. These rootzone mixes are employed for topdressing and make fine top dressing materials, even if they are not being employed on a USGA constructed green. However, they may not be a universally suitable topdressing material for all greens. If in doubt seek expert advice.

Quantities

The amount of material applied will depend on its type, the time of year and severity of preparatory operations e.g. scarification, aeration, etc., before dressing is applied. At one time topdressing operations were a lot less frequent but perhaps a degree heavier than they are today. Modern technology has made topdressing much easier and allowed more accuracy in controlling the depth of material applied.

Sandy topdressings work in so well that even heavy dressings present little difficulty to the sward or player, provided they are applied during the growing season. That is not to say that topdressing cannot be applied in the period between October and March when the grass is not growing or only showing very slow growth, but dressings at this time must be nothing more than a dusting of material (perhaps best applied using a fertiliser spreader rather than a topdressing machine). In practice we may see application rates ranging from 0.5kg/m² in winter or as summer microdressings to 3kg/m² after deep spike and heave or hollow tine aeration in late summer.



Timing

Local microclimate conditions may dictate precise timing. For example, a west coast links course enjoying the warming influence of the sea may be several weeks ahead in terms of sward growth than an inland course at the same latitude. Similarly, a course in the south of the country at low altitude may enjoy steady growth as much as 4-6 weeks before a course located on high ground in Scotland. Even courses in the same general geographical area may experience different growth due to differences in soil type (wetter clay soils take longer to warm in spring) and whether the course has a southerly or north facing aspect.

Spring and early summer are the ideal times for topdressing work as the grass is growing actively at this time allowing it to grow through the dressing rather than be buried by it. The golden rule of topdressing is to only apply material when the grass is growing, therefore the spring, summer and early autumn are the times of true opportunity. However, experienced greenkeepers know that a

watch must be kept at the start and end of the growing season for conditions that may hamper the growth of the grass and therefore its ability to push through topdressing material.

Why employ consistency in choice of topdressing material

As a general principle it is best practice to use as consistent a material as possible, so long as it is suitable. This helps avoid any risk of creating layers within the soil profile. Topdressing is an operation that is recorded for posterity in the soil profile, unlike others such as mowing, etc., which are only temporary in their effects. Some of you may recall how pure sand topdressing still shows on your greens as a root break at a depth of three inches even though it was applied twenty years ago! Layers of different materials create problems for plant roots as they are very sensitive to changes within the medium through which they grow.

A layer of different material presents quite a different set of environmental conditions which may

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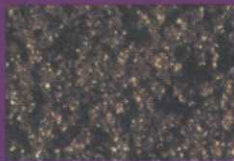


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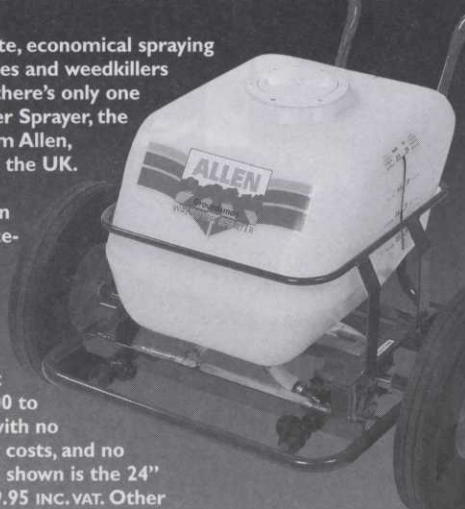


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Dressing for dinner



challenge the survival abilities of the root or prevent further growth.

Within a consistent soil/rootzone changes are likely to be gradual, probably occurring over a distance of several centimetres or more. However, when a root comes across a layer of different material, perhaps a band of pure sand topdressing laid 30 years ago, the sand presents a sudden and severe boundary for the root to cross from one environment to another. Everything changes for that root, perhaps in a distance of less than a millimeter, one or more of the following factors will alter:

- Soil texture
- Soil structure
- Water availability
- Oxygen availability
- Chemical environment, especially nutrient availability

As if the above is not enough, the root may also be up against a change in microbial populations since all these changed environmental factors within the soil will inevitably have an effect on the bacteria, fungi, viruses and microscopic fauna that live here.

I often try to put this into a human perspective in order that people might understand just how serious this issue is for the plant root. Imagine you are walking down the road in a normal environment and as you take your next stride you enter a realm where the oxygen content is equivalent to that found at 30,000 feet. Not only this, you have to take a lung full of this depleted air and swim 100 metres underwater to the end of the road in acidic water that stings your senses while toxic compounds such as hydrogen sulphide make you nauseous. Further more, it is just possible that microbes begin to attack your body (for the sake of our analogy lets imagine piranhas nipping you!). Even if you were the fittest, strongest human being ever

born your chances of completing your journey would be even less favourable than winning the lottery every week for a year! In modern parlance - "Game Over!"

I should say that it is not always this hard for the plant, but changes within the soil certainly make life for a root very difficult indeed!

Why change topdressing materials?

Despite what has gone before there are several situations where changing topdressing materials may be warranted or unavoidable.

One justifiable reason to change topdressing is because the original material is not of a suitable type. Obviously, suitability depends largely on prevailing site conditions and objectives but some materials would not be suitable on any course. If in doubt check your material with a laboratory test, preferably also consulting with your agronomist as well.

The most common reason for changing topdressing materials is that suppliers may go bust or become unreliable. In the case of bankruptcy wait to see if the company is taken over or if there is another supplier dealing with the original source of material. If your current supplier becomes unreliable tell them of your concerns and your need to continue to receive the consistent topdressing material from them. If this does not work then changing supplier is the inevitable consequence but do see if anyone else supplies the same material or match the new material as closely as possible to the old one unless you are taking an opportunity to review the aims/objectives of your topdressing programme.

Occasionally the quality of the material supplied declines and is no longer acceptable or suitable. Some companies are better at checking

material quality than others thereby helping to avoid this problem as far as possible. Your first step should clearly be to challenge your supplier as to why there is a change. Usually a change in parameters is due to a quarry becoming exhausted and the supplier must therefore source material from another site. A final check using an independent laboratory is often useful from time to time.

The other reason that greenkeepers and course managers change topdressing material is that of changing overall objectives/aims from topdressing. The reasons for this may be to increase surface infiltration of water, improve moisture retention, acidify the soil a little more, etc. Before pursuing any change in objectives necessitating the use of a different topdressing do consult with an experienced agronomist. Taking time to do this may avoid very serious consequences in the future which might have implications for the course, club and even your career!

Conclusion

Topdressing is now a fundamental part of modern golf course maintenance. However, familiarity often breeds contempt and it is frequently the case that the overall objective of this important operation is lost from sight. This occurs particularly easily since the effects of topdressing may take years or even decades, to accomplish the desired aim. Over such large time periods it is easy to see how changes in staff (especially head greenkeepers/course managers) and even club committees can fail to follow the topdressing policy through to achieve their goal. Those responsible for course management must understand the objectives of topdressing the greens and be prepared to review practice on a regular basis to ensure the course management programme stays on track.