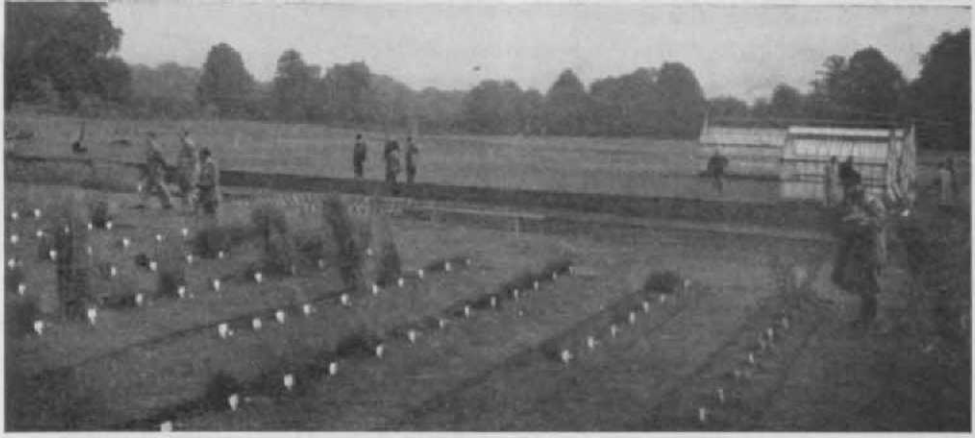

Part of the experimental turf garden at Bingley, Yorkshire, England.

OVER HERE, OVER THERE

By JOHN MONTEITH, Jr.

Continuing from last issue the comparison of British and U. S. golf courses

THE grasses most common in turf in Great Britain are quite different from those in America. Most of the American visitors on the tour of the Grassland Congress had realized that Kentucky bluegrass, which was introduced into America from Europe, was not regarded as an important grass in Great Britain. It was a decided surprise to find it such a rarity.

Perennial ryegrass takes its place as the principal grass in pastures and along roadsides. For turf on golf courses, lawns, and similar places, red fescue leads the grasses by a big margin, just as Kentucky bluegrass leads in America. Annual bluegrass (**Poa annua**) is far more common in British turf than is Kentucky bluegrass, but even this grass is by no means as prevalent over there as it is in this country. Crabgrass, which grows only too well in all parts of the United States, is even more rare than Kentucky bluegrass in Great Britain.

Differences in turf grasses between the seaside and inland courses in Great Britain are much more striking than they are in the United States. A large proportion of British golf courses are beside the sea. Much land that has little or no agricultural possibilities along the coast line is ideal for golf courses. Not only does the undulating terrain provide interesting golf with little or no construction costs but the natural vegetation is remarkably well adapted to golf. Indeed these two factors no doubt were chiefly responsible for the early development of the game in Great Britain.

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Fescue is the dominant grass on putting greens, tees and fairways of British seaside courses. Different species occur and all seem to thrive there without any artificial encouragement. All through the fescue is a scattering of colonial bent and other fine grasses. There is usually a liberal scattering of many species of weeds but these weeds are not massed in objectionable mats as we find the same species on American golf courses. It is interesting to find some of our most troublesome turf weeds growing there in large numbers but so intermingled with the grass and so subdued as not to be objectionable to play.

On the inland courses the turf is more like American turf than is that on the seaside courses. Fescues are common but bents are more noticeable in the turf. Mowing is more frequent, the use of artificial fertilizers more common, and other artificial maintenance methods more generally resorted to than is required or apparently advisable on the seaside courses.

The principal grass on the putting greens in Great Britain is fescue. Colonial bent is also common and there thrives in the mixture with fescue. However it has been found that when turf is fertilized the colonial bent gradually crowds the

fescue out of putting green turf. This is probably why the combination of fescue and colonial bent which has been planted in so many thousands of cases in America has failed to continue as a mixture, for in this country our golfers want a dense turf which calls for the use of fertilizers. The creeping and velvet bents do not thrive in the British Isles as they do under favorable treatments in large areas in America.

Diseases of turf are not as troublesome on putting greens in Great Britain as in this country. Nevertheless diseases do occur and cause some damage. Snowmold is common and may do much damage. Dollarspot is prevalent but brown-patch is rare compared with its occurrence in the United States. Diseases are not as noticeable in turf over there as they are here due to the masking of injury by the large number of fine-leaved weeds scattered through the turf. In our pure stands of one variety of grass it is natural that any injury is much more noticeable than is the case where there may be several unaffected species of plants within a diseased area.

Fairway turf in general on British courses is kept cut much more closely than on American courses. Their grasses are naturally of a lower-growing type than ours and are better able to withstand close mowing than is our common Kentucky bluegrass. Their fairways are not well fertilized as a rule and the turf therefore has a somewhat "starved" appearance. The grass therefore tends to be less succulent than ours and consequently is somewhat better for playing purposes. However the turf is not as dense as our golfers seem to desire. It seems that fairway

fertilization is gradually becoming more prevalent in Great Britain, with the resultant denser turf.

There is one portion of the golf course where we have to concede that the British

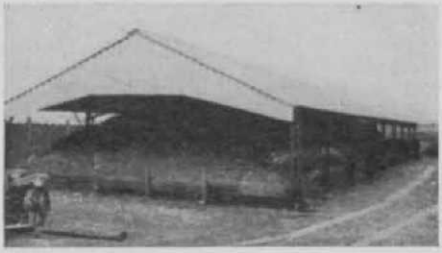
This large practice putting green at St. Andrews has constant traffic every day except Sunday. As Tom Morris said, "Even if players don't need one day's rest a week, the grass does."

courses generally have superior turf to American courses, regardless of the standards that are used to judge turf. That is on the approaches to the putting greens. Invariably the turf on approaches over there is better or at least as good as the fairway turf and apparently remains so throughout the year. In the United States, on the contrary, the poorest turf on the fairways or on the whole course in some instances is too often immediately in front of the green. This condition provides an uncertain region to pitch onto and undoubtedly has been an important factor in the development of the American custom of pitching directly to the putting green, to the almost complete neglect of the run-up shot. Undoubtedly this part of our average golf course could profit decidedly by improvements in grass varieties and in maintenance methods.

The British rough is not as carefully manicured as is much of the American rough; nor are the fringes of traps and other hazards trimmed with such precision and frequency as on many of our courses. The general appearance of rough and hazards soon reminds one of a criticism made of American golf courses by a foreign visitor a few years ago. This gentleman had circled the globe several times and played golf in all parts of the world, so was qualified to compare American courses with those of other countries. He was asked to name the outstanding feature

of American golf courses as compared with others.

"The thing that seems to me outstanding in American golf courses," said he, "is the great abundance of sand traps which must have added tremendously to the cost of building and maintaining your fine courses. It would appear that your



A well-protected compost pile at a course in Troon, Scotland.

architects had uppermost in their minds a desire to throw the fear of the Lord into the heart of every golfer as he stood on each tee. Therefore they scattered the landscape with sand traps. Then it would appear the frightfulness of their creations had caused club officials to relent and keep traps as well as surrounding areas so well groomed that the effectiveness of these hazards is kept at an absolute minimum—also at much added cost."

Gentle Showers More Likely than Heavy Downpours

Rainfall in the British Isles is more evenly distributed than in the United States. Although heavy showers occur, most precipitation is in the form of a prolonged gentle rain that makes the umbrella and raincoat so prominent a part of the equipment of the gallery and players in British golf matches. This slow, even rainfall is much more beneficial to grass than the much heavier downpours which are common in most of the United States during the growing season.

Not only is British rainfall more evenly distributed and more completely absorbed by the soil, but loss by evaporation is also decidedly less. Prolonged droughts, as we know them, are rare. While traveling through England last summer we were told at several places that crops were suffering because of the "drought." The use of this term proved somewhat confusing to the members of the American delegation, particularly those who had come from the West or Middle West, where the term "drought" is not used when one sees fresh, green fields all around him. The more favorable precipitation and evaporation naturally spares British golf much cost

for irrigation. Watering turf has become a much more common practice on British golf courses in recent years, but there are still many well-kept courses on which little or no water is used, even on the putting greens.

Not So Much Use of Machinery

Machines on golf courses, as elsewhere, are much more common in America than in Great Britain. Gas and oil costs are higher and labor costs are lower than in this country. The differences no doubt are important factors in the use of machines on golf courses. Some interesting and apparently efficient machines are in use but they are not as varied nor as universally used as in the United States. Many fairways are kept mowed by sheep, but the better courses are cut by power mowers. It will no doubt surprise many readers to learn that the putting greens of the famous old St. Andrews course are cut with power mowers.

The type of vegetation in the rough of British courses however is quite different from that on most of our courses. Neglected rough there does not usually present the nuisance of lost balls for every wayward shot, as is found on so many of our golf courses where dandelions, broad-leaved plantain, dock and similar weeds provide a type of cover which is rare in British rough. On the other hand some of their gorse and similar plants in places rival our worst ball-hiding rough.

Although the turf on British golf courses is so well favored by Nature and although the British temperament naturally accepts changes with caution, there is plenty of evidence of demands for turf improvements. The British Golf Unions are now supporting a program of scientific investigations of turf at Bingley in Yorkshire, England. There they have a permanent staff of 23 members, with a large turf garden, where many series of experiments are in progress. There is at present no such support of turf improvement investigations in America.

Aussie Amateurs Are Hot—Gene Sarazen, after playing with numerous Australian amateurs, on his latest trip to the Antipodes, believes Australia could present an amateur team that would give the American Walker Cup team stiffer competition than the British Walker Cup teams have furnished.