

Curiosity Made a Greenkeeper

The Story of HUGH LUKE
Greenkeeper, Garden City Golf Club, Garden City, Long Island

MY first interest in greenkeeping came to me when I was a caddie on a golf course in the North of Ireland, where my family happened to be residing at that time. I have never been able to decide whether it was interest, or just natural inquisitiveness. However, I used to ask questions about the course which could not by any stretch of the imagination be said to be any concern of mine. Although not always getting a reply, I came back for more. After a year or so of asking questions, I was allowed to do some work on the course, as an occasional helper. From being an occasional helper I gradually became a regular greenkeeper on the same course where as a caddie I began to ask questions.

Serves on Green Committee

Later, owing to a family move, I lost touch with greenkeeping until I joined the club in my home town, Clyde Bank, Scotland. I was not long a member of the club when I was elected to the council of management and put on the Green committee, owing to my knowledge of greenkeeping. I carried on in the Green committee several years and had some heated arguments in regard to alterations and general upkeep, as I understood the

work from the greenkeeper's point of view, whereas the other members of the committee were in industrial life and had only a vague idea of how the work should be done.

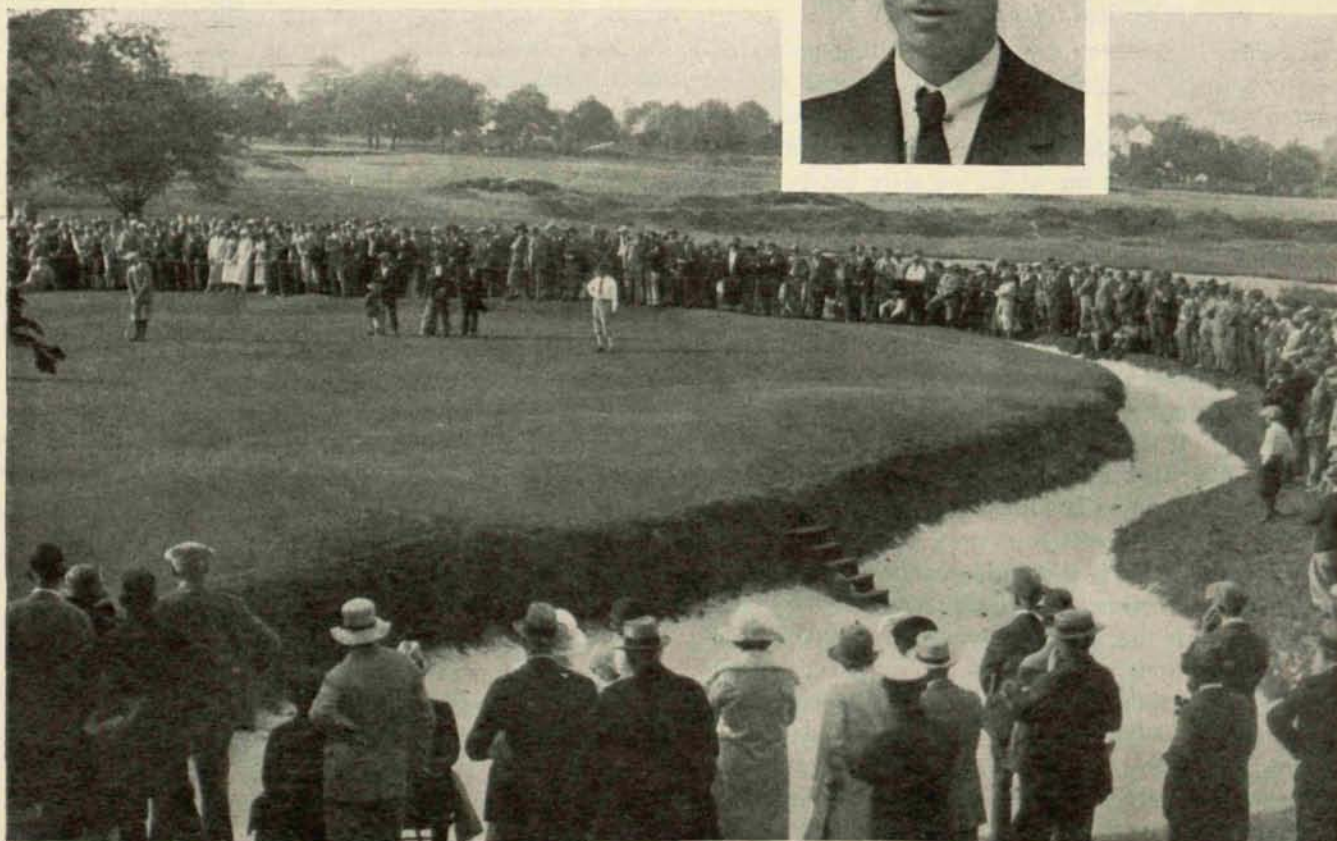
Back Home After the War

Then came the World War and over four years of army life, which event upset golf courses in common with everything else. With peace came many changes in industrial life, and along with it the re-conditioning and improvement of golf courses, among them Clyde Bank. We decided to extend the course, and we had no greenkeeper. I was offered the opportunity of taking the position as professional and greenkeeper, which I accepted.

From the start, I had most of the extension of the course to swing, which took several months to accomplish. At the end of two years, I decided to change,



Hugh Luke, Greenkeeper
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Open Tournament Day at Garden City

although to a certain extent I was sorry to leave the club where my work had been much appreciated. However, I felt that I wished to come to the United States, where golf was gaining rapid headway.

Starts in New York State

Soon after arriving in this country, I secured a position on a new course being built at Mt. Kisco, New York, where I had charge of seeding all the greens and fairways. At this time I applied for the position as greenkeeper at the Garden City Golf Club. I started on the job in the spring of 1924, when everything was being rushed to get the course in shape for an early opening. There was also some construction work to be finished for the Open Tournament held every year at Garden City.

One green had to be built over, and as the approach to the new green was in the position of the old one, two greens had to be returfed. We had just five weeks to make our changes, and five weeks after we started the job, both greens were in play and ready for the tournament.

Since the first year, we have had a quiet time in construction work at Garden City, with the exception of altering half of one green, building seven large bunkers, and rebuilding a fairway.

Controlling Brown Patch

Our chief enemy is brown patch, and it seems to come earlier and stay later each season. Corrosive sublimate applied at the rate of one-third in two barrels of water to a green seems to give good results. During the hot dry weather, one-quarter of a pound is safer to use, and gives good control. We use a proportioning machine in applying such mixtures to the greens, which facilitates the work to a great extent. This past fall we had a severe attack of brown patch, even as late as September, when one naturally expects to be free of it.

How Our Magazine Helps

Brown patch attacks many courses here in the east, and I believe that by comparing notes through the pages of this magazine, greenkeepers will eventually overcome this trouble. Scientists are working for us, but we must make determined efforts ourselves to control the ravages of this disease, and what one greenkeeper has found out should be passed on to others. I hope to see all the members of the Association taking advantage of the opportunity our magazine offers them. It is the medium through which our problems may be discussed, so let's hear from *you*, Brother Greenkeeper.

"Getting Set for the Future"

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nevertheless it has been my experience that unless climatic conditions are impossible any grass will respond to intelligent care.

At the Hillcrest Club where I am now located we have two bent greens on which we were playing sixty days from the planting and are expecting to put in more bent for next season.

Good Greenkeepers in Demand

It seems to me that greenkeeping affords a wonderful opportunity to the man who wants to buckle down, learn his problems and apply the same attention and intelligence to those problems that he would in a business, for example. It also seems to me and I can say it with all due modesty that a good greenkeeper is of the utmost importance if a course is going to be satisfactory to the members. The greenkeeper's work is seldom noticed unless it is wrong; it is seldom if ever praised no matter how good, but receives quick condemnation if the greenkeeper fails; so the greenkeeper must after all serve more or less through his love of the work and his joy in healthy turf, well kept traps and work well done. I do not mean to advise anybody how to conduct a golf club but I do believe the way to get the best results is to *get a good greenkeeper and then let him alone*. He should of course consult with the chairman of the Green com-

mittee on all matters out of the ordinary such as rebuilding greens, traps, removing or installation of hazards and things of that nature but in routine matters, if he knows his business, he can be trusted to handle them without interference.

It is my firm belief that this policy put into general effect would considerably reduce the cost of course upkeep because it would reduce a great deal of experimenting and thus save money.

Study and Make Good

Greenkeeping is a profession worthy of a man's best efforts, a profession which is not likely to be overcrowded for some time. There are available text books and courses of instruction from which an earnest man can obtain a great deal of sound, valuable information. These of course will not take the place of practical experience. There never will be anything to equal experience on the turf itself; nevertheless, a greenkeeper whose experience has been limited can add greatly to his fund of information by study and application of what he learns to the problems at hand. I know that it would have been of great benefit to me when I first went to Ingleside if I had had books to refer to.

Greenkeeping is interesting work. It is work that may well occupy the entire attention of any lover of golf.