

Automatic Watering

by Walter Heeles

BACK in 1970 at Oakdale Golf Club we were having to come to terms with thorny problems of how to apply sufficient water to the Greens to maintain optimum condition without disrupting our summer work schedule, without disrupting play and without littering the picturesque course with portable sprinklers, hoses etc.

The obvious answer was to instal pop-up sprinklers, but, as with many clubs, the prospect of sudden heavy capital expenditure did not appeal, so it was decided to carry out the work in stages, on a 'do it yourself' basis where possible.

In this, the Club was fortunate in a number of respects—the existing pump and pipe work system could be readily converted for use with pop-ups—they had an enthusiastic and hard working green staff, and a long established firm of irrigation contractors was based in nearby Ripon. This company supplied both technical advice and all necessary materials to the golf club when we installed the manually-operated pop-up sprinklers on one trial green in 1971.

From then, over the next three years, the programme developed with the club purchasing equipment as finance and circumstances allowed, until every green was watered by manually operated pop-ups.

An arrangement was made with the irrigation contractors to hire a mole plough with operators on an hourly basis, which kept everybody happy, and was used to partially instal some of the greens, and to replace some of the existing mains pipe which was not considered suitable.

The final phase was completed, involving the automation of the complete system by installing low voltage cable, electric solenoid valves, control panel, and improving the pump installation a good deal of which was again done with the benefit of advice as needed from the Ripon.

The resulting automatic system has brought the club fully up to date in terms of greens watering, and has proved a useful exercise in co-operation between contractor and client, good relations having been happily maintained, despite occasional problems caused by such factors as rocky conditions on the course. I and my staff have learnt a considerable amount about the practicalities of watering installations and maintenance and (who Knows?) perhaps more of this type of venture will be seen in time to come.

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