'The man who understands greenkeepers to the extent

17 - Hayter's was the first company to intro-
duce a rotary with rear rollers - the Hayter Har-
rrier - a move which transformed the 17"-20"
traditional market whilst giving the trade a shot
in the arm by providing a machine that was
cheaper to buy and cheaper to run - while giving
that all important banded finish. Indication of the
success of that machine may be seen to this day,
for the Harrier is now in its third generation!

In the early '80s Hayter's joined the Unlisted
Securities Market, becoming one of the first PLCs,
though remaining essentially a family share
owned business, and in 1984 Kim Macfie joined
them - just three weeks before the company was
acquired by Tompkins PLC. Tompkins
entrepreneurial chief executive, Gregory Hutch-
ing, recognised the company as being an ideal
vehicle to start a mini-conglomerate and won
the company by beating bids from Qualcast and
Westwood. What started as a clever man move
came a huge success story, for Tompkins are
now major league players, in 1992 joining the FT-
SE 100 index - the largest UK companies, by market
capitalisation, listed on the Stock Exchange.

Growth is the name of the game in any suc-
cessful business and in 1987, aware of a need
to develop still further in the professional market,
Hayter's acquired the Beaver company, their
range of triple cylinder mowers, lightweight fair-
way mowers, mounted gangs and the state-of
the-art T92 triple greens mower. It was a sharp
intakes of breath from the competition! Further
acquisition in the USA by Tompkins of Murray-
Ohio, the biggest manufacturing company in the
world of pedestrian and consumer ride-on mow-
ers, with 1.5 million pedestrian mowers manufac-
tured each year, has given Hayter distribution of
this marque under the Murray label. Perhaps to
put the icing on the cake, they have the 'Articula-
tor', a unique product which, as Kim put it, "every
golf course should buy - because they have a
requirement for it."

Kim Macfie is a golfer with an impeccable pedig-
ree - he's Scottish, which in most books is worth
about three shots on the first tee, and he's a long
standing member of Royal Troon Golf Club, prob-
obly worth another two! He has practical experi-
ence as a Royal Troon administrator, specifically,
having served as chairman of green in the mid-
seventies and working alongside the R&A Cham-

It's all down to...

whenever a rally was
scheduled. At first he cut his teeth in
cub events, progressing sooner than most to
national status (as a semi-professional) before
eventually moving into the heady atmosphere
of the international rally scene. Frederick is too
modest to list his successes during those won-
derful crazy years, but I've discovered that as
a contemporary of rally aces John Taylor and
Tony Mason, he was good enough to come
under the wing of 'the works' at Bourne, the
training and testing grounds of Ford Motor-
sport. His UNIC/TAP sponsored Escort twin-
cam became a familiar sight on the
international scene - the RAC, the Tulip, the
Thousand Lakes and other events of superstar
status - and he was very, very quick, even
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at times, suffering
the indignity of the odd 'off' (rally
speak for crash) as punishment for such flat-out
ten-tenths performances.

"What made you give it up?" I asked. "Well, I
want you to know that I never regretted it for a
moment, he answered, "but there came a time
when I discovered the other great love of my
life - Monica - and I began to have other things
rather than rally pace notes on my mind. I found
I wasn't always going quite as fast as I had
before, there was another person to think about
and I was thinking about her. It was a good time
to stop".

Suddenly safety on the road took on a whole
new aspect and for two years Frederick earned a
living by selling Volvo's. He freely admits,
even some six years on, to remaining a dedi-
cated Volvo addict - largely because of the
safety features for which this marque is famous.
of backing them with hard cash...'

hership Committee's agronomist for that period, Jim Arthur. Having in my time met a few green chairman/a that I would have loved to throttle, I warmed instantly to Kim's words of wisdom when promoting him into reminiscing over his term of ofice, in particular his thinking on the relation-ship forged with Norman Ferguson, Royal Troon's long serving links superintendent.

"I took the view that I could never dictate to Norman on how he should do his job, for the man knew every blade of grass on the links. So I never tried. My connection with the business side of golf at that time was from my having worked for Ransomes in Scotland and before that as group head-cultural manager for Eastern Tractors. I knew the fine turf machinery side intimately and used my expertise to instigate a machinery replacement programme at Royal Troon, I think for the first time. I saw my job as being the inter- mediary between Norman, Jim Arthur and the committees, never one of interfering."

As an enlightened soul with whom any green-keeper would enjoy instant rapport, Kim's views on uplifting the status of greenkeepers are worth repeating. "For a start," he said, "the move should be made to educate a number of different parties. Training is vital and BIGGA's initiative in doing so much for their industry is laudable, creditable to the point of being seen as an example which other trade associations might do well to copy. That stated, education of other parties, of keeping members informed of greenkeeping develop- ments, for example, is vital. I would especially single out the need to ensure that club secretaries understand the professional importance of the greenkeeper, for they more than any other enjoy the privilege of continuity in the club hierarchy."

Yes, let's face it, the man knows about fine turf machinery and knows about golf. Above all, he knows about greenkeepers, what makes then tick. I left Bishops Stortford with an overwhelming feeling of optimism for the success of the Hayter Challenge Tournament, safe in the knowledge that the future of championship golf, greenkeeper style, is in very capable hands indeed. Let's hear it for Hayter - and for Kim Macfie, the man who understands greenkeepers to the extent of back-ing them with hard cash. Finally, let's drink a toast to Hayter's foresight, whilst vowing to make the world take note of this unique partnership - cheers!

But the call to return to grass roots was nagging - indeed had been festering since his retirement from rallying - and he set about gaining entry into the greenkeeping profession. His brothers were keen golfers and he was often dragged along to make up a four, sooon discovering that he had a good eye/ball synchronisation and rather found that the game grew on him. He warmed to the idea of working in such an environment and became a greenkeeper by the simple expedient of adver-tising himself. Throughout his motoring career he had kept hang up-to-date on matters agricul-tural, especially the equipment and technology side, whilst maintaining an enthusiastic and practical interest in gardening and landscape architecture. His interest in golf fanned wide hot, he read technical and 'how-to' books by the score, joined BIGGA, attended workshops and seminars in Britain at every opportunity - and thirsted after knowledge, absorbing it like a blotter.

Frederick's first greenkeeping job was a mod-est one, and came as a result of an advert in a golfing magazine, his commission being to knock into shape a small course which, by his own admission, was 'in a big mess'. It was a giant step for a greenhorn, but in a country where trained expert greenkeepers are at a pre-mium it was the sort of challenge he needed. In less than three years he had turned the place on its axis, producing enviable playing surfaces that were proof enough of his skills and his belief in himself. He'd done what others in Hol-land might have just dreamed about - blended book learning and theory with essential practice and survived to tell the tale. Moving forward, in 1990 this now practical and proven greenkeeper advertised himself in the Dutch golfing press and was soon called to action to become the head greenkeeper and oversee construction and growing-in at a brand new 18 hole prestige course near The Hague, designed and supervised by the talented young architect, Gerald Jol. As one might imagine, this task was a far cry from his rather humble first steps at the nine-holer, but Frederick is no aver-age greenkeeper, indeed no average man, and he took to the big time with aplomb, finding it totally within his mark and revelling in the extra challenge that working with contractors, with STRI's Jeff Perris and with Watermation's installation engineers provided. In addition, the course was to be on a site containing Roman archaeological remains and he was called upon time and again to exercise the now famous ten Hage diplomacy when dealing with site geologists.

The course itself is near to the coast and set on a seam of sand some three metres below ground, which has proven useful in two ways. Thus far it has enabled extraction of some 45000m³ of excellent material for bunker use, with the resultant extraction craters providing two special lakes that have become an integral feature of play. From the very beginning Fred- erick has set out to play a pivotal part in the whole building and maintenance operation, to stamp his own personality on the programme, to see the course identified in play as 'his' course. He's fiercely proud of his achievements; nine holes are already in play, widely acclaimed as being something rather special, and the full eighteen will be open later this year. It's a high priced golf club and his members quite rightly expect something special. That stated, I'm bound to say that in having Frederick ten Hage as their head greenkeeper they are on the right path, for he's not the sort to rest on laurels and views the next four years or so as a continuing testing ground, both from an individual learning viewpoint and as a happily accepted obliga-tion to his members - to see the course mature, flourish and prosper.

Currently engaged in an Elmwood College distance learning course covering golf course management, he gets over to Britain on every possible occasion, has been seen on BIGGA lect-ure platforms on two or three occasions, dis-cussing Dutch methods and ideology; and has taken up the pen - contributing articles for his native golf federation magazine. Summarising over what is still something of a new experience for him, he declared that taking to greenkeep-ing was a case of returning to roots and cer-tainly a blessed case of 'life begins at forty'!

I take my hat off to this enterprising Dutchman who appears totally at ease in his new 'driving seat', very much master of his own destiny. He freely acknowledges that the road ahead may be full of twists and turns - many unplotted - and is gracious in praising the sup-port given him by his many colleagues. He sin-gled out just three from the dozens that have helped him achieve his goals, Jan van Mond-frans from the consultant company 'ProGrass', Jeff Perris from STRI and the Jacobsen dealer Van de Lienden. I smiled as this ex-rally man turned the talk around to motoring once again - "you know with Van de Lienden I've enjoyed tinkering with and making minor modifications to some of their equipment. I'm a self-taught engineer and you could say that as a result of those early days of tinkering, of building racing engines and experimenting with settings, I'm now the driver of a rather special version of the Tri-King. I love to put my own ideas into prac-tice and I'm delighted that we are able to work together for the betterment of greenkeeping."

Frederick ten Hage - a Dutch ambassador, very much a leader, proud to be a BIGGA mem-ber and firmly putting the 'I' for International in BIGGA!