

Pattissons have been instrumental in producing some of the most fundamental pieces of golf equipment. They have now become BIGGA Golden Key Sponsors.

There is a saying that goes something along the lines of "a golf green without a hole is a lawn". It hadn't been for Arthur Harold Pattisson Cole, the founder of Pattissons, there would have been a great many lawns on the world's golf courses and not too many greens.

That is because Arthur Pattisson's second golf invention was the first ever hole cutter – the Bogey Hole Cup Cutter. Mr Pattisson, who owned his own engineering company, had watched the green staff at his own Streatam Golf Club toiling with the Heath Robinson knife and spoon method for digging out a hole. He found an old Aga stove removed the steel pipe, which happened to conform to R&A guidelines on hole size, added a wooden handle through the top – the teeth in the top of the pipe helped pull the earth up and Voila!

The Bogey Hole Cup Cutter is still around today and the general design has changed very little in that time – pedals have been added.

"Pattissons were the original innovators on the golf course," said Mike Hinch, along with his brother Jonathan, joint Managing Director of the Luton-based company – Mike is MD – Sales and Marketing with Jonathan MD – Finance and Administration. Pattissons were formed in 1896 and in their centenary year they have become a BIGGA Golden Key sponsor.

What was that? You want to know what was the first invention Arthur Pattisson came up with?

Well there is not much chance of seeing it of a golf course these days but in 1896 it was a God send. The Pattissons Horse Shoe enabled horses to drag mowers over the fairways and greens without leaving dirty great indentations in the playing surface.

For many years Pattissons were the leaders in the field producing golf equipment as varied as it was excellent.

"I have an original 1912 brochure and it really had a full complement of handy tools, equipment and furniture for the golf market," explained Mike. "It was the only company in the market at the time."

They even had a hold on the motorised market, producing tractors until the 60s.

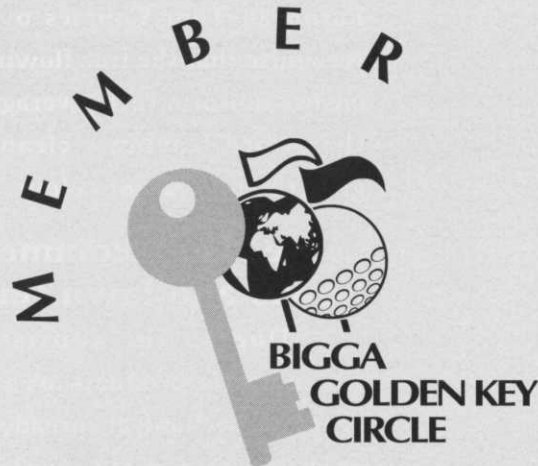
"At the time I feel the company should have capitalised when they were the market leader and done more to protect their position as the whole development of golf was happening," said Mike, a 32 year old prop forward with National League rugby team High Wycombe and the Public School Wanderers.

The Hinch involvement with Pattissons began in July '93 when they bought the company which at that stage was being run by the third generation of Pattisson family.

"The name was fantastically marketable but it had acquired a bad reputation and it takes you twice as long to get rid of a reputation like that than it does to build a name in the first place," said Mike, of the firm which became known as "Five Week Pattisson" referring to the time it took to get deliveries out.

"It was the fact that clubs couldn't get products from Pattissons which gave birth to our competitors," he added.

Where would golf be without Pattissons?



"When we took over we spent six months gearing the company up to relaunch at BTME 94 with a new brochure, new image and new logo. We sharpened up the product range which was looking very staid. Pattisson's had a blue image and I could never understand what blue had to do with golf. So we changed to green and the cosmetic changes we made to our products helped us immediately."

In the two years since the relaunch they have developed somewhere in the region of 20 new products ranging from handy tools, new flag pins, better hole cups and generally produced better quality products.

"The first thing I did was a whistle stop tour of the UK distributors we used and spoke to a lot of greenkeepers. What I learned was that they liked our products but that they just couldn't get hold of them.

"I visited David Roffey in Bournemouth and he put down a red carpet saying that in 40 years dealing with Pattissons no-one from the

company had ever crossed his door step!"

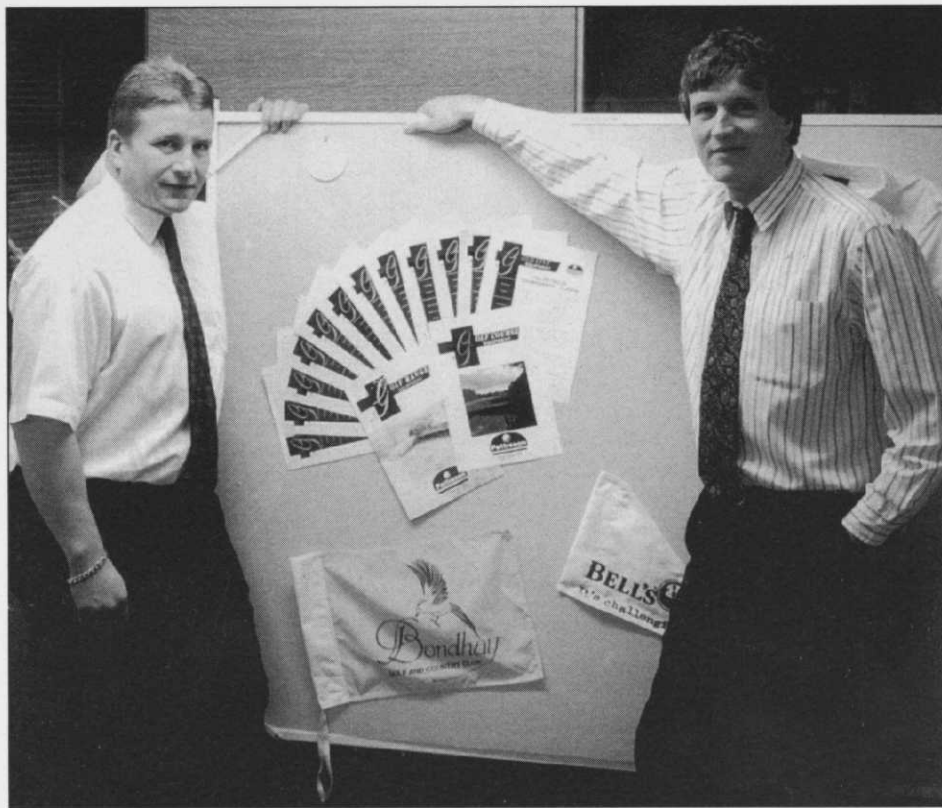
Mike spent eight years working for Phillips rising to UK Sales Manager, controlling around £22 million worth of business. He then joined a small company distributing BT mobile phones as Operations Director before taking on the challenge which was Pattissons.

Jonathan Hinch, four years the elder, joined the company in November '93 having previously been European Finance Manager for a large US multi national.

He significantly worked on tightening up internal systems, stock control and production planning.

"These are now all in place and we plan our production anything from six months to a year in advance and can adapt to change if needed."

The Hinch offensive was two pronged. Not only had they to convince the market that Pattissons were back they had to shake up their suppliers as well.



Men at the top: Mike and Jonathan Hinch of Patisson's

"To many of our suppliers we were just another customer. Suddenly we were shouting about wanting three times more from them and wanting to be higher up their list of priorities. We had to change a lot of our suppliers because they couldn't adapt."

Mike and Jonathan are, by their own admission, business people and not manufacturing orientated, so one of the first appointments was Mike Buckholt as Operations Manager.

"He has been a fantastic asset to the company. His enthusiasm, attention to quality and health and safety knowledge are quite superb. We needed someone good in that area and he's got carte blanche control over the factory. He also gets involved in research and development and enjoys interacting with customers."

On of the many products which put the company back on the road to success was a deluxe golf ball tee marker, a solid resin model with the colour impregnated all the way through.

"We had the company who made them geared up to seven day a week three shift 24 hour a day working and it took us two months to get on top of the demand," said Mike with a degree of pride.

The product range is always been added to and currently stands at around 100 with a basic range of around 50. Coincidentally, the Hinch brother's father is the Chairman of a company known for exactly 57 varieties – Heinz.

"Lots of our ideas come from greenkeepers and our brochure carries the statement, 'our huge and vast R&D Department – you the customer'.

"An example of this came in France when one of the greenkeepers asked if we could come up with a small soil sampler so Mike Buckholt came up with one which is three inches in diameter and hand held. It is now a well known and used tool in the greenkeeper fraternity. Ah yes, France. Not only has the

company bounced back in the United Kingdom it's launched itself into Europe in a big way.

"We now have distributor networks in every single European country and our business in Europe has gone up 300%.

"We looked to Europe immediately and I spent a great deal of time visiting people in Europe and found they were as receptive as they were in the UK."

Mike judges their European progress by the impact at the Munich trade show.

"In '93 our name didn't even appear in the brochure. In '94 our name was in and where to buy our products. In '95 you could see our products pictured," said Mike, who also describes the French company whose turn over of Patisson's product has risen from £4000 to £100,000 in two years.

As part of the BIGGA Golden Key sponsorship and to commemorate the company's centenary they have launched a 100-100-100 Club. Patissons are helping to fund greenkeepers attending BTME '97 and details are available from Patisson's or BIGGA Headquarters.

Listening to Mike you come away convinced that the way ahead for Patissons has been cleared and that it will again be the force it was when Arthur Patisson first launched it into the market with his horse shoes and hole cutter.

"We get faxes in for orders from Fiji, Japan and the Moscow Golf and Country Club and they know about this little company in Luton. It never ceases to amaze me. There is probably a Patisson's product in every golf club in the country."

The renewed vigour of the company should ensure that more products will be appearing in each of those clubs.



Signs of the times: part of the signage range



Made to measure: in the Patissons workshop