

DAVID WHITE talks to Hayter's Kim Macfie, mastermind of the new 'Hayter Challenge Tournament'



Golf Crazy

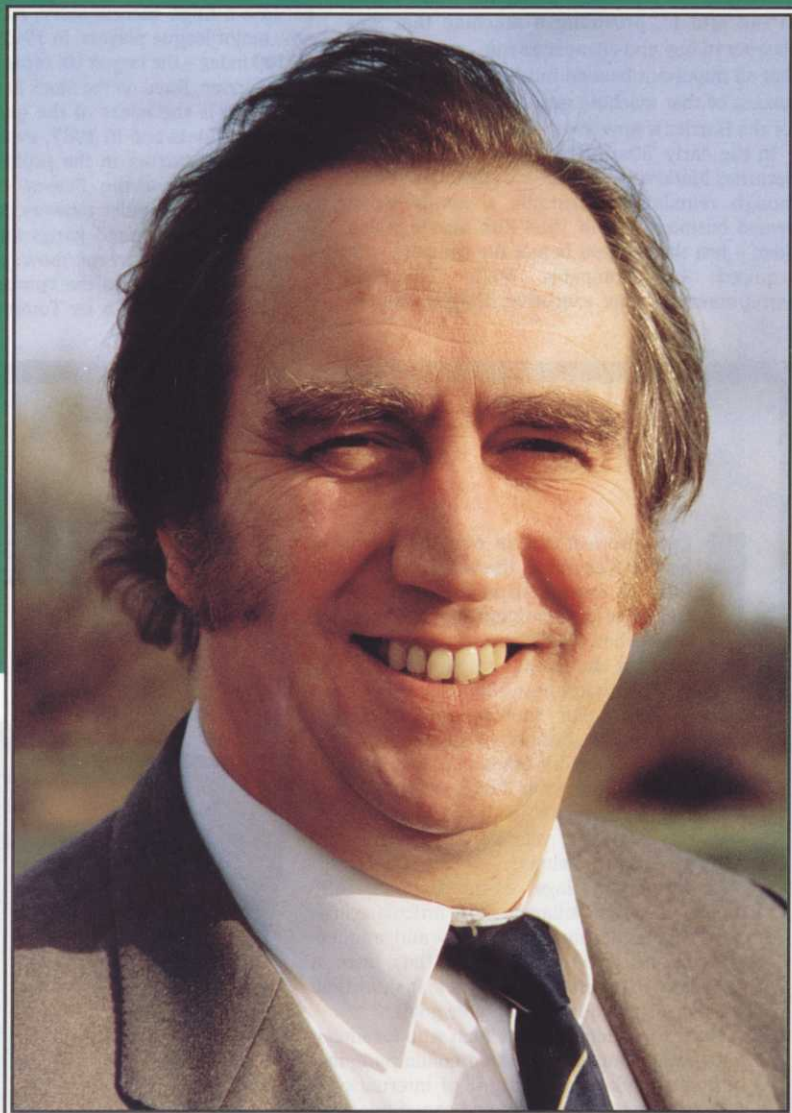
They're using more four letter words in Bishops Stortford these days, words like golf, hook, fore, grip, push, draw, loft, sand, club and putt. Nothing unusual in that, you may think, but at Hayter PLC, headquarters of the famous turfcare machinery company that is to sponsor our 'new image' nationwide golf tournament, it's all part of a fresh and inspired company effervescence, an almost unbelievable enthusiasm that even those few remaining diehards who think of golf as a good walk spoiled have taken fully in their stride – Hayter's has gone golf crazy!

When the news broke that Hayter's had grasped the glittering prize, I wasn't so much surprised that this hugely popular tournament, formerly known as the Iseki, was to come under their wing, rather that there hadn't been a riot of companies in our industry hammering on BIGGA's doors, clamouring for the opportunity to identify with such a sure-fire winner.

Meeting Kim Macfie, Hayter's sales and marketing director and the man who will mastermind the new 'Hayter Challenge Tournament', it soon became clear that he shared my view: that the idea required precious little persuasion on BIGGA's part, the whole concept from the very beginning seen as absolutely right for their development, the very epitome of how Kim visualised promoting and further generating Hayter's business growth. "I believe the greenkeeping fraternity are a superb bunch of people who have increased in status, though not sufficiently yet," he told me. "We want to be close to them because we have products that are good for them. We feel that having this close link is going to develop our business as well as develop their Association – that's why we are so excited about it."

Did being a golfer influence his decision, I asked. "I'm not the sort to let personal feelings influence what is right for the company," he replied, "though perhaps the fact that I've been around golf as a player and administrator may have had some slight bearing, recognising the potential that was offered. It was the sheer brilliance of the concept, exactly the sort of move we wanted to make, that fired my enthusiasm. That stated, the Board's decision to go with this superb initiative was unanimous, objective rather than subjective, and their excitement is unbounded."

What is certain is that Hayter's will be putting a great deal of thought, time and creative effort into the Hayter Challenge Tournament, convinced that by so doing both parties will get a great deal more out of it – isn't that encouraging!



Though 1993 will be their first year as sponsors, to a certain extent the year in which to feel their way, Kim sees the whole Hayter Challenge Tournament profile capable of being raised to untold heights – by their developing tournament links with other suppliers (MacGregor was one name mentioned), prestigious names who will want to be identified with our industry, building the tournament into an even more credible entity where publicity will almost be self-generating – perhaps in years to come involving even satellite TV. Elaborating, Kim sees the voracious appetite generated for golf in all its aspects making its mark, the Association and the Hayter profile growing together as a natural evolution.

The story of the Hayter company is fascinating. Formed way back in 1946 by Doug Hayter on the original Bishops Stortford site, it came into being more by luck than judgement, for Doug Hayter, then in the timber buildings business, was something of an innovator and loved to tinker with machinery. There was a need around the site for an effective grass cutter, so he set about creating his own unique version of the rotary mower. Though the original rotary technique came into being in the thirties, reputedly invented by Dennis Selby of Mountfield, it was Doug who commercially developed the concept, at first selling his clever device to a few farmer friends before the idea really mushroomed, the Hayterette soon identified as the rotary and making Hayter's business positively boom. ■ 18

'The man who understands greenkeepers to the extent

17 ➤ Hayter's was the first company to introduce a rotary with rear rollers – the Hayter Harrier – 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 – whilst 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-

ings, 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 move soon became 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 successful 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 fairway mowers, mounted gangs and the state-of-the-art T92 triple greens mower causing 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 mowers, with 1.5 million pedestrian mowers manufactured each year, has given Hayter distribution of this marque under the Murray label. Perhaps to put the icing on the cake, they have the 'Articulator', 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 pedigree – 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, probably worth another two! He has practical experience as a Royal Troon administrator, specifically having served as chairman of green in the mid-seventies and working alongside the R&A Cham-

It was the year of Tom Watson, glorying in his fifth Open title, the year Nigel Mansell finished fourteenth in the FIA Formula One World Championships. It was the year when our World Cup soccer team demonstrated that things might be worse by singing "This time, more than any other time" before leaving our shores for a 'thorough thumping' by the Spaniards. Mercifully, it was also the year when our other national team did much better, dishing out their own version of a 'thorough thumping' in the Falklands. The year was 1982, the year Frederick ten Hage hung up his crash helmet.

Frederick ten Hage, ex-international rally driver, arguably Holland's most articulate high profile greenkeeping personality and unquestionably its finest ambassador, has been a greenkeeper for just six years, in that short time achieving some quite remarkable goals.

How, I wondered, does a man who for fifteen long years competed in the adrenalin pumping, hurly-burly glamour and grit of international rallying come to find peace and contentment on the fairways? Frederick completed high school in his native Holland, following this with a spell at agricultural college before earning a Degree in Agriculture, specifically in arable farming. Finishing his formal education at age twenty or thereabouts, one might have assumed that a career 'on the land' was expected of this young academic – but he had other ideas. Only one thing was on Frederick's mind as he bade farewell to college life – a burning belief that he could make his mark in motorsport, carve a career in the rough and tumble of competitive rallying.

Anyone who has ever competed in motorsport, even at club level, will know that it costs an arm and leg to set up a competitive rally car, to pay astronomic entry fees, for reconnaissance work and for sheer 'wear and tear'. It's certainly not a sport for the poor and the income of a young farmer in those early days would have barely kept a competition car in screenwash fluid, let alone gas or tyres!

Thus it came that Frederick took to earning as much as he possibly could in the flight operations sector of Schiphol Airport, not with any specific career in mind but with the cold, calculated aim of amassing the necessary pile of loot with which to go rally raiding. His was an 'all-hours' job that provided essential finances whilst giving him the freedom to be away

It's all down to...



when-
ever a rally was
scheduled. At first he cut his teeth in club 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 wonderfully 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 Motorsport. 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

'hairy'
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 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 – 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 dedicated Volvo addict – largely because of the safety features for which this marque is famous.

of backing them with hard cash...'

pionship Committee's agronomist for that period, Jim Arthur. Having in my time met a few green chairmen that I would have loved to throttle, I warmed instantly to Kim's words of wisdom when prompting him into reminiscing over his term of office, in particular his thinking on the relationship 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 horticultural manager for Eastern Tractors. I knew the fine turf machinery side intimately and used my expertise to instigate a machinery

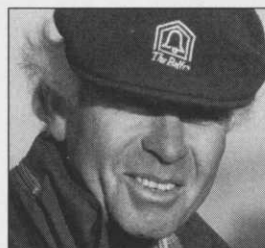
replacement programme at Royal Troon, I think for the first time. I saw my job as being the intermediary between Norman, Jim Arthur and the committee, never one of interfering."

As an enlightened soul with whom any greenkeeper 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 developments, 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 them 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 backing 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!

DRIVE



reckons rally driver turned greenkeeper

FREDERICK TEN HAGE



But the call to return to grass roots was niggling – 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, soon discovering that he had good eye/ball synchronisation and r

ather 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 advertising himself. Throughout his motoring career he had kept bang up-to-date on matters agricultural, especially the equipment and technology side, whilst maintaining an enthusiastic and practical interest in gardening and landscape architecture. His interest in golf fanned white 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 modest 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 premium 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 Holland 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 average 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 found 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 Frederick has set out to play a pivotal part in the whole building and maintenance operation, to stamp his own personality on the programme and 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 obligation 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 lecture platforms on two or three occasions, discussing 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 greenkeeping was a case of returning to roots and certainly a blessed case of 'life begins at forty'!

I take my hat off to this enterprising Dutchman, a man 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 support given him by his many colleagues. He singled out just three from the dozens that have helped him achieve his goals, Jan van Mondfrans from the consultant company 'ProGrass', Jeff Perris from STRI and the Jacobsen dealer Van de Lienden. I smiled at 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 practice 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 member and firmly putting the 'I' for International in BIGGA!