



Ocmis has been quick to make an impact on the golf course irrigation market and now, as Golden Key sponsor, greenkeepers will be seeing even more of the Somerset based company which has an additional three offices providing service to the whole of England and Scotland.

When it comes to timing its introduction into golf course irrigation, Ocmis couldn't have done it any better if a crystal ball had come as part of the office equipment. The Somerset based company began installing golf course systems in the late 1980s and has strengthened its position to the extent, that as the need for improved water usage and conservation has become increasingly apparent few companies are better placed to take advantage of

# Preparing for an 'unrainy' day!

the increasing demand for irrigation systems. "For a long period the attitude towards irrigation in the UK was that it was used to top up natural rainfall," said Ocmis Managing Director, Chris Aplin. "However, grass is now much more technical than that nowadays, both in growing it and keeping it growing well."

But the change in the weather, although the experts say they need many more hot dry summers before it can be described as a significant trend, has marked water down as a precious commodity to be used wisely.

"The apparent change in the weather over the last few years in bound to have an affect on our

business. We've seen golf courses where the fairways have been so dry that golf balls have been disappearing down cracks and have seen a significant interest from clubs who are looking into full fairway irrigation."

Chris says it is difficult to make members comprehend that they need a system when it is perhaps only a month in middle of summer when it doesn't rain at all. "However, the damage which can be caused to the course in that time can be astronomical. It's the unfortunate greenkeeper who has to find five or six bodies to water by hand day and night to keep the course from burning up."

"The labour saving benefits of

having a fully efficient automated system are very high compared with manual watering but in many instances the members and the committee never see the work which is going on in the background by greenkeepers to keep the course up to their required standard."

Chris has also noticed a change in the way golf courses have marketed in recent years. "So many of the courses built in the late 80s and early 90s were in remote locations. Since then other courses have been built nearer population centres so the remote ones are finding it more difficult to survive. The only way they can is to make their playing condi-



tions better than the next club's. If it's burnt out it's not nearly as appealing as one which is green and lush and everything is growing." Much of the work Ocmis carries out is in the field is upgrading and refurbishments to existing systems.

"Unfortunately a lot of developers do not appreciate what makes a good irrigation system. If a course is being developed to be sold, price is paramount and even with a fully automatic irrigation system, whether it is good, bad or indifferent often does not become apparent until the new owner has taken over."

Ocmis is responsible for introducing the use of the superior polyethylene pipe system into the golf irrigation market.

"The golf market had always used UPVC pipe supplied in 6 metre lengths (jointed by glue or simply push fit) the biggest problems being bursts in existing UPVC mains where jointing occurs. The advantages with PE pipe are that you have only one joint every 100 metres, it resists intrusion by stones and it follows ground contours."

"We always use compression couplings which have a far superior reliability, galvanised manifold assembly rather than UPVC and brass valves, which are many times more expensive than plastic."

Obviously using the best quality products means greater cost overall but Ocmis is careful to ensure that golf clubs get the best possible results for their investment.

"We can rarely ever be cheapest because of the quality of materials we use but we never compromise. What we suggest is that the project is phased for the club if they don't have enough money for the full project initially. We also encourage clubs to spend a little more to put in the cable for an automatic system at the beginning, even if they just want manual system. Because if they want to upgrade at a later date for a little extra cost at the beginning, it can save thousands of pounds later and avoid causing major disruption to the course."

Chris explains that designing a system is the key to making it work and they have a team of five designers who give the customer



The Ocmis installation team in action. Far left, late evening irrigation

as much as they can for the money available.

"Ocmis prides itself on having the most up-to-date design department in the country with Computer Aided Design (CAD) to produce the complicated drawings required for golf and particularly landscape projects which tend to be more complicated than golf."

In addition Ocmis boasts what Chris Aplin believes to be the biggest service team in the irrigation market.

Ocmis offers a 24 hour call out service for a major system failure to all customers who have a service agreement and 30 service engineers are spread throughout the country who are all fully qualified electricians as well as being mechanical engineers.

"It means we can send one engineer to a site and he can cope whatever the problem. You never know, particularly in golf where there is so much computerisation, whether the problem is electrical or mechanical," explained Chris.

When Ocmis first became involved in the golf market a team was sent to America to learn about the equipment and their methods of design. "We also sent off five of our designers to Myerscough College to do the full BTLIA training course in irrigation."

"I honestly don't believe that many of the clubs get the greenkeeper involved enough in the decision making, when it comes to an irrigation system. Decisions which affect them directly and on which his technical input will lead to a better deal for the club."

Our company policy is that if we install or service a system is to make sure that all the greenkeepers at the club are trained in the way the system works and in basic maintenance. How to service the sprinklers and how to do small servicing jobs. It can save the club a lot of money. When we do a spring start up for the customer we check the whole system through, and when we shut it down in the winter, we blow the

whole system out using compressed air which no-one else in the industry does, this ensures the system is completely drained and avoids any possibility of frost damage.

Chris sees much development in the area of water storage in the future on the strength of last year's water restrictions. "It is relatively easy to get an extraction licence in winter from a river or a stream because it is flowing to excess, while it is nearly impossible now to get a licence to extract in the summer. It's even getting difficult to get borehole licences for extraction during the summer period, so ideally clubs should extract water in the winter, store it for use during the summer."

"We calculate the size of the

storage lakes for clubs, provide the liners to put in them, and any additional equipment such as aerators, borehole pumps, etc. in fact anything to do with pumping and storage. Clubs have got to be made aware of water storage and water usage. The annual average rainfall is approximately 30 inches in the UK and all that water soaks into the ground and runs off. Most golf courses have extensive land drainage systems but instead of draining the water into reservoirs, which would conserve the water to reuse, often it goes directly into an outflow, and off down the river. A totally wasted precious resource."

It's that type of thinking which will ensure that Ocmis continues to make advances in the modern golf course irrigation market and that golf clubs will make the most of the resources both financial and natural they have available to them.

# "FOUR!"

Tees, greens, fairways and roughs, now you can "whole in one" with Barenbrug mixtures especially formulated for specific purposes.

- 1** Greens - Bar 2 mixture
- 2** Fairways - Bar 3 mixture
- 3** Roughs - Bar 4 mixture
- 4** Tees - Bar 5 mixture

Containing varieties like Bargreen, Barcrown, Bardot and Heriot, Barenbrug mixtures will give superb colour, hard wear, low maintenance and rapid growth.

As with all Barenbrug mixtures, they contain varieties consistently rated in the top banding of the STRI Turfgrass Seed booklets.

**BARENBRUG**  
Great in Grass

Tel: (01359) 270766 Fax: (01359) 271021

AD REF 172