

TALKING HEADS

Compiled by Malcolm Huntington MBE

1

What sort of system do you have at your course and how old is it?

IRRIGATION



Name: Ian Gunn
Address: Strathpeffer Golf Club
Region: Scottish
Course type: Upland/Heathland (18 holes)
Staff: Head Greenkeeper plus two

We have a gravity fed system, perhaps unique in Britain, with running water from a pond at the top of the course. There is a 600 foot drop from the highest to the lowest point on the course.



Name: Steve Oultram
Address: Wilmslow Golf Club
Region: Northern
Course type: Parkland (18 holes)
Staff: Course Manager plus five

We have a Watermation TW2 system which covers greens and tees. We spot water other areas.



Name: Cedric Gough
Course: Broadway Golf Club
Region: Midland
Course type: Cotswold (unlike parkland, links or heathland, it tends to be a mix of all three based on limestone with a clay-like soil)
Staff: Course Manager, plus five

A two-wire control system with a Watermation TW2 controller. Greens pop-ups are Royal Coach impact type. Tees are gear driven Hunter 1J1s. Installed 1992.



Name: Terry Huntley
Course: West Hill Golf Club
Region: South East
Course type: Heathland (18 holes)
Staff: Course Manager, plus five, plus mechanic

Toro Site Pro system which is four and a half years old. We have wall-to-wall irrigation for tees, greens, fairways and approaches.



Name: Phil Wentworth
Course: Army Golf Club, Aldershot
Region: South West & South Wales
Course type: Woodland/Heathland (18 holes)
Staff: Course Manager, plus five

A Watermation system for greens, surrounds and tees only. It was installed in 1980.



Name: Greg Ferson
Address: Loughgall Country Park golf course.
Region: Northern Ireland
Course type: Parkland (18 holes)
Staff: Course Park Manager, plus Head Greenkeeper, plus four

The Rainbird system was installed three years ago when the course was built. It does only greens and surrounds. We water tees manually.

2

Where does your irrigation water come from?

We have a pond at the summit and another lower down on the course, which gives us a plentiful supply. The course slopes 170ft from the 1st tee to the green.

Mobberley Brook, which runs alongside the course, is an excellent source. It is a good size and in the 13 years I have been here it has never got near to running dry.

We are supplied by mains water filling two 12,000 gallon storage tanks.

Two bore holes which are our main supply. If the river drops to a low level we can switch to a back-up mains supply.

The mains supply, which is metered, is connected to our storage tanks.

We have a 35-acre lake nearby which gives us access to plenty of water, should we need it.

3

What are the plusses and minuses of the system?

The plus is that it doesn't cost us a penny. There is never a breakdown and the pipes are so far under the ground that they don't burst. The minus is that it is labour intensive as it is a manual system.

It is a good system and does the job well, but can do only one green at a time. In an ideal world I would like a valve in head system.

Plus - Easy to maintain, all in-house maintenance. Simple to operate and reliable once original decoders, which were unreliable, were replaced. Minus is no control over individual pop-ups for more controlled watering.

Plus - infinite control over where, when and how much water we put on. Every pop up can be controlled individually and we have a remote control. There are no minuses apart from the very odd leak you get in any system.

The plusses are that the no frills system is very simple and never breaks down. It is adequate. Minus - you can only do one green at a time and we have no individual control with timers.

We don't use the system that often as we have a lot of rain in our part of the world. We can do three greens at a time, so that is a plus. There are no minuses.

4

What is your policy with regard to using the system and has it changed in the recent past?

We use it very sparingly and only when the grass is dry or to wash in fertiliser. We seem to get an eight to nine week wet spell followed by the same time dry. The policy has never changed.

A little and often and only enough to keep the grass alive, We never over water as obviously the idea is to promote bents and fescues not annual meadow grass.

Policy changed very little and only when really required. This has always been the case since an automatic system was installed.

The irrigation system is there to keep the grass healthy and alive. A little and often is the motto. A watering system can be a disaster in the hands of the wrong person. We keep our moisture levels high in May, June and July, while after August 1 very little water goes on.

A little and often. Individual greens need an individual amount of water, such as some of our sloping greens. I have not changed the system in the 13 years I have been here.

Our policy is only to water when absolutely necessary in drought conditions or watering in fertiliser.

5

Looking ahead. How do you see the issue of golf course irrigation in 10 years time?

As the water is free it never bothers us. It seems to have got wetter and windier over the years, so as far as we are concerned I can't see any change in the issue of irrigation, though it may well be that many clubs will have to put up with tighter controls in the use of water.

I think there will be pressure on the amount of water we use and we will have to show more accountability. The extraction of water will become an issue.

It would be good to have our own water source to allow wall to wall irrigation with the same policy as above, all computer controlled. Above all, I think there could be strict controls on the use of water in the future.

The main problem may be water supply, the way things are going. I have an open mind on global warming, but history seems to show that planets warm up and cool down. The future availability of water is the main issue.

It is possible there might be tighter constraints on the use of water. However, in the last ten years there haven't been changes, so it is also possible there might not be any in the next ten.

Water conservation may become an issue. I can see it being very tightly controlled in future and there will probably be restrictions.