

# The rise of the CLUB MECHANIC

wearing out I'll order a new one, run the original until it is nearly ready to give in then replace it right away," explained Steve who is also not averse to helping out the greenkeeping staff if they are pushed and he has some free time.

"I work with the operators so they will let me know if there are any problems. Machines are serviced for oil and filter change after 100 hours usage. But if we have had a really dusty season, like the last one, I'd try to do it every 50 hours. I don't mind putting oil in them.

He is quick to stress the importance of good operators and how that can prolong the life of machines.

"Steve has come in and told operators certain way to leave the machines when they are not being used and that is helping prevent any damage in future. When starting up don't have it on high revs for too long drop lit straight back down to tick over. Basic things that generally you'd probably forget," said Adrian (26).

"He can do the servicing on a day when the machine is not being used and you don't really notice it," he added.

There are other benefits to a golf club and its members to having a club mechanic.

"Hopefully in the future we shall be able to take business from another golf course if they want machines regrinding and we have the facilities to do it or even assist members who want mowers repairing – it can be done for a set fee. We've got 800 members and they've all got lawns to cut. It will help to finance the building up of the workshop. That is what is in the pipeline," said Adrian.

The cost of fitting out that workshop is not quite as expensive as you might imagine.

"I did a rough price check for kitting out the workshop by ringing round different places for machines. We have kept it down as much as we could on prices etc and I don't think we've done too badly. We shall obviously add to it as we go on.

"It has cost around £7,000 to equip the workshop to a state of usability which when you compare it to a triplex or fairway mower, which can cost around £30,000, you can see how reasonable it is," said Steve, who has also brought much of his own equipment with him.

"I have a lot of my own hydraulic testing equipment and electric testing equipment. If a situation arose where we didn't have the piece of kit required to do the job I think we would



The Greatham Valley team with Robert Hinch (third left) who, together with his father Frank, own the club. Steve Randall is pictured extreme left and Adrian Porter, Head Greenkeeper, is extreme right

probably buy the kit because we wouldn't want to be in the position of sending the machinery out and if we were to need it once chances are we would need it again some time."

The growth of the Club Mechanic will perhaps need a change of thinking by some manufacturers as Steve has discovered.

"If you are a main dealer you can tap on to available information but the manufacturers are a bit loath to give information to a golf club mechanic.

If you go on a training course as a main dealer you get the full training course right through but if you go as a golf course mechanic you just get the basics on how to change the oil and grease it. That is basically it at the end of the day. With the advent of the golf course mechanic this is bound to change though. It has got to," commented Steve.

Another situation which will require clarification is that of manufacture warranties on equipment and whether main dealers would be required to service them to maintain the warranty's validity.

"It's a situation we've not come across but we would have to make sure that the warranty wasn't affected," said Adrian.

Overall, however, the benefits of the Club Mechanic are there to be seen and ensure that

machinery is kept performing at its optimum level.

"Anything that is due to break down tend to get seen to before it does break down so you get rid of all these problems. Greenkeepers with mechanical skills I would imagine would just be trained to fix it when it does break-down. You're not a trouble shooter whereas Steve can find out all problems," explained Adrian.

■ So what do the major companies do by way of training for use in their equipment? Greenkeeper International surveyed what's available...

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# The rise of the CLUB MECHANIC



## **John Deere Ltd**

Manuals: Operator and technical manuals.  
Videos: F1145 Operator Safety Video.  
Training Courses: Available at the golf course or at their training facility at Langar. They include installation and safe operation, cutting units and adjustments and a two day course for golf course mechanics/greenkeepers.  
Helpline Number: 01949 863204 or 863244.  
Richard Charleton or Ivan Miller.

## **Hardi Ltd**

Manuals: Sent out with each machine.  
Videos: Available on machine operation.  
Training Courses: In association with the dealer network or special training with BIGGA sections on request.  
Helpline Number: 01455 233811 or 0831 430025 R.W. Oliver (Amenity Manager).

## **Kubota UK Ltd**

Manuals: WSM available by ordering from dealer.  
Videos: Can be loaned on request.  
Training Courses: Can be arranged on request to regional sales manager or dealer staff.  
Helpline Number: 0184421 4500 Ext 229.

## **Hayter Ltd**

Manuals: Operator and workshop manuals, coloured maintenance charts, maintenance check list and maintenance schedules.  
Videos: Just started producing safety and operator videos.  
Training Courses: Four day Dealer mechanic courses, End user mechanic courses, basic maintenance courses, operator courses, safety courses.  
Helpline Number: 01279 723444.

## **Charterhouse Turf Machinery**

Manuals: Complete manuals available for all products.  
Training Courses: Can be arranged for suitable parties.  
Helpline Number: 01428 661222.

## **Ransomes Sims and Jefferies Ltd**

Manuals: Operator, Parts and Service manuals.  
Videos: Product Presentation Videos.  
Training Courses: Service training courses held annually at the Ipswich factory for all professional equipment users.  
Helpline Number: 01473 276443 Mike Prentice for service training or 01473 276286 Nigel Church for sales information.

## **New Holland UK Ltd**

Manuals: Operator, Service/Repair and Parts manuals for all models available through New Holland dealers.  
Training Courses: Operation and daily maintenance procedures.  
Helpline Number: 01268 292573 – Peter Bray.

## **Huxley's Grass Machinery Ltd**

Manuals: Operator and Parts manuals supplied with all new machines.  
Training Courses: An in-house Training Centre for regular customer and dealer training.  
Helpline Number: 01962 733222 – Ray Chant, Service Manager.

## **SISIS Equipment**

Manual: In duplicate with all new machines and available free of charge on request even for obsolete machines back to the 1950s.  
Training Courses: On application.  
Helpline Number: 01625 503030.

## **Multi Core Aerators Ltd**

Manuals: Full and comprehensive manuals detailing all aspects of routine maintenance.  
Training Courses: Upon delivery full operator instruction is given and all routine maintenance jobs are covered with the mechanic/greenkeeper.  
Helpline Number: 01257 231861 – Ian Waddington Mobile 0374 488508.

## **Massey Ferguson**

Manuals: Operator instruction books.  
Training Courses: BIGGA training courses covering safety and critical tractor maintenance at key greenkeeper training colleges. Customer training on site and at in house company training centre.  
Helpline Number: 01203 851243.

*The job I'm always glad to see the back of is...*



**"Clearing leaves from ditches"**

– Kevin Peace, Inverurie GC

# IRRIGATION SYSTEM'S Toughest test

**In March 1994 we reported on Head Greenkeeper Alistair Cale's route to installing a new irrigation system. How did he and Ifield GC cope with this summer's drought conditions?**

This year's severe drought has tested irrigation systems at every club in the country to the full and, coupled with the general lack of water, has seen many greenkeepers faced with severe problems in preventing their courses from burning up.

With that in mind we returned to Ifield GC, where in March of

last year we published an article with Head Greenkeeper Alastair Cale on the installation of a new irrigation system, to find out how they had coped with the harshest of examinations.

"I said in the article at the time that only time would tell if I'd made the right decision," said Head Greenkeeper Alastair Cale, who had purchased a Heron (also known as HHI Electronics) controller with Hunter pop-ups installed by local Sussex company Flanderblade.

"All I can say is that I'm absolutely delighted with the irrigation system we have," said 31

year-old Alastair.

"Over the summer I heard some horror stories from some clubs which had far more expensive systems than ours but we didn't have any problems."

"I know that I took a gamble going with Heron because I didn't know them but I visited the factory and got references from others who had a system – mainly horticultural people – and went with them. The object was to get value for money and I feel that we achieved that while at the same time not losing out on efficiency."

The system was installed in the

winter of last year and the weather did cause a few problems.

"The cable laying took place in late February and March but the pipe laying around the greens didn't begin until early April and it was held up because it still hadn't stopped raining," recalled Alastair.

The original article explained how Alastair had gone about preparing a report for his committee outlining what could be achieved by way of a new irrigation system on a limited budget.

"To compile the report we got a couple of the leading irrigation

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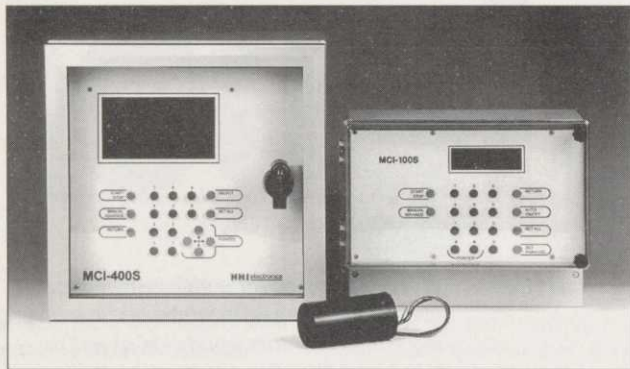
**Fact No. 8.** **Watermation** have their own installation crews under the direction of the Contracts Department and don't have to rely solely on sub contractors, as do most installers.

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## Ifield also saved water and

# IRRIGATION SYSTEM'S Toughest test

companies to come and give us their opinions of our watering system and to brief the committee members about irrigation systems in general. We also went down to Ham Manor (where Alistair had been an assistant) so I could show a committee member what we'd done and he talked to the secretary. I also asked a lot of greenkeepers I knew in the area who had parkland courses what sort of pop-ups they were using impact or gear driven. I got demonstrations of different types of pop-ups and over a period of about three months we began to

form the basis of a report." explained Alastair in the original piece.

The Heron MCI 100S controller, that was eventually agreed upon has been a roaring success.

"It has proved to be reliable, simple to use and very versatile – apart from a lightning strike in the first two months.

"David Carter from Heron came to replace the controller and they have since up-graded the lightning protection for all their controllers."

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# cut down on their water charges by high spot watering

Alistair Cale in his 'pump room'



Alastair doesn't feel he has lost out.

"The only thing I would say is that the diagnostics are not quite as good as you would get on a more expensive model – but if they go wrong you still have to call out an electrician," he commented.

"The biggest problem you can get with a system is that the decoders are not reliable but I have not had a de-coder go down in all the time I have had the system.

He has also been impressed by the versatility of the de-coder.

"I can make a complete change in the order of pop-ups in a couple of minutes while I can water sections of the course in parallel and didn't need originally to wire up a zones on the course."

In the original piece Alastair described how they presented a 10 page report to the committee.

"It was decided we would do 12 greens this year, the remain-

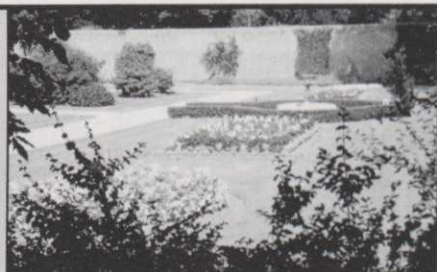
der and a few tees next year and the following year we'd finish off the tees and do the approaches. We'd do the cabling this year; we've already put our pump in so we've got the pressure and the flow rate to cope with the extra sprinklers on the greens."

"When we did the other six greens we changed the Hunter I 41s we had originally put on the greens and put them on the tees while we put I43s on the greens – the reason being that the I43s turn a lot faster.

The fact that the club got such

a good deal on its system allowed them to move further down their phased installation than they had originally hoped.

"We have already done all the greens, including the practice putting green, 12 tees, had a new controller, up-graded the pump-



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# IRRIGATION SYSTEM'S Toughest test



The 3rd hole at Ifield Golf and Country Club

ing system and re-wired the course for well under £30,000," explained Alastair.

Ifield also saved water and cut down on their water charges by high spot watering with a hose and with wetting agents.

"We used a spray to spot treat dry patch with non burning wet-

ting agent which was put on by a hand lance from our Cushman sprayer," said Alastair.

"We also verti drained the greens with half inch tines to a depth of three inches which left no surface damage or heave from the verti drain. This helped cut down the use of wetting agent.

We did this four times in the height of the drought."

The experiences at Ifield show that it is possible for all golf clubs, whether they be wealthy or not, can have an irrigation system which will do an excellent job and cope with the most searching of weather conditions.

*The job I'm always glad to see the back of is...*



**"Divotting"**

- Gerry Byrne, Luttrellstown Castle G&CC

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**Duncan McGillvray concludes his series on the role of the Course Manager by looking at the hoary subject of communication**

**M**any if not all the problems we come up against in our jobs as greenkeepers can be blamed fairly and squarely on the distinct lack of communication of information.

As a teenage Apprentice Greenkeeper I remember top dressing greens which took six men three days to complete!

I knew something was wrong because at a time when we were working our hardest the golfers seemed to complain the most about what we were doing!

Why? The simple answer was that in the golfer's eyes we were making putting surfaces much worse than they were before we started (in the short term anyway) so who can blame them.

They did not know why we were doing this job because it had not been communicated to them.

Now, some 25 years later, I have to say that the situation has changed very little – all the effort has gone into getting the job done as quickly and as efficiently as possible so that the golfer is inconvenienced as little as possible which is commendable but little or no effective advance has been made in explaining the very necessary work of the greenkeeper which I believe is vital in securing the future of our profession.

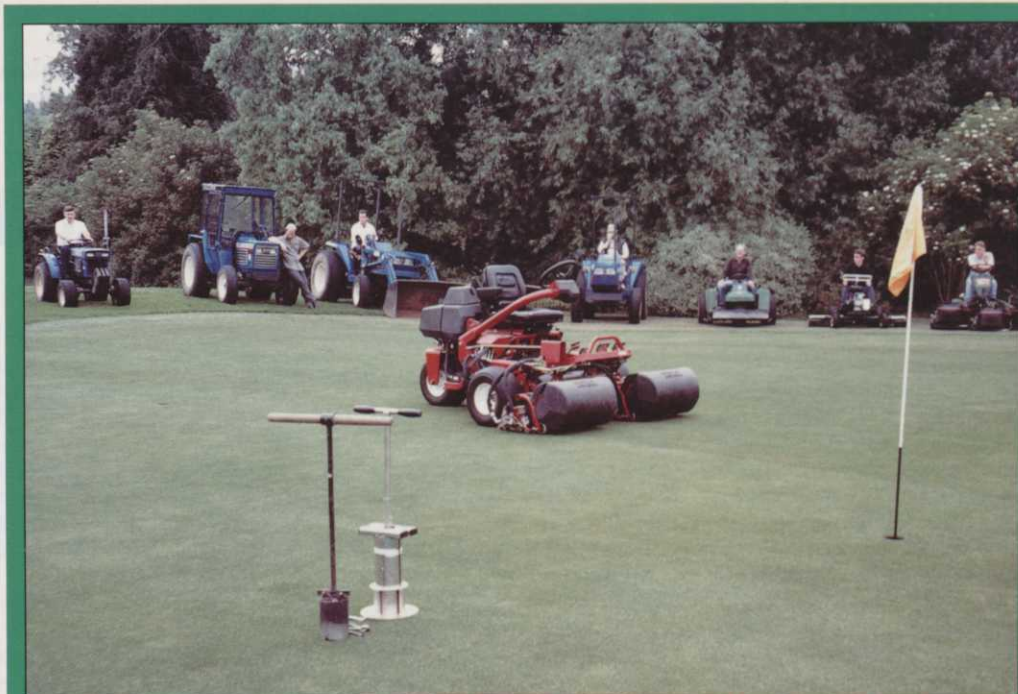
I use the top dressing scenario as an instance – all the tasks on the golf course require explanation from the most general question, e.g. "How often do you cut greens?" to the more detailed analogy "Why do you dig the greens up just when you've got them right?"

The days of hiding away in some distant corner of the golf course when questions are being asked are long gone. Today's Course Managers are required to be excellent communicators and must communicate effectively at all levels.

I fervently believe that it makes our job easier in the long term if we continue to try to "get the message across".

#### **ENDEAVOURING AT ALL TIMES TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION**

The average private members' golf club probably has around 500 – 1000 members, is controlled by an elected General/ Management Committee of say 10 – 15 people, has various Sub-Committees of which one will be for the course, e.g. Course/Liaison/Green Committee of say three – seven people.



Ready for the off: Greenstaff and equipment prepare for course information evening, for members' information

# KEEPING EVERYONE INFORMED

The club will have a Ladies' Section, a Seniors' Section, a Juniors' Section and in some instances an Artisans' Section.

But only one golf course! So how can you possibly communicate with all those people? With extreme difficulty is the answer but we have to if we are to be in any way effective in maintaining and improving upon present golf course conditions.

One thing I have learned over my years as a greenkeeper is that anything worthwhile is not achieved easily and that is certainly the case with effective communication. The subject must be tackled from many different directions with a common goal in mind – accurate information to the member.

Not only that but the whole system has to be monitored and reviewed periodically to assess if it is actually achieving the objectives set. If it is not we must be

prepared to change and improve the system – it is no good proclaiming that "the members never read the noticeboard". That is accepting that you have failed to communicate.

I have come across five main areas of communication and these are as follows:

#### **Official Communication**

The Course Manager's presence at appropriate Committee meetings to convey all aspects of the maintenance work involved, present schedules and programmes, etc. for approval, and be able to answer questions. The development and publishing of a Golf Course Management Policy Document to ensure continuity on all golf course matters. Appropriate regular management meetings with the overall Head of Staff (usually the Secretary) to assist in his/her role as a channel of information to Committee and members.

#### **Direct Written Communication**

Monthly Course Reports by the Course Manager on detailed observations, progress, expectations on all areas of the golf course as well as general information on staff, etc. which are presented to the relevant Committee and once approved are posted for member information. Winter/Spring Renovation/ Autumn Renovation Programmes once approved should also be posted. Internal magazines and newsletters as well as simple A4 large print notices of impending work on the course can be distributed on tables throughout the bar.

#### **Direct General Communication**

Presentations by the Course Manager to the members on subjects ranging from "What's wrong with the golf course and what we are going to do to put it right" to "How much it costs to maintain Augusta National in comparison



# KEEPING EVERYONE INFORMED

to our own golf course" followed by question and answer sessions.

Smaller presentations by the Course Manager to sections of the Club (25 - 30 people maximum) on various subjects. This is a better way to develop two-way communication because the emphasis is placed on discussion and not lecture and much is learned by all concerned (and that includes the Course Manager).

## General Communication

A large area must be made available in a prominent area of the Clubhouse for Course Information to post reports, programmes and schedules and any other relevant information.

It is important that this area is up-dated regularly and kept "fresh" to keep interest. Illustrated drawings and photographs are an excellent way of attracting attention and should be used as often as possible.

Videos both professionally produced, e.g. the BIGGA career video and home-made on subjects such as course etiquette, can also keep the subjects interesting.

## Public Relations/Semi-Social Communication

Staff golf matches against different sections of the club and even the Committee. Visits to the workshops by Committee and members to look behind the scenes. These two measures bring the rest of the greenstaff into the equation as well as the Course Manager which is important.

Having lunch in the Clubhouse periodically and playing golf with members to a small degree help us to understand and get over individual views in an amicable way.

Using all these different ways of communicating will "get the message across" better than previously and the membership will begin to understand what we are trying to achieve on the golf course. After all, we all want the same thing - a well maintained, well presented golf course of which we we can all be proud.

## TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF THE STAFF AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The last and vitally important responsibility of every Course Manager is basic safety. With the assistance of the Health & Safety

Executive, the local Authorities and the many competent safety consultants working within the industry, this area is not so frightening as once it was.

The one piece of advice which I can pass on is to contact the relevant authority first and request assistance in setting safe systems in place and not waiting until they come knocking on your door.

In this way you are demonstrating your commitment to ensuring safe standards of work in your workplace and also ensuring a good future working relationship with the relevant authority.

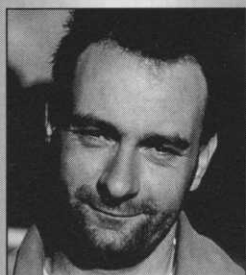
■ *During the course of this series of articles I have had some feedback regarding content. Some destructive but mostly constructive.*

*One point which has been made is "It's okay for these big money 36/54 hole complexes and golf clubs which can afford these highly trained Course Managers but we are just a 9/18 hole private member's club - we can't afford a Course Manager" or even "We don't need a Course Manager".*

*My answer to that is - you cannot afford not to employ a fully trained Course Manager. It is he/she who will analyse/assess what you have and devise efficient systems which will ensure that money is not wasted.*

*I would guarantee in the long term you will enjoy a better maintained and presented golf course and therefore a more contented membership for the money available - that is after all what efficient management is all about.*

*The job I'm always glad to see the back of is...*



**"Putting in drainage ditches"**

- Richard Gamble  
Aldwark Manor

## A big thank you

May I take this opportunity to thank all those BIGGA members who formed the Walker Cup Support Team for their help in the preparation of the course.

Your efforts were much appreciated by both Royal Porthcawl and myself.

**David Ward**  
Course Manager  
Royal Porthcawl GC

## In search of age record

I am writing to you to see if you can find out how old the youngest Head Greenkeeper in Britain is.

I am 18 years-old and a Head Greenkeeper on an 18 hole private course - Sandilands GC in Sutton-on-Sea, Lincolnshire. I have just finished my National Certificate at Elmwood College and have been greenkeeping since I was 12.

If you could do this for me I would be very grateful indeed.

**James North**  
Sandilands GC

■ *Editor's Note: Our investigations suggest that as you were born on December 18, 1976 you are the youngest Head Greenkeeper in BIGGA. However if we are wrong we'd be delighted to hear from anyone younger.*

*The job I'm always glad to see the back of is...*



**"Hollow coring"**

- Glenn Millar  
Ullesthorpe GC

Send letters to The Editor, Greenkeeper International, Aldwark Manor, Aldwark, Aine, York YO6 2NF or fax them on 01347 838864

# Tournament magic

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody at BIGGA Headquarters for the marvellous two days I enjoyed at the West Lancashire GC competing in the Hayter Challenge. I thought that the tournament was extremely well organised and it was a great honour to take part.

The kindness and hospitality shown by the golf club was also of a very high standard, as was the setting and the condition of the golf course - which was a credit to the greenstaff.

I would also like to thank our sponsor Hayter for making everything possible and I am most grateful to them for such a fine competition. I'm sure everybody who took part would agree with these comments and will look forward to next year's tournament, hoping they are fortunate to qualify again.

**Antony Bindley**  
Kirby Muxloe GC

## Peter Alliss' explanation appreciated

*The following was first published in Golf Weekly magazine:*

May I publicly thank Peter Alliss on behalf of greenkeepers, Chairmen of green committees and Club Secretaries for his invaluable assistance while commenting on the Walker Cup. For many weeks we have been trying to explain to members why the grass is being lost on the greens only to be met with disbelief and accusations of poor greenkeeping practices.

Alliss' explanation of Take All Disease will hopefully make the many doubters realise that this problem is totally outside the control of greenstaff and is a direct result of weather conditions.

**Mike Penny**  
Secretary  
Worlebury GC, Avon

■ *Editor's Note: Peter Alliss was provided with information regarding the disease of the Royal Porthcawl greens by BIGGA.*