

# Everything you have ever wanted to know about golf courses!



*Delegates relax on the sun terrace between lecture sessions.*

**An unrivalled array of golf course management  
expertise gathered together to present  
*Golf Course '84* at Cambridge last month.  
Report by Robin Stewart and John Campbell.  
Photos by John Campbell and David Jones.**

TRINITY HALL proved an ideal venue for *Golf Course '84*—the architectural antiquity and tranquility of this venerable seat of learning provided the right kind of background and created a highly favourable impression on some 200 delegates from around the world.

A welcome spell of spring sunshine blessed the occasion. The choice of speakers, high quality presentations, excellent catering and dormitory facilities all combined to make the occasion a rich educational and entertaining experience.

One of the benefits gained from such meetings is the mutual exchange of views and information and also the friendships

that are established outside the conference room.

The general sessions programme attained an extremely impressive high standard of presentation. Speakers had been carefully selected to cover a wide variety of subjects and audience participation at the question and answer sessions was often the most important and interesting part of each discourse.

## **DAY ONE**

Golf course architect and writer Donald Steel gave an excellent talk on The

Architect's Relationship With Other Aspects Of The Game. He stressed the need not to create courses that are laid out purely as a test of muscle. Courses of 7,000 yards plus, built for big hitters, don't contribute much to the finesse and strategy of golf, he said.

Length is no measure of quality and it is the brief of the course designer to preserve all aspects of the game by creating courses which, according to Tom Simpson, "Will provide entertainment for golfers of all handicaps, a searching and difficult test for the good player and quite another less exacting one for the medium and long handicap man.

Steel added that, "The element of ball control is an important part of the game nowadays and better greenkeeping standards in recent years have had quite a lot to do with low scoring. In major events, fast greens are what test the players and they are the kind of playing conditions that require skilled preparation by an experienced greenkeeper."

"It has always been Peter Thomson's view that we should not 'trick up' our championship courses to try and make them more difficult and prevent low scoring and I agree with him," Donald said.

Constantly changing committees are the bugbear of golf clubs and Donald Steel would like to see the running of the course vested in the hands of an experienced course manager who would maintain continuity of planning and a long term programme for the good of the course. "Golfers in Britain expect miracles from the greenkeeping staff, but are unwilling to pay for them," he concluded.

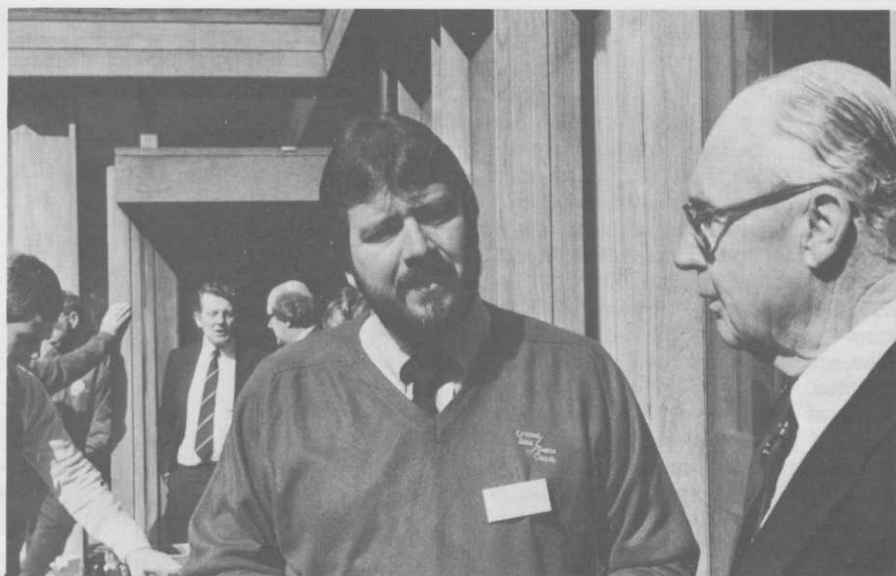
It was also interesting to hear Donald Harradine's views on golf course development on the Continent. As a course designer based in Switzerland, he is recognised as one of the leading designers in Europe and over the years he has built many fine courses, which are a tribute to his natural genius. Modestly, he maintains he is the poor man's golf course architect as many clubs have only limited funds.

In 1968, he founded the International Greenkeepers' Association with the object of raising the status of greenkeeping, promoting lectures and educational conferences and bringing greenkeepers together for mutual discussion and exchanges of ideas. Tribute must be paid to Donald Harradine and his wife Babette, secretary of the association, for its success. Both are skilled linguists and produce a technical magazine in several languages.

"Most of those who belong to our association do not receive any encouragement from their clubs to attend meetings and generally have to find all their expenses," Donald Harradine said. "Golf club officials in Europe show a lack of interest in the affairs of greenkeeping and some regard it as a subterfuge for obtaining higher wages. It is not easy to get experienced golf greenkeepers for new courses and most of those who apply for such jobs are usually gardeners who, generally, do not make good greenkeepers."

"I would like to see a greenkeeper training exchange scheme between golf clubs in Europe and Britain. This would be excellent experience for young apprentices on both sides and is something I think we must look to for the future."

The history of the golf course architect was reviewed by Geoffrey Cornish, who is one of America's leading course designers. His presentation described the start of the profession and the gradual evolution of golf course design. He has designed courses in many parts of the world and is a prolific author.



American superintendent Dan Pierson renewed his acquaintance with fellow countryman and golf course architect Geoffrey Cornish.

## DAY TWO

Friday opened with Vivian Auer, chairman of the British Turf Irrigation Association, introducing the general session on irrigation. He said that the design and layout of automatic systems had very much improved since the early 1960s when they were first introduced here from the USA.

He pointed out that golf clubs should be aware of the minimum regulations laid down by his association for the installation of an efficient automatic watering system and that the anticipated life of most was between ten and 15 years.

Martyn Jones talked about the management of irrigation systems and how to obtain the best results. He explained the importance of being aware of the problems of overwatering and illustrated how a soil's nature has a great influence on water application rates.

"Experience and local knowledge are important factors in knowing when and how much water to apply to keep the turf in healthy condition. A good watering programme should allow grasses to stress

themselves, encouraging deeper rooting and discouraging poa annua," he said.

Andrew Lawrence of Weir Pumps discussed pumping systems for irrigation and, with simple diagrams, showed how the output and performance of any pump can be calculated.

Jim Webb from the Severn Trent Water Authority explained the authority's view of golf course irrigation systems and the complexity of some water byelaws, set up to prevent undue consumption and misuse. He said that many clubs pump water from boreholes on the course, but they have to pay for a licence to abstract water from their local authority and the amount used has to be metered to ensure that regulations are adhered to.

Dr Jim Watson for the USGA Green Section chose The Past, Present And Future Of Turfgrass Irrigation as the subject of his lecture. He recalled how agricultural systems were adapted for golf course use in the 1930s, which was about the time the first pop-up rotary systems were designed for the sports turf industry.

"Automatic systems came into vogue in the 1950s and this was the beginning of an

*Continued overleaf...*



Donald Harradine (left) of the International Greenkeepers' Association discussed the European scene with John Wilson of Ransomes.

## GOLF COURSE '84 CONTINUED

era of automation in water management for golf courses," he said. "Irrigation systems will become more sophisticated and computers will play a major role in many aspects of golf course management. Moisture sensors will be built into the automatic irrigation systems of the future—we are moving from art to science in the upkeep of our golf courses," he predicted.

Graham Carson of Wavin Plastics discussed pipework and, in particular, fittings for irrigation systems.

Dr Bill Adams from the University of Aberystwyth spoke on sand technology in golf and showed how having the right sand particle size is important to good drainage.

He was followed by Rolf Lowgren of the Swedish Golf Federation who gave an illustrated presentation on the problems of course construction and maintenance in his native country. Rolf's commentary was



Rolf Lowgren revealed that interest in golf was growing in Sweden. He represented his country's Golf Federation at *Golf Course '84*.

placed with humorous accounts of his experiences as a golf course consultant, revealing that his major problem is finding experienced labour for construction jobs.

### DAY THREE

Saturday morning saw the first participation by a greenkeeper association at *Golf Course '84*. Joe McKean, secretary of the Scottish And International Golf Greenkeepers' Association, opened his association's programme by introducing Walter Woods, links supervisor at St Andrews. Walter's paper, on the origins of St Andrews, provided a fascinating insight into The Home Of Golf—especially to the many overseas visitors.

With his customary dry sense of humour, Walter said: "My second Open comes up in July, so I don't like to talk about maintenance in case it puts a curse on me." Walter's programme was backed up by slides of the Old Course, one of which showed Keith Mackenzie's son, who is interested in greenkeeping, working out on the course.

The problems that go with the volume of traffic over the St Andrews links were best illustrated by Walter's quote that: "In the summer, virtually nothing, except the

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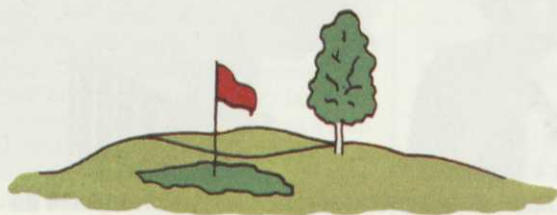
The trade Press was well represented at Cambridge. Alan Guthrie (left), editor of *Parks And Sportsgrounds*, is pictured with Dr Jim Watson, who gave two excellent lectures over the weekend.

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## GOLF COURSE '84 CONTINUED

traditional Sunday close-down, stops the golfers playing. I can spend ten hours at work and two hours in church praying for rain!"

He believes the St Andrews irrigation system is among the best in the world (it's wall-to-wall on the Old Course, while some tees and fairways on the other courses have automatic systems), although he expects that the system will have to be upgraded in the foreseeable future.

Perhaps his most apposite comment was that everyone at St Andrews is keen to keep tradition to the fore and that playing, on the Old Course especially, should never become out of the reach of everyday golfers.

Following Walter Woods' insight into a local authority controlled links, with all-year-round play and a tradition of major championships, came Jimmy Kidd, who has been the course manager at the Gleneagles Hotel for just a year.

Gleneagles is, of course, a commercial operation and the running of the hotel complex and four golf courses is geared to profit. Jimmy highlighted some of the problems that Gleneagles went through in the mid-1970s. "The best thing that ever happened to Gleneagles was British Rail selling out," he said.

Throughout the previous decade, and before, demarcation between the various unions had been a major problem. For instance, the head gardener and head greenkeeper were never allowed to cross over into each other's territory. When the Glendevon Course was built, the head greenkeeper and pro were told not to go near the construction—hence the course was finished late and cost double the estimate. Greens on the Glendevon are still being renovated some eight years later.



The Scots were headed by Joe McKean.



SIGGA speakers Jimmy Kidd, Walter Woods, Chris Kennedy and Alan McDougall deserved the highest praise for the content and presentation of their papers.

Another example of Gleneagles' facilities and potential not being used to the full was seen with Jimmy's slide of a bowling green in the hotel's shadow. It is due to re-open in June, having been dormant for 14 years largely due to the lines of union demarcation.

Training, too, was almost non-existent. One greenkeeper, in 26 years at the hotel, had never constructed a golf green. It was a case of one operator, one machine, one man, one job—a system that soon fell apart when someone went sick or on holiday. Jimmy said that the maintenance fitter once returned from his two weeks annual leave to find 21 machines in his workshop awaiting repair!

After the group of companies and institutions had put up £13m to purchase 69 per cent of the shares (British Transport Hotels retained the remainder), cash was soon injected into Gleneagles. With the brave decision to open the hotel for 12 months a year, came refurbishment of the existing facilities, a £1.6m country club and £½m conference centre.

More importantly, perhaps, for Jimmy was money for the courses and maintenance facilities. The King's Course has been extended to nearly 7,000 yards, with 11 new tees, in an attempt to attract major championships.

When Jimmy arrived at Gleneagles, he stood in despair at the general compound, which was strewn with rubbish. There were no storage facilities and poor muddy access roads. Jimmy even found it impossible at times to find expensive equipment and the staff were, naturally enough, dispirited.

Jimmy's immediate course of action was to produce a five-year plan of improvements. It was properly costed and the first phase put into action soon after with the building of a soil storage shed, new roads and landscaping. The staff got involved in the levelling, shuttering and concreting and there's now a feeling of pride about the place. A full programme of staff training is also underway.

In closing, Jimmy showed the severe

weather conditions that can hit Gleneagles at strikingly short notice. On one green, sheet ice was being tractored away—two days later, 250 games, plus caddies, were passing through the same spot.

The first day of summer saw the Sunningdale Foursomes taking place in near perfect weather. But things were very different some 400 miles north. Gleneagles had blizzards, nearby roads were closed and the hotel recorded below zero temperatures.

Such set-backs are only temporary. Jimmy is full of optimism about the future of Gleneagles. "On completion of 12 years work on the courses and hotel in the 1920s, Caledonian Railways erected a cairn in celebration. The new company has invested £4½m to date in the resurrection of Gleneagles. Maybe this year we'll see a matching cairn alongside the old one," he concluded.

Another aspect of a golf course—that of a private golf club with a fixed income from members' subscriptions—was given by Chris Kennedy, course manager at Hags Castle GC, near Glasgow and chairman of SIGGA.

Greenkeepers of his kind had to view matters in a completely different light, he said. Subscriptions of, say, £150 per annum are not sufficient to finance course upkeep. Clubs need societies and clubhouse income from the bar, gaming machines, etc. Chris, therefore, praised the work that colleges, such as Elmwood, are doing to teach budget control to youngsters.

Staying with the theme of young greenkeepers, he felt saddened that headmen, reluctantly, did not have more time to devote to those learning their craft. He felt that schemes such as YOPS were encouraging a two-tier system of workers on golf courses, which is prevalent in the States, but said that head greenkeepers in the UK should not accept this trend.

Appropriately, the last SIGGA speaker was from the 'new wave'—Alan McDougall, 26, head greenkeeper at Eastwood GC, 11 miles from Glasgow,

which has some 700 members. He said how proud he was to be involved in the industry, although he would be the first to admit he was still learning the trade. Without wishing to offend others in the hall, Alan said he wanted to heed the advice of fellow greenkeepers only.

But it was Alan's passing shot that was to prove his most controversial. "I've discussed at length the problem of annual meadow grass with Jim Arthur—a man for whom I have the utmost respect," he said. "But I would ask all of you the question: 'Is it, in fact, a bad grass or have we failed to recognise its worth?' I know that without annual meadow grass on my course, I would lose a good deal of the course to bare earth, so is it a case of any grass is better than no grass?" Alan defended his belief competently throughout a lively question and answer session.

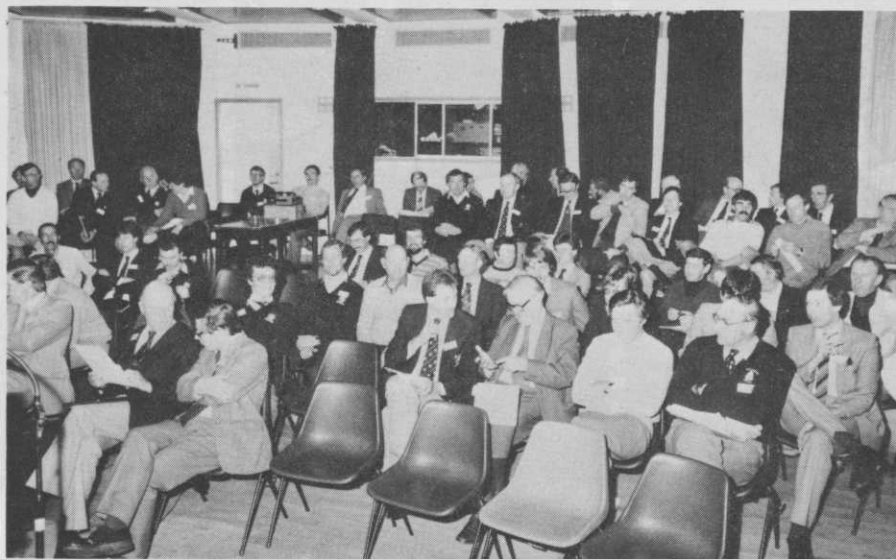


PGA European Tour tournament director George O'Grady gave frank replies to occasionally probing questions from the audience...

What The PGA Expects From A Tournament Venue was the final session before lunch and, in the capable hands of tournament director George O'Grady, the talk proved interesting and prompted a vociferous response from the audience.

George began by outlining why the majority of clubs wanted to take a PGA European Tour event. First, there is the prestige attached and, second, the commercial spin-offs. He gave the example of one Yorkshire course that prior to hosting a tour event was taking £1,000 a year in green fees. Now, it takes £100,000 from societies and the like.

In a private survey of the tournament professionals, it has been demonstrably proven that the pros are satisfied with the conditioning of courses on the tour and that greens have generally reached a high standard. George said that everyone involved in the PGA European Tour had the highest regard and sympathy with the head greenkeepers and assistants at courses on the tour. He appreciated the brunt they often had to bear from their



club members in the time leading up to the staging of a tournament.

One greenkeeper had looked on his last legs when receiving George O'Grady on the eve of a championship. "I met him alongside the 18th green and shook hands saying: 'The 18th looks good.' The poor fellow almost broke down, replying: 'That's the first compliment I've had for months.' Fortunately, we were able to revive his spirits with shots of Hennessy!

"When you arrive at a course during the planning meeting stages, which take place in the winter, you need only really to look at the 1st fairway and 18th green to see whether or not the headman is on top of his job and willing to prepare the course for tournament play," he added. "A badly prepared course will have greenkeeping rubbish behind the tees and greens and alongside fairways, etc.

"Often a tournament's fate—in respect of the course's presentation—in the eyes of the Press is out of the hands of the greenkeeper. The emphasis in the Press seems to have switched from poor presentation of the course to the lack of practice facilities. What isn't always realised is that the usual range is given over to a tented village area or car park.

This is what happened to Chris Kennedy at Hagg's Castle during the Glasgow Classic. His practice ground was turned into a car park and the pros had to use ground at a rugby club down the road, just two weeks after a rugby sevens had been played. But Chris and his team put in a tremendous amount of effort, which the pros appreciated."

Saturday afternoon was given over to a very welcome team of Americans headed by Jim Prusa, director of education at the Golf Course Superintendents' Association Of America. Jim was followed by Stanley J. Zontek, regional director of the United States Golf Association, Bruce Williams, superintendent of the Bob O'Link Golf Club, Illinois and Dr Jim Watson of Toro.

Jim Prusa discussed the GCSAA In Action and traced its origins through to the highly successful operation it is today. He drew a parallel with the first footings taken by EIGGA a year ago and underlined the importance of promoting the image of an association.

The GCSAA's magazine—*Golf Course Management*—is, Jim confessed, seen as something of a propaganda tool by the

*Continued on page 18...*



## GOLF COURSE '84 CONTINUED



Jim Prusa, director of education for the GCSAA, outlined the many activities of his association, which demonstrated its professionalism.

association. It is mailed to all the Press, even those in Fleet Street, although he emphasised that any 'dirty laundry' is kept to a separate news-sheet for members' eyes only.

Today, the GCSAA can call on all forms of modern technology including widespread use of video and the GCSAA Conference And Show in Las Vegas earlier this year had computers to ease registration of the 9,000 visitors. Jim also recognises the value of traditional practices, "I was very impressed by the record-keeping Walter Woods does at St Andrews. 'I've done the same thing, in the same way, at my club for years,'" he said.

Finally, Jim detailed the GCSAA's Distinguished Service Award and encouraged our associations to recognise the achievement of their members. "It's all about generating enthusiasm before going out to face those bloody golfers in the summer," he joked.

The largely British audience listened attentively to the distinguished speakers from the United States, while respecting the differences between golf course maintenance in the UK and on the other side of the Atlantic. In Stan Zontek—who delivered a paper on the USGA Greens Section—they were treated to a performance par excellence and his light-hearted asides drew a warm response.

Zontek's performance was ably matched at a formal dinner by the guest speaker, BBC television golf commentator Bruce Critchley. During the evening, a vote of thanks was proposed by the North-West branch of EIGGA to Michael Coffey and his staff at *Greenkeeper* for the excellent organisation of *Golf Course '84*.



USGA regional director Stanley J. Zontek proved to be a larger-than-life character.



The American viewpoint was given by Dr Jim Watson, Jim Prusa, Stan Zontek and Bruce Williams—superintendent of the Bob O'Link Golf Club, Illinois. Howard Swan thanked the visitors for making the journey.

## DAY FOUR

Sunday was the turn of the English And International Golf Greenkeepers' Association—chaired by Kevin Munt. Opening the batting for EIGGA was Dr Peter Hayes of the Sports Turf Research Institute, who spoke on The Maintenance Problems Found On Advisory Visits. A vote of thanks was given to the splendid work being done by the STRI and to Dr Peter Hayes in particular for "putting Bingley back on its feet," as Jim Arthur said in his opening address.

Jim recognised the professional image of the new association and went on to emphasise that his paper, while entitled Open Championship Course Preparation, would embrace only his opinions and was not being delivered under the R&A's banner.

Jim stated that only a dozen or so courses had been used for the Open—that number was now down to six and he hoped he'd never see the day when a parkland or heathland venue would be considered for the championship.

He recounted a conversation with one important executive of a shipping line who, in the course of a phone conversation, had asked when his inland course might take the Open Championship... "My advice," Jim said, "was that he should turn the whole place into a Safari Park and that there was absolutely no chance of the course getting the Open in this or the next century." Jim told this story because it illustrated how the PGA and the R&A differed—"The PGA is at the mercy of its sponsors, while the R&A is not afraid to put the bite in."

Jim informed delegates that St Andrews was looking in absolutely first-class shape for the Open and was surprised at the number of people saying to him that he must be terribly busy with the Open so near. "I'm now considering Open Championship venues for five years hence and, believe you me, if St Andrews is not ready by now, it never will be. I'm pleased to say that Walter has done a marvellous job—the greens are firm and



In the case of serious accidents, Peter advised, the club captain and, in turn, the course manager could be deemed responsible and that a copy of the act should be predominantly displayed in the greenkeepers' mess room.

Peter continued to say that fractures, apart from those of a finger or foot, must be reported to the relevant local authority. It is vital for the headman to keep an accident record book and, if possible, anyone suffering an accident should write his own report in the book.

The recurring theme of Peter's talk was that common sense should prevail at all times and that it is all too easy to lapse into slack habits—for instance, when new machinery is purchased, be sure the operator and other staff read the working instructions fully.

Fires on the golf course are another constant danger. Peter said that all

putting true and long," he said.

He cited his excellent working relationship with Walter Woods, which has the ideal fusion of two talents—there is no way, he said, he ever sets out to dictate policy to any headman. Jim believes that the two hardest influences for any greenkeeper to get to grips with are wear and tear of the course and the club's green committee.

The final two EIGGA speakers were Lawrence Pithie, course manager at Minchinhampton GC, Gloucestershire, whose paper Management Of Different Types Of Course was well received, and, finally, Peter Wisbey, course manager of North Foreland GC, Kent.

Peter's paper—Safety At Work—opened by advising all course managers and head greenkeepers to read and study the Health & Safety At Work Act, 1974, which states that any club employing five part- or full-time workers—be they greenkeepers, club pros or clubhouse staff—comes under the act's jurisdiction.



Jim Arthur and Dr Peter Hayes put their heads together to answer a question.



Plenty of experience and diverse backgrounds in EIGGA's team of Dr Peter Hayes, Jim Arthur, Lawrence Pithie, Peter Wisbey and association president Jack McMillan.

machinery at his club has fire extinguishers and although he has only had to use an extinguisher once in the last four years, his foresight probably saved the machine from being gutted.

On the subject of chemicals, it is best to keep a list of those in stock for the fire brigade, who will want all the information possible if you happen to be absent from the club.

Another possibly less obvious danger area concerns tractors overturning and, while the law does not enforce the fitting of roll-bars to machinery working on the course, taking such a precaution could save a life.

Slightly away from the safety aspect, Peter concluded his talk on the subject of Road Fund Licence Exemption Certificates. Machinery is allowed to travel up to six miles a week on the road without being taxed, but such exemptions are only allowable if applied for.

In his closing speech, EIGGA president  
*Continued overleaf...*



## GOLF COURSE '84 CONTINUED

Jack McMillan said that the most pleasing feature of the weekend had been the willingness of greenkeepers and others involved in the industry to talk to each other.

When he started, greenkeepers were often loathe to share their experiences. "I remember one old boy who would lock his workshop door when mixing fertilisers—it was as though he was concocting some magical elixir!"

Jack added that all modern greenkeeping staff are entitled to dignity, security and the best materials and



Peter Wisbey exposed many of the daily dangers surrounding safety at work out on the course. EIGGA's session was chaired by Kevin Munt (background).

machinery at work. "I can then demand a full day's return and send them home tired, but contented.

"In the past, greenkeepers have had something of a reputation for not being great thinkers. Today, we present a highly professional image. We have lots in common with our many friends who have

travelled to Cambridge for this weekend from America and we now have the intelligence to know what's applicable to conditions on both sides of the Atlantic.

"Finally, *Golf Course '84* has been a 100 per cent success. I hope it will become a regular feature for many years to come," he said.



Dr Peter Hayes with *Greenkeeper* publisher Michael Coffey, whose staff did so much leading up to and throughout *Golf Course '84* to make it a resounding success.

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