

# **BIGGA International Conference 1988 at Troon**

**by  
John  
Campbell**

AS one who has attended many greenkeeping conferences over the years, this must be one of the best that I have been to in recent years. Much hard work has gone on behind the scenes to promote the event and one must pay tribute to those who organised and arranged the excellent panel of international speakers whose contributions made the conference an unqualified success. Subjects covered all aspects of golf course upkeep at home and abroad, tournament preparation, construction techniques, turf research, history of the game and a wide variety of other subjects to interest all concerned with the business of golf greenkeeping. The International Conference opened in the Concert Hall, Troon with a warm welcome and introduction by B.I.G.G.A. Chairman, Jack McMillan of Sunningdale Golf Club. The programme ran smoothly in the capable hands of the Conference Chairman, Cecil George of Lenzie Golf Club who introduced the speakers and summed up briefly at the end of each presentation.

## **FASCINATING**

THE first speaker James Kidd, Estate Manager, Gleneagles Hotel, dealt with the subject of preparation and reparation of the Kings Course for the Scottish Open. With a fascinating collection of colour slides he explained how some aspects of the Kings Course had changed over the years and work was now taking place to bring back many of James Braid's original design concepts to improve the layout of the course.

Preparing the golf course for the Scottish Open gave an insight into the vast amount of work involved weeks in advance of the event. Erection of stands, marquees, hospitality tents, cable installation, etc., has all to be supervised by the staff in addition to preparing and grooming the courses for the many tourists who visit Gleneagles from all parts of the world every year. Clearing up after the tournament is over is a

monumental task for the greenkeeping staff and not always fully appreciated by golfers. It takes weeks to get back to normal and it often takes much longer for repair and re-instatement of damage to the course in the wake of all the traffic and activities. Gleneagles has much to offer all kinds of sportsmen by way of golf, shooting, riding, fishing etc., and its magnificent setting among the Perthshire hills is always an attraction for tourists from all parts of the world.

## **WEST GERMANY**

PETER SHAW talked about his experience as a course manager in West Germany where he has worked for the past two years. The interest in golf is growing there and quite a number of new courses are under construction with others in the pipeline. Planning restrictions and environmental laws are important obstacles to overcome before a golf course can be built in Germany.

Peter admits the language barrier made things difficult for him at first but his knowledge of German is gradually improving; he knows good communication is vital to direct the greenkeeping staff in their daily tasks. He has to order his turf fertilisers from England for they cannot be obtained locally. Machinery agents are not fully geared up for the golf course industry which makes it difficult and expensive to get equipment overhauled and repaired. Getting men with greenkeeping experience for a new course is almost impossible and it is mainly farm workers who take up this kind of employment, so it takes a lot of patience and a good command of the language to train them.

## **POOR STANDARD**

IN Germany the standard of golf is poor although many are fanatical enthusiasts of the game, even in the winter when the course is covered with snow. Having no golf tradition or knowledge of etiquette, it is not

unusual to see someone pushing a pram around as they play. Although many clubs now insist that new members have compulsory golf lessons and educational sessions to acquaint them with the rules and etiquette of the game. The initial fee to join a club would be around £8,000 after which the annual subscription would be £2,000. Vandalism is not uncommon, mostly inflicted by youths on motorbikes and others who spray paint on greens. Winter is the time when many people want to play golf and green fees around this period may total around £160,000. Some clubs apply high nitrogen fertilisers too late in the season which leads to disease problems in the winter. When irrigation systems develop faults it is difficult to get them rectified. Some installation companies do not undertake repairs.

## A WOMAN'S VIEW

IN her presentation "The Other Side Of The Coin," Jean Esposito, Course Superintendent at Hinckley Hills, Northern Ohio, gave us a woman's view of her job in greenkeeping. She followed in her father's footsteps in the business and now has the responsibility of looking after the family course. With a good training in all aspects of golf course upkeep from an early age she has acquired the necessary skills and experience to do any jobs from mowing to construction.

Jean has always been actively involved with the Northern Ohio Chapter of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and is a past president of the branch. Although the number of women employed as course superintendents in the U.S. is a relatively small in number, about 40, female labour is quite extensively used on golf courses throughout the country. Most greenkeeping tasks nowadays are physically less demanding than they used to be in the past with the advent of modern, sophisticated



**Walter Woods, Links Supervisor at St Andrews**

machinery. Woman employees are claimed to be more particular than men in all phases of the work and they are generally more careful with the equipment. Course operating budgets vary; affluent clubs may spend between \$236,000 - £292,000. Less wealthier clubs range from £80,000 - £160,000. Northern Ohio experienced a dry season this year, winter snowfall is generally about 55 inches.

## COURSE BUILDING

AFTER lunch Dr. Tom Cavanagh, Turfgrass Consultant, Dublin, talked about golf course building in Ireland, laying out a links and all the problems associated with sand construction. Wind erosion was an important factor and he stressed the need for "heeling in" when preparing seed beds and areas for laying turf. Building costs per green with own labour and competent supervisor £10,000. Employing a contractor costs would vary between £13,000 - £15,000.

Barry Brittin, President of the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association is presently involved with the construction of a brand new course at Brampton, Ontario. His colour slide presentation showed the many fine courses in and around Toronto where staff strength varies between 18-20 men for an 18 hole course. Vandalism is quite rife in this part of Canada.

## OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP

DAVID HILL, Championship Secretary, Royal and Ancient, St.

Andrews explained a few facts about the Open Championship and its organisation. The R.A. prints a staggering 18 million copies of the Rules of Golf every four years. Every manufacturer must submit golf equipment, clubs etc., to them for approval. A difference between the ruling bodies is the U.S.G.A. has a Green Section and the R.&A. has not. The S.T.R.I. is now employed by the St. Andrews Authority to advise clubs on the Championship rota about course preparation methods.

David Hill said head greenkeepers ideally should be in charge of their own courses. Close liaison is necessary between Championship Officials and the greenkeeping staff to site stands, tented village, facilities for catering, water and drainage and cable laying operations by British Telecom. Nowadays grandstands are provided to seat 18,000 spectators and something like 250,000 are expected to attend the Open Championships which are planned on a four year cycle. David Hill concluded with a film presentation of the 1987 Open Championship.

## SWEDEN

ON the second day of the conference Stig Persson, the administrator of the Swedish Greenkeepers Association explained about the Swedish Greenkeepers Association and planning and maintenance of buildings for greenkeeping machinery. Sweden is one of Europe's major golfing countries. In 1985 it claimed to have 168 courses made up of 9,18,27 and

36 hole layouts and many more are planned. The Swedish golfing season varies from one end of the country to the other. In the south golf is possible from March to November or even longer if the weather is mild. In the north the season runs from May to October and the midnight sun permits golf to be played around the clock in June.

## RESEARCH

DR. PETER HAYES Director of the Sports Turf Research Institute, talked about research today for the golfing needs of tomorrow. Some of their research work is being supported by the R.&A. Ball bounce, turf wear factors, dry patch and fairy ring are among the main research programmes at the Institute. Dr. Hayes reported many enquiries about dry patch this year from clubs around the country. Some causes of the condition could be compaction, old fairy rings and high spots, but research work is being done to find the best methods of dealing with the problem.

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT

DEREK GANNING, Course Manager at The Belfry delivered an interesting paper on Project Management and the many problems he was faced with when he first joined the Club. The course is beginning to mature and gradually being brought up to the required standard to host the Ryder Cup in 1989 under Derek's experienced guidance.

## OVERSEAS PROJECTS

HOWARD SWAN, Golf Course Constructor, entertained his audience with a selection of colour slides of international golf courses. Howard spends a lot of his time in Europe nowadays advising on the construction of a number of overseas projects, which seems to keep him busy.

## ST ANDREWS

WALTER WOODS, Links Supervisor at St. Andrews recalled some of the history of the game at St. Andrews where the early rules were first formulated. The name of Tom Morris, Open Champion, is closely associated with the Home of Golf where he was the first custodian of the links. His son young Tom Morris, retained the Open Championship Belt after winning the award three years in succession.

Fashioning the ancient links at St. Andrews has been a process of evolution and the natural humps and hollows of the land have been cunningly used to create a great golf course. All the construction work in those days was laboriously done with wheelbarrow and shovel. Wells were sunk at different points to provide irrigation and buckets were used to apply water to the greens during dry spells. As keeper of the links, Tom Morris was a firm believer in regular sand dressings; there was little else to use then. He also decreed that the links should have a period of rest every year to allow time for repair and recovery from the depredations of golfers. To this day the practice is still observed when the Old Course is closed during the month of March.

Except at a few courses in England and two in India, golf was barely known outside Scotland as late as the 1840's.



Derek Ganning

The earliest records of course designers date from this period. The first was Allan Robertson of St. Andrews who died in 1859 and David his brother who emigrated to Australia where he introduced golf and probably laid out the first course in that country. Allan Robertson planned the early changes at St. Andrews, laid out ten formal holes at Barry, Angus and according to his obituary "he laid out capital links in various districts." The new course at St. Andrews opened in 1895 and was laid out by Tom Morris. The Jubilee Course first opened in 1897 as nine holes, then revised and extended to 18 as more land was reclaimed. The Eden course planned by H.S. Colt was opened in 1914.

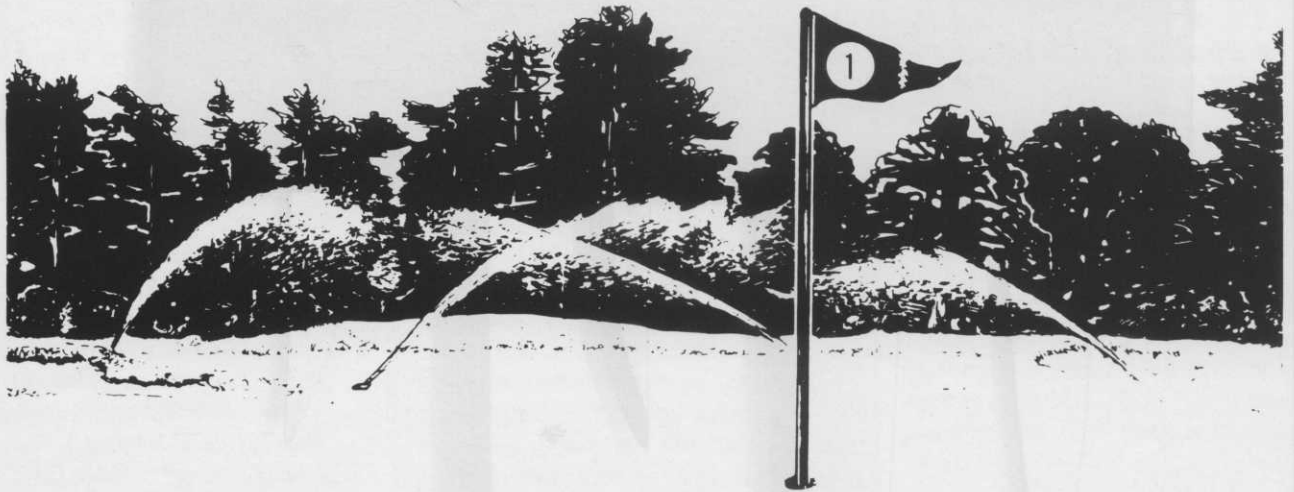
## AMERICAN'S DEBUT

JOHN SEGUI, President, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, made his debut with a video presentation "Golf At Its Best" a glossy upmarket promotion film in sound and colour made specifically to enhance the image of the American golf course superintendent and the association. The G.C.S.A.A., formed 62 years ago, now employs a headquarter staff of 35. The annual budget is 4 million dollars. They have a certification programme for aspiring superintendents and everyone is committed to raising the standards of the profession. The official monthly magazine has an annual income of one million dollars from advertising. Other benefits - Health Insurance, Job Referral Scheme, International Trade Show, Conference and Golf Tournament every year. The average assistant greenkeeper earns 8-10 dollars an hour. Total number of golf courses in U.S.A. is 13,000.

**Bill Lawson, Vice-Chairman of B.I.G.G.A. admirably summed up the Conference with some pithy comments and a vote of thanks to all who had contributed to the success of the occasion.**

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## B.I.G.G.A. NATIONAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

The National Tournament at Ayr Belleisle was well supported. The course is a fairly tough layout with long par 4's and greens strategically bunkered and contoured to place a premium on accurate approach shots to score well.

### Report by John Campbell

Blustery winds at times with showers and bright intervals added to the interest of play in this lovely part of Ayrshire. Due praise must go to Harry Diamond and his greenkeeping staff for having the course in such fine condition also to Duncan Gray, Parks Superintendent, who enthusiastically supported all the arrangements in connection with the event.

Full results in next issue.

## LADIES PROGRAMME

The ladies were well taken care of by Mrs Chris Kennedy with coach

trips to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Burns Cottage Culzean Castle, Land O'Burns Centre, a distillery visit, etc. By all accounts they thoroughly enjoyed themselves, particularly the Swedish, American and Canadian delegates, wives.

## CATERING & ENTERTAINMENT

Catering arrangements each day included buffet lunches, evening

buffets and conference luncheons. The evening entertainment included a Scottish Night Out and a Big Band Dance as well as discos and other events. On the final evening trophies and prizes for the golf were presented and this was supported by the 'Taste of Scotland' Banquet and entertainment as the grand finale.



Teeing off at the tournament