

ST. ANDREW'S CONFERENCE

The Editor reports.....

Over three hundred delegates, including students from Elmwood College, attended a Conference for Greenkeepers held at Younger Hall, St. Andrews last month run in conjunction with the Ransomes International Tournament, organised by SIGGA Executive Members under the Chairmanship of Walter Woods.

The Scottish Greenkeepers, excelled themselves, not only for the entertainment arranged for the many nationalities attending the three day event, but by their attention to detail and personal concern that everyone should not only feel welcome, but wanted, at St. Andrews.

This year forty-five greenkeepers, secretaries and green chairmen from Sweden flew in for the one day conference. When one considers Sweden has only 175 courses, a degree of the depth of enthusiasm and thirst for knowledge can be gauged. Not only that - they could all converse in the English language!

The theme throughout the day was the golf course maintenance.

David Jones discussed the methods he was using to bring back the finer grasses to Purdis Heath; Russell Brown, Turnberry's Course Manager, refuted criticisms of his course's suitability and readiness for next year's Open Championship; Gordon Childs, a member of the Devon and Cornwall

Section of the BGGGA gave a well received paper on Parkland Management, and the morning session finished with a previous Green Chairman at Lindrick, Nicholas Park, presenting a well researched and excellently illustrated lecture justifying the present turf culture regime at Lindrick.

Despite extending his talk well over the allotted time, there were many in the hall who were not convinced the objectives had been achieved or whether an overwhelming belief in principles had clouded the original issues.

Did we really hear correctly that green is only a cosmetic colour for the putting surface?

The afternoon session was led by Mike Bonallack, the Secretary of the R.&A., whose significant remarks are reported elsewhere in this edition. Then followed a paper by Rolf Lowgren of the Swedish Golf Federation with a most interesting slide presentation of golf in Sweden, including the development of a new course inside the Arctic Circle.

Bob Heron, from the Canadian GCSSA, showed how his team tackle the massive ice-flows that spill out of the adjacent river every spring turning the greens and fairways into a penguin's paradise. He also showed pictures of migrating wild geese descending on the course and how greenstaff stage a rodeo style round-up so they can be shipped out by truck to join another flight path to the south.

Although fascinated by Bob's efforts to overcome adversity there were several who, applying a little lateral thinking, wondered why anyone had built a golf course there in the first place!

Agronomist Stanley Zontek, who I had the pleasure of meeting several times during the three days, covered the subject of the US Greens Section and how this organisation of consultant agronomists helps golf courses with analysis and advice. It was interesting to discover the finance for maintaining the staff, offices and the well read news-letter, comes from money raised at the US Open Championship.

Jim Wyllie, from the Bay View Golf and Country Club, closed the session in his usual polished fashion. Disagreeing with some of the previous speakers and not afraid to say so.

Well done the SIGGA Conference Committee. Although thirteen countries were represented, the English were sparse on the ground. If only more Green Chairmen would take the trouble to attend an event such as this, they would have a better understanding of the vagaries of maintaining a golf course.

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