

the employment of greenkeepers.

Two years ago, it was felt that there was much uncertainty within greenkeeping associations and that they did not speak with one voice. As the R&A recognises that the golf course forms the most important part of the game, it was felt that greenkeepers should have one strong association. The R&A has provided money for the STRI research programme and for greenkeeper training, so that they can speak with one voice and with authority. This is why the new association will have its headquarters alongside the STRI at Bingley.

The R&A's panel on greenkeeping, although not all experts, is there to advise the club on how it should make money available in this most important area of the game. Although BIGGA will be run by its board of management, the R&A will assist the association with funding for as long as it takes to become financially viable, for it is recognised to be most worthy and of great importance to golf.

Should the association, greenkeepers or the STRI staff at Bingley feel there are specific problems that need research, the R&A will provide money for this. Michael Bonallack stressed that it was not the R&A's role to dictate. The golf unions run golf, not the R&A, and are responsible for handicapping, course rating, etc. The R&A has links with the golf unions, not the golf clubs - clubs are members of the unions. Therefore, the R&A has no authority to tell clubs how to operate. Help can be given where necessary and advice from its consultant agronomist

provided.

The championship committee advises clubs what is wanted - firm greens and firm, closely mown fairways - but the committee is happy to leave matters in the hands of experts, such as Walter Woods and Tom O'Brien. The R&A believes that these conditions, unlike some American courses seen on TV, are correct for its championships and that skilled players cope with them best, thus producing worthy champions.

Michael Bonallack ended by wishing BIGGA well with its first seminar and promised that anything the R&A could do to further the association's cause would be done.

The remaining speakers were Tony Gentil, deputy head of horticulture at Reaseheath College, who spoke about trees on golf courses. David Lucas, course manager at the new Tytherington Golf and Country Club, came next - his theme was construction of a golf course through to completion. Those who attended the EIGGA conference at Warwick last year will recall this talk, excellently presented and illustrated.

After lunch came Wing Commander Bill McCrea, secretary at Walton Heath, who delivered a paper on the financial and budgeting aspects of greenkeeping. Although many greenkeepers are now responsible for budgets, Bill McCrea gave some interesting views on how to present cases to committees who "hold the purse strings."

Malcolm Evans of ICI Professional Products followed with a detailed slide show on the im-

plications of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985. As *Greenkeeper* has pointed out, it is imperative that clubs themselves are aware of the requirements under this act. If you have any doubts or queries, ICI has a help-line (tel: 0252 724525) manned by Malcolm Evans, Roy Taylor and division manager Keith Cleverly.

John Lowery, course manager at Ringway Golf Club, whose clubhouse was recently destroyed, then detailed, in a very amusing fashion, how he made his own compost and the cost of doing so, contrasting his methods with purchasing from an outside supplier.

Sand and its uses on the golf course, by Martyn Jones, was the final topic for the day. After a lengthy description of what sand actually is, illustrations showing a sand construction within a plastic lining were discussed. The presentation was detailed and technical and it is by no means certain everyone understood all of what was said. However, sand constructions clearly do need different and careful management compared to more conventional forms of green.

The day concluded with a lively question and answer session. One of the most interesting points raised being the question of a levy, suggested by Wing Commander McCrea, to be paid by all golfers through their golf unions to support greenkeeper training and research. Upon being questioned on the likelihood of this, Bill McCrea said he felt it was something on which the R&A should "give a lead."

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