FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

Well there we are. Harrogate has come and gone and we can look back on another week when the greenkeeping profession did itself proud.

The Sunday afternoon, when delegates began to arrive for the National Education Conference, supported by the John Deere Team Championship, to the Thursday evening banquet when The Countertop Stones entertained everyone so royally, no-one could have anything but praise for the professionalism on display.

It has become almost commonplace to announce record attendance figures for BTME so you won’t be surprised to hear that once again we had added to the numbers we announced last year. But the degree by which last year’s totals were bettered augers well for the long term development of both BTME and Clubhouse, which made its Harrogate debut this year.

Over 5,500 people visited the Shows over the three days and, with many of those staying for more than one day, the overall attendance figure for the three days was well over 10,000. Last year we had just over 8,500, so that’s a good measure of development.

But perhaps more importantly than the pure attendance stats were the comments from a large number of exhibitors about the level of business they had done during the week.

It would appear that, more than ever before, people were visiting the show with a view to placing orders, rather than merely investigating potential purchases. Exhibiting at Shows is an expensive business nowadays, so if companies can look to the number of orders they took during Harrogate week they are more likely to make a decision to return next year, and not only that, perhaps increase the size of their stand.

It might be that the addition of Clubhouse to the mix has a lot to do with that as the people required to make large purchasing decisions may have been together during the week and decisions could be made much more quickly.

That is all good news for BIGGA as the more successful Harrogate can be the more the Association can plough back into the industry. And so it snowballs.

The keynote address will be by David Payne, Director of Sport England.

Other issues tackled will be grass seed quality, artificial surfaces, multi-sport grounds and facility management, by James Mead of Millfield School, and the new national stadium at Wembley, explained by Noel Jeffs, the Director of Operations.

On the third day of the conference, Monday, April 14, there is a strong local authority input with a focus on Best Value and contractors, composting waste and managing a local authority pitch improvement project.

Among the visits planned are a study tour to Leicester City FC Walkers Stadium and Leicester Tigers Stadium plus a visit to Loughborough University and the new ECB National Cricket Academy.

For booking information Tel: Charlotte Lambert on 01908 312511 or e-mail: iogk@bigga.org

RANSOMES JACOBSEN

Thanks to the support of Ransomes Jacobsen BIGGA has produced a Machinery and Work Equipment Training and Assessment Manual which gives guidance to Golf Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers on training, assessment of competence, training providers and on qualifications and an Individual Record of Achievement.

Each Manual will include a disk so that managers will be able to produce Individual Records of Achievement for each member of their staff.

“BIGGA puts greenkeeper training at the top of its list of priorities, believing that training should start as soon as greenkeepers commence employment and that it should continue throughout their careers,” explained BIGGA’s Education and Training Manager, Ken Richardson.

“Training in the safe use of golf course machinery is essential, not only to ensure high standards of golf course preparation and maintenance but also to ensure the safety of greenkeepers, golfers and the general public,” he added.

The Manual complements the recently introduced GTC Machinery Training Wall Chart and it will help to improve Health and Safety on the Golf Course.

Copies of the Manual will be distributed to all Course Manager/Head Greenkeeper members of BIGGA during February.

John Deere dealer Godfrey’s from Sevenoaks, Kent, has entered a three year preferred supplier agreement with The Royal St George’s Golf Club, host club of The 2001 Open Championship. This means John Deere will have supplied course maintenance equipment for three consecutive Opens, in 2001 at Royal Lytham & St Annes, in 2002 at Muirfield and now again in 2003. Godfrey’s delivered its first machine to the club last October, a 2500 triple greens mower.

Two further 2500s, a 3235B fairway mower, a 2653A compact tractor are also now being delivered. The club will seek to add to its range of John Deere equipment as existing machines need to be updated.

Having conducted extensive trials with John Deere and Godfrey’s over the past few months, the club has been impressed by the reliability of the John Deere machines, their high quality of cut and their adaptability working over our undulating links fairways and greens.”

Past Chairman Richard Barker, a guest at the East Anglia Section Turkey Trot and AGM with Section Chairman Steve Millard, the winner of the Ernie Hart Award Peter Howard and Section Secretary Ian Willett. Richard was amazed at the Section’s support of the event with 80 attending. To see the results of the Texas Scramble see ‘Around the Green’.

JOHN DEERE

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