



# The ultimate turf management exhibition in Europe

Jim Cook spent three days exploring Harrogate Week and found it to be time extremely well spent



**After a few days spent in the old spa town of Harrogate at this certain time of year, it is difficult not to feel that you have been part of something a bit special.**

An exhibitor at the show told me his company return annually because it is the biggest 'shop window' in the industry, in Europe. This statement is certainly true, the opportunity for sales and promotion is huge, but it is also a fact that the week offers an experience outside of the capacious halls that is simply unrivalled throughout the continent. Workshops and seminars with some of the biggest names in the business run throughout the week and newly-qualified greenkeepers have the chance to plot their way to

becoming a Course Manager with the guidance of the Personal Development Zone. From welcoming old pubs tucked away below street level to the multitude of restaurants, coffee shops and modern, vibrant bars, all within a short stroll of each other, the networking opportunity that Harrogate town itself provides is truly tantalising.

It was with all this and the upcoming 'Harrogate buzz' in mind that I arrived at the exhibition entrance at 9am on Tuesday, January 18.

If the eager throng of visitors that bustled outside Hall A was anything to go by, then this year's Harrogate Week looked likely to be a resounding success.

BIGGA Chairman, Paul Worster,



ABOVE: Media Centre press conference with Top Green and Rigby Taylor  
 OTHERS: A great place for meeting people

cut the green ribbon to start BTME and Clubhouse 2011. Previous to this, the Continue to Learn Education Programme, had begun on Sunday, with record numbers in attendance.

As the halls steadily began to fill, it was down to the Media Centre for the opening press conference with Top Green and Rigby Taylor who were launching their Euroflor flower seed mixes.

Brian Robinson, Seed Research Director, at Rigby Taylor, emphasised the biodiversity the flowers should encourage, due to long flowering periods from spring to autumn and this was the first of many positive environmental sentiments to be broadcast over the week.



The announcement of Dennis acquiring SISIS was made by Managing Director of Dennis, Ian Howard. He emphasised how the two companies were metaphorical headlights, side by side, whilst parent company Howardson Ltd was the battery driving them.

Although I did not have the opportunity to see many of the seminars and workshops, I managed to catch the presentation given by Course Manager of the Old Course, St. Andrews, Gordon McKie and Gordon Moir, Director of Greenkeeping at St. Andrew's Links, entitled 'Preparing the Old Course for the 2010 Open Championship'.

This proved immensely interesting as they spoke about many things including how daily maintenance of the course continued around contractors setting up grandstands, and removing sprinklers in preparation for The Open. They talked about increasing Fescue with overseeding, top dressing little

## STRI's Golf Environment Awards recognise the most environmentally proactive clubs in the UK and it was in the Queen's Suite where presentations were made for the 2010 winners

and often, problems with Pearlwort and how fungicides have not been used on the course for 20 years. A fascinating insight into life at St. Andrews came when the laborious methods of a company developing a computer game about the course were explained and how greenstaff worked around this.

The annual awards ceremony saw BIGGA members recognised for achievements in front of a crowded room.

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Regional awards were given to David Cole, of Loch Lomond GC; Meurig Lumley, of Aberdovey GC; Brian Storey, of Silloth on Solway GC and Mark Broughton MG, of Aldeburgh GC.

Overall winner was Colin Webber, of Portmore Golf Club, who was commended as being a fantastic exemplar of the greenkeeping

PHOTOS FROM THE ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONY: Past Chairman, Paul Worster, stands beside...

TOP: STRI's Golf Environment Award winners Josh and Colin Webber

SECOND TOP: Master Greenkeeper Award winners: Alan Hess MG, Stuart Yarwood MG, Alan Pierce MG and Greg Evans MG

THIRD TOP: Lifetime Award recipient Gordon Child with Jack McMillan MBE

BOTTOM LEFT: Machrihanish Dunes GC Course Manager, Keith Martin receiving the GEO certificate from Jonathan Smith

BOTTOM RIGHT: Auchterarder GC Head Greenkeeper, Archie Dunn receiving the GEO certificate from Jonathan Smith

PAGE 37 TOP: Unsung Heroes David Green; Dave Saltman; Winner, Lestin Carpenter; Trevor Williams and Lynda Green





industry. He thanked his family and colleagues and accepted the award on behalf of all the team. James Hutchinson, of Fairhaven GC, was the winner of the individual award.

Ben Warren, Director of Communications at the Golf Environment Organisation, presented GEO certification to Machrihanish Dunes GC, on the Kintyre Peninsula, Scotland, and Auchterarder GC, in Perthshire, Scotland, and said he looked forward to many more BIGGA members receiving this award next year.

Master Greenkeeper awards followed with Greg Evans, of Ealing GC, becoming the 52nd person to achieve this status. Stuart Yarwood, of Lymm GC, and Alan Pierce, of Ham Manor GC, also received the accolade alongside Alan Hess, of Augusta Pines GC, in Texas, USA. Alan thanked Sami and Rachael for their support and made a moving speech thanking his father for encouraging him to become a Superintendent.

Gordon Child received the prestigious BIGGA Lifetime Achievement Award, presented by Jack McMillan MBE.

Gordon started out at Dore and Totley and Royal Birkdale and went on to become Course Manager at such courses as St George's Hill and Moor Park, where he prepared the course for some top European Tour events.

He became Course Manager at Churston Golf Club, in Devon, where he stayed until retirement.

Gordon also played in The Open Championship twice, at St. Andrews in 1960 and Royal Birkdale in 1965. Out on the course, he still regularly beats his age.

Terrain Aeration's eighth Unsung Heroes were recognised at the Show. Joint Sponsors, the EGU sponsor the Unsung Hero award

for a Greenkeeper and presented a cheque along with Terrain Aeration to Iestyn Carpenter, of Corhampton Golf Club.

Steven Kennedy, of Sandgate Boys Football Club, won the Groundsman Award

The BIGGA social night went down extremely well, literally, as this year's entertainment was a beer festival held at the Old Swan Hotel. The night was a definite success with attendees enjoying a buffet, live band and a wide selection of real ales.

It was with thick heads that many of us approached Wednesday morning's calendar of events.

In the Queen's Suite above Hall C, Chris Kennedy, Director and Course Manager of Wentworth GC, gave an overview of major refurbishments of the West Course.

His working relationship with Ernie Els proved a source of amusement and interest to the massed onlookers.

Els had said that the point of making changes was not to alter the character of the course, that would have been a crime, but to bring it up to specifications needed to host the largest competitions.

Chris mentioned turf from their old greens, sold for charity, raised £27,000.

The vast amount of manpower and materials involved in the refurbishments was apparent from Chris's presentation and he was keen to recognise the rest of the team responsible saying:

"Everyone who has been involved from 2005 has done a fantastic job."

Back to the press conferences where Vitax Amenity launched their new fertiliser, Enhance R Prime, which won IOG's 'Best New and Innovative Product' award in the Fertiliser and Pesticides category.



TOP: The Social Night; SECOND TOP: The live entertainment; THIRD TOP: Shona Garner hosts a Continue to Learn Workshop; ABOVE: Another workshop in full flow







The introduction of an Envirozone was new to this year's exhibition and with environmentalism becoming such an importance for golf courses, it was encouraging to see the area lively with activity over the three days.

Stands from British Climate Services, Golf Environment Organisation, EnviroSports Ltd, Solarwall Ltd, Vermigrand and British Wild Flower Plants sent out a clear message that the industry is working hard to dispel myths about golf courses not being environmentally friendly or offering bio diversity and sustainability.

In relation to this, BTME 2011 saw Syngenta launch Operation Pollinator, which is a project designed to create new habitats in out of play areas of golf courses, for bumblebees and pollinating insects.

It is well documented that bumblebee numbers have declined by 70% over the past 40 years and Syngenta's press conference on Wednesday afternoon made the very agreeable statement that the plight of the bumblebee should be reversed.

For the incentive, golf courses are being sought to join a national scheme in which they commit to establishing at least half a hectare of Operation Pollinator seed mix, which is designed to encourage bumblebees and pollinating insects by being rich in pollen and nectar food sources. Simon Elsworth, Turf and Landscape Manager at Syngenta, said that with the correct management, golf courses could provide the perfect habitat for bumblebees and other pollinating insects.

Late on Wednesday afternoon, BIGGA and the Golf Environment Organisation announced the establishment of a partnership between

## Syngenta's stand included a platoon of live bees which caught the attention of one young visitor

the two bodies. It will see them collaborating in promoting sustainability in golf facility management.

The partnership aims to make sustainability easier for greenkeepers and course managers to understand, and provide support for their improvement efforts.

Incoming Chairman at BIGGA, Andrew Mellon said the whole industry needs to pull together and collaboration with like minded bodies brings more strength to golf's efforts.

On Thursday morning it was great to catch up with a new exhibitor at the show to get his view on the week. Richard Allen, Co-Director of EnviroSports Ltd, was showcasing its riveted bunker system in the Envirozone and said: "EnviroSports is a very new company and it's our first time to Harrogate. We've really enjoyed the show, we've met a lot of people, especially in our target

client list of golf courses and really enjoyed the whole experience of exchanging ideas with other people who have the same passion towards golf that we've got."

After 4pm when the doors closed to visitors, the cleanup began and it was time for assessments of a hectic few days.

Any fears of inclement weather, such as the recent early December freeze, affecting Harrogate Week were quickly appeased as it became apparent we were in for cold but rain and snow free skies for the duration. This, combined with the unquestionable lure of so many industry names under one roof, led the exhibition halls to be crowded with enthusiastic visitors.

The attendance figure of 6019 for the week is higher than in 2010 and shows that despite budget pressures, people are willing to make the effort for something which is



**RIGHT:** Jim McKenzie of Celtic Manor conducting a very popular session on last year's Ryder Cup  
**ABOVE RIGHT:** Volunteers' workshop  
**BELOW:** John Pemberton with some of the BIGGA team

worthwhile. The Continue to Learn Education Programme in the Queen's Suite provided a catalogue of informative, educational seminars and workshops throughout the entire week, while the exhibition halls bustled throughout.

With the success of this year's show still ringing in their ears, the BIGGA team has already begun preparing for Harrogate Week 2012, which will undoubtedly prove once again to be the ultimate turf management exhibition in Europe.

