from the airport and I’d never seen weather like it. It was terrible and I can still remember wiping the streamed up windows, probably wondering why we had left Africa.” said Andy, who lived initially with his grandmother and aunts in Twechar, a small mining village near Kirkintilloch.

It was then that he displayed a rare ability to fit into his new surroundings.

“Living in Kenya I’d picked up quite a posh accent but within two weeks I was speaking like a true Glaswegian. My parents said they had never heard anyone change so quickly! – Kids have a strong ability to adapt”

On leaving school Andy went to Strathclyde University to study Civil Engineering, but his desire to earn a living was never far away and he took a job in the summer holidays selling photocopyers and also joined the University's Officer Training Corp. This saw him out on exercises most weekends.

“I enjoyed the challenging outdoor, military lifestyle, so much so that I joined Glasgow's Royal Marines Reserve Corp, and was seriously considering a full time military career.”

After having studied for two years Andy decided to take a year out and worked on a self employed basis for an insurance brokerage. He was still serving in the Reserve Corp but having met his future wife, Jane, the prospect of a full time military career and being away from home for long periods became less attractive and the demands of self employed Insurance Sales required his full time commitment. Having progressed to the position of Trainee Project Manager, Andy decided to take a year out and work on a self employed basis for an insurance brokerage. He was still serving in the Reserve Corp but having met his future wife, Jane, the prospect of a full time military career and being away from home for long periods became less attractive and the demands of self employed Insurance Sales required his full time commitment.

“I was actually in the process of setting up my own brokerage when Standard Life offered me a job and I worked for them in Glasgow for two years,” said Andy.

“I took full advantage of the superb Standard Life’s Customer service and Sales training programme which has served me well ever since!”

“It was a fairly intense job and the money was good but there was something missing.”

The opportunity to make a change came when his wife was offered a job in the Western Isles.

“Jane had worked in the area before and had a lot of friends up there so I said let’s just go. I decided that I would go to college and study Business Admin and just see what happened.”

As it turned out, one of his lecturers also ran a local insurance brokerage and offered Andy a job so he found himself working in the same industry as one he’d left behind in Glasgow.

“We settled in Stornoway for seven years and two of our children were born there. We had a fantastic house, looking out over a bay, and a great lifestyle, although it was difficult being so far away from family.”

Over the years Andy turned his hand to several jobs, seeking something which he would enjoy.

He played golf regularly and a chance encounter with the Greens Convenor made him aware of a vacancy as a six month labourer.

“I filled out an application form and one interview later I had the job. I can still remember my first day walking around the course with Alistair MacLeod, the Head Greenkeeper. The sun was coming up and I thought – I’m getting paid to do this. This is the life and what I want to do.”

The job was only meant to be temporary but Andy threw himself into it making himself as indispensible as possible. He serviced machines, saving the club money, and one interview later I had the job. I can still remember my first day walking around the course with Alistair MacLeod, the Head Greenkeeper. The sun was coming up and I thought – I’m getting paid to do this. This is the life and what I want to do.

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“Working in a small dedicated training academy and a state-of-the-art maintenance facility.

“In my last position of Trainee Project Manager, Andy had set up his own business, allowing me to develop my knowledge and skills, for which I’m grateful, and took full advantage of them. Elmwood College was a very supportive employer, allowing me to full my desire for further education.”

“Within a year he’d been appointed as Head Greenkeeper and another year on, when John left to set up his own business, he was appointed Course Manager.”

“I like to think that I was working hard and applying myself but opportunities came along at the right time and I was able to take advantage of them. Elmwood College was a very supportive employer, allowing me to full my desire for further education.”

“Before long the Course was to undergo a massive project reconstruction, building a superb new driving range and training academy and a state-of-the-art maintenance facility.”

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Defying the odds, more people visited Harrogate Week 2011 than did in 2010, which is a huge tribute to the work that goes into ensuring that the week delivers what the customer wants and the attraction that the town of Harrogate holds for visitors. With 6018 coming through the doors over the three days of the Show it represented a 2.3% increase on the year before while the number who took part in a Continue to Learn Workshop or Seminar exceeded 2000 for the very first time.
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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, 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.
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The announcement of Dennis acquiring SISIS was made by Managing Director of Dennis, Ian Howard. He emphasised how the two companies were metaphorical headlight, 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 McKe and Gordon Moir, Director of Greenkeeping at St. Andrew’s,’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 stands, and removing sprinklers 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.

The annual awards ceremony in the Queen’s Suite where presentations were made for the 2010 winners was the battery driving them.

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

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.

Regional awards were given to David Cole, of Loch Lomond GC; Mearg Laney, of Aberdeen 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 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 MacRitchie Deunes 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 Lynn GC, and Alan Pierce, of Han 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 Lytham 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 at Troon, where he played for the team responsible saying: “Everyone who has been involved with this has been a crime, but to make changes was not to alter the character of the course, that would have been a crime, but to make changes was not to alter the character of the course.”

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Chris’s presentation and he was keen to recognise the rest of the team responsible saying: “Everyone who has been involved with this has been a crime, but to make changes was not to alter the character of the course, that would have been a crime, but to make changes was not to alter the character of the course.”

Back to the press conferences where Viva! Amenity launched their new fertiliser, Enhance R Prime, which won IOG’s ‘Best New and Innovative Product’ award in the Fertiliser and Pesticides category.
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HARROGATE WEEK 2011

The ultimate turf management exhibition in Europe

PHOTOS FROM THE ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONY: Paul Dearnley, Paul Marque, Vihaan Doshi...
The Ultimate Turf Management Exhibition in Europe

Harrow Week 2011

13 METROS
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TUESDAY 18 JANUARY 2011 9AM - 5PM
WEDNESDAY 19 JANUARY 2011 9AM - 5PM
THURSDAY 20 JANUARY 2011 9AM - 4PM
THE ULTIMATE TURF MANAGEMENT EXHIBITION IN EUROPE

HARROGATE WEEK 2011

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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 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.

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.