

50 years of Exhibitions

Richard Frost looks at the early days of the IOG shows

When, in 1938, the then National Association of Groundsmen organised the first of their annual exhibitions in the grounds of the prestigious Hurlingham Club, life, for the average Groundsman/Greenkeeper was pretty hard. Although some turf maintenance machinery was available, much of the work was manual and it was a case of well developed muscles being directed by a well developed and active brain. The English golf course, in general, was the domain of the wealthy and of the few top professionals although, in Scotland, the game enjoyed much wider public support. After all, the R & A was a public course.

The machinery and materials available in 1938 were on display and, despite the fact that all the big names were present, including the two leading seed houses and the main mower and roller manufacturers, the visitor could inspect the whole show comfortably in about one hour. When, in 1966, the exhibition, having outgrown the Hurlingham Club, moved to the University of London's grounds at Motspur Park, the machinery exhibits included: Spraying and Watering Equipment; Mowing Machines of all types; Hand, Motor and Gang Units; Aerating Machines; Rollers, Tractors and Distributors; Model Tennis Courts; Tools; Educational Exhibits; Playing Equipment and Sports Gear. Also on display was a range of chemicals, including selective weedkillers, which were unheard of in 1938; the latest varieties of grass seeds and cultivars; a range of fertilisers specially formulated for recreational and amenity turf areas, plus; the latest and best products and machines for the rapidly expanding industry. One big step forward was, at Motspur Park limited demonstrations of machinery could be staged.

There is no doubt that in the years immediately after World War II, great changes occurred in

the UK and, as much as anywhere, in the sporting arena. Where, after the first World War, sports grounds and bowling greens were constructed to occupy the time of the countless demobilised and unemployed servicemen, on this occasion full employment and increased leisure opportunities created a demand for good class facilities. Golf clubs were the first to realise that, in order to provide these facilities and the professionals to maintain them, subscriptions would have to be considerably increased and even, in some cases, doubled. The prophets of doom were sure that this action would lead to so many resignations that the clubs concerned would be bankrupted. In the event, most found that their membership waiting lists doubled.

These years saw the introduction of selective weedkillers and improved cultivars of sportsturf grasses, both spin-offs from agricultural research. A closer relationship between the practical man on the ground and the manufacturers led to a variety of efficient, reliable machines designed to produce the excellent playing surfaces which were now in demand. Improved methods of drainage and water control to supplement the traditional herringbone pipe drain system, combined with the increasing use of sands of the correct grain size and type also helped to make life easier for the professional Groundsman/Greenkeeper. Despite all this, the real professional is always aware that it is still the hard work and attention to detail by the man on the spot that produces the excellent playing surfaces for which we are world renowned. A good drainage system remains a good drainage system only so long as aeration is carried out as and when required. A surface remains a good bowling or putting surface only so long as the thatch is kept under control. The right machines are available but,

in the final count, it is the skilful and experienced operator who produces the results.

To return to the Sports & Leisure World Trade Exhibition. By 1981, due to the increase in exhibitors from both home and overseas, the show had once more outgrown its venue and so, in that year, it was moved from Motspur Park to the racecourse at Royal Windsor, and this year, the 43rd annual exhibition has attracted a record 385 exhibitors. The visitor will find that the regular and traditional machines and materials are still on display alongside the new introductions which the manufacturers enjoy unveiling at these IOG exhibitions. It is safe to say that everything that is relevant to the turf culture and landscape industries is on show, with none of the gimmicks and fripperies which clutter so many other exhibitions. Here, on the one site, the Greenkeeper can purchase any item from tee markers & discs, flag pins & flags, switches, bunker rakes and hole scissors through to complete turf care systems, multimowers and gangs, tractor mounted sprayers, aeration equipment and dis-

tributors as well as a range of tractors from 14hp compacts up to 65+hp highway & agricultural models. Add to this the complete range of pesticides, slow & normal release inorganic fertilisers and natural soil conditioners, and one is sure that their every need has been catered for.

But there is more.

Trees, shrubs and bedding plants are displayed by the leading nurseries and forestry equipment suitable for the maintenance of small copses or larger woodland areas can be seen working. Working?

Sorry, almost forgot. In the six acre demonstration area within the showground, machinery, including trenchers, backhoes, multimowers, graders, wood chippers and chain saws, as well as mobile saw benches and pipelaying machines can be seen operating throughout the three days of the exhibition. With all the listed items, plus an educational section where the leading horticultural colleges and institutions have taken space, the visitor who can spare the time would be advised to make an overnight stop.

PARKERS' ANNUAL GREEN-KEEPERS TOURNAMENT

A field of 58 Greenkeepers' turned out for the Parkers' Golf Greenkeepers Tournament staged at Cuddington Golf Club on the 16th June, and as usual the prayer mats worked well and a splendid day's Golf was had by all.

The competition was fierce and the winner was Derek Gould who is featured here receiving the Parker Rose Bowl presented by Maggie Parker, wife of Parkers' Managing Director. Derek said "why do Parkers give umbrellas as prizes, it never rains on their Golf days!!"

