

We've come a long way quickly, says BIGGA's Executive Director NEIL THOMAS

Looking forward to a great week in Harrogate



In January 1989 the first Turf Management Exhibition was held in Harrogate. Time marches on and now we approach the fifth exhibition on an altogether larger and more professional scale.

This year BIGGA is honoured with the presence of HRH The Duke of York to formally open the Exhibition on 20 January. In a short period the BTME has come a long way and there is justifiable pride amongst both BIGGA members and exhibitors alike that the BTME has now received royal recognition. We all look forward to a great week in Harrogate.

During the last four years BIGGA has listened to many people, not least those working within the industry, with a view to constantly improving upon both the exhibition and the educational programmes. The Steering Committee continues to be the key to the upgrading and development of the Exhibition, meeting some three times a year for lively exchanges of views which have resulted in decisions influencing the future direction and growth of BTME. As an Association, we are indebted to those industry representatives who give so freely of their time to ensure the ongoing success of BTME.

Our educational programmes continue to be a key factor in BTME's success attracting delegates in large numbers to both the popular

two-day workshops which precede the opening of the Exhibition as well as the general seminar programme which runs throughout the Exhibition. This year, for the first time, BIGGA will be organising a European Forum aimed particularly at ascertaining the needs of greenkeepers throughout Europe, seeing where help can be given through BIGGA's administrative structure and seeking greater co-operation with European greenkeeping Associations. A number of speakers from Europe have been invited to contribute to the Forum which it is anticipated will meet with an enthusiastic response from BIGGA's many members working in Europe. Indications are that the Forum will also attract much interest from a number of European Greenkeeping Associations as well as Golf Federations.

One of the Exhibition's main marketing 'tools' is the Pre-Registration Card and all participating companies are urged to distribute these cards in large numbers. There is no limitation on the number of cards that can be provided and companies can order them by contacting BIGGA Headquarters. BIGGA is looking at all times to promote the Exhibition jointly with the industry and is always open to suggestions on marketing initiatives.

The 1992 Exhibition certainly proved to be the most successful to date. Not only were

there many more Course Managers and greenkeepers at Harrogate, but they were often accompanied by Chairmen of Green, Secretaries or club owners as the case may be. Also the geographical spread was much wider with, for example, not only a substantial attendance from the South West but also a most encouraging presence from Scotland. BIGGA will continue to direct its efforts to increasing member participation. In this we are undoubtedly helped by the Exhibition's surrounding infrastructure - restaurants, hotels, guest houses and shops all offer much to the visitor together with the bonus of being able to park one's car and leave it unused for the week with all facilities within walking distance. Indeed, those attending BTME need no second invitation to return and many in returning have subsequently brought colleagues with them. Our intention is to firmly establish BTME as the premier exhibition for the fine turf industries. In this regard we are actively encouraging local authority participation and we are also targeting architects and constructors considering it important that they be present in Harrogate as an integral part of the industry.

I believe that BTME is now firmly fixed in the industry's calendar and we in BIGGA will spare no effort to ensure the continued growth and success of the Exhibition.

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