

# Around the Green

Keeping in touch with news and comment from the regions

## MIDLANDS

I would like to start by thanking ET Breakwell for their kind sponsorship of the Rose Bowl and to congratulate them on becoming Gold Key members for 1994. Well done, Len!

It was nice to see so many of our members at Harrogate, with many of them staying for the whole show. The show continues to grow both in size and support, which makes us all, I'm sure, proud to be members. Many thanks to our staff at HQ for their hard work and commitment in producing the show. While at the show I met our new editor, Chris Boiling, who seemed full of enthusiasm for the job in hand.

Our first lecture of the winter – in February – attracted 25 members, who heard two speakers: one from Dowlenco and another from the NRA. Our thanks to David and John.



Dates to remember: March 25 – Lecture on Hardi sprayers and Bob Pilsbury on diesel engines, Telford GC, starting 2pm; April 6 – Spring Tournament, Trentham Park GC.  
DEAN CLEAVER

## NORTH EAST

Once again the BTME at Harrogate was a huge success and it was good to see quite a lot of greenkeepers ranging from YTS to head greenkeepers from the North East. Pity only one of them attended any of the workshops – well done Mal Latham, at least he is trying. Believe me, they are well worth the money.

Bumped into Tony Chambers of Shorts of Whitburn on behalf of the section – get well soon, Tony.

Golf dates: April 14 – Spring Competition, South Moor GC; July 20 N/E v Secretaries, Seaham GC; September – Autumn Comp, TBA; October 6 – N/E v East Lothian, Westerhope GC; Match v Cleveland TBA..  
JIMMY RICHARDSON



## EVENTS DIARY

**April 8-10: National Education Conference, University of Warwick**  
**April 27: Westurf, Turf Care Trade Exhibition, Long Ashton Golf Club, Bristol**  
**June 8-9: BALI Trade Show, Stoneleigh**  
**June 29: Southurf, Turf Care Trade Exhibition, Mottspur Park, south west London**  
**July 14-17: Open Championship, Turnberry**  
**August 1-3: National Tournament, Dartmouth Golf Club, Devon**  
**September 6-8: Saltex (previously loG) Trade Exhibition, Royal Windsor Racecourse, Berkshire.**  
**September 22: Hayter Challenge Final, Pannal Golf Club, Harrogate**  
**November (to be confirmed): Scotsturf**  
**January 25-27, 1995: BTME '95, Harrogate International Centre**

## SHEFFIELD

Firstly, this month I would like to, on behalf of the section, congratulate Barry Heaney on becoming vice chairman of BIGGA. Barry takes over on April 8 at the National Conference, and he becomes chairman of the Association next year. This is a great honour for Barry and for the Sheffield Section, and I hope we can give Barry all the support he needs.

Our winter lecture in February was given by John Souter of Souter's Sportsturf. John delivered his lecture to a packed meeting which was good to see, I hope we can keep the numbers up. John's lecture was superb and one of the best we've had, we thank him for his time and his interesting, informative and sometimes lighthearted lecture.

Two of our golf fixtures have now been arranged for 1994, they are at Worksof Golf Club on April 26, which will also be the Hayter Qualifier. Our Annual Tournament (27 holes) will be at Tankersley Park GC on July 14. This brings me on to wishing Ron Graham of

Tankersley a speedy recovery after his accident at work and also to Ian Lilley of Lindrick GC who is recovering after an operation.

Congratulations go to Ian Whitehead on becoming deputy head greenkeeper at Hillsborough GC and also to Mike Coultas who has now joined Dave Chappel at Boundhay Golf and Country Club as Dave's deputy. I understand from David that construction at Boundhay has got off to a slow start but things are now in full swing. I'm sure we all look forward to playing it in the future.

On February 16, 24 members of the section went on a trip to the John Deere factory at Langar near Nottingham. We would like to thank Steve Jeffcock, Paul Beckett and Peter Chambers of Mitchells for organising the visit and to Howard Storey, Richard Charlton and Ivan Miller of John Deere for looking after us so well with an interesting insight into the workings of John Deere and an excellent lunch – thank you once again.

Finally, I would like to welcome John Coleman, James Hall, Paul Smith, Ryan Binns, Andrew Chapman, Andrew Hadin, Paul Green, Jonathan Shaw and David Sulley who are all new members to our section. I'm sure you all will be made welcome and we look forward to seeing you all at our winter lectures and golf meetings.



IAN COLLETT

## EAST MIDLANDS

Congratulations go to David Sankey on his appointment as head greenkeeper at Grimsby GC. David was formerly assistant at the Leicestershire GC.

This year's golf tournament dates have been arranged:

April 29 – Spring Outing and Hayter Qualifier, Sherwood Forest GC; September 28 – Autumn Outing, Wellingborough GC, Northamptonshire; November 16 – AGM Tournament, Ullesthorpe Court GC, Leicestershire; December 14 – Christmas Tournament, Birstall GC, Leicestershire. All members should be receiving their entry forms shortly, please try to return them to me as soon as possible.

This month we welcome the following new members to our section: Mark Reeves, Charnwood Forest GC; Nick Howe, student, Brackenhurst College; David James, student; Nick Danvers, associate/company, Hewitt's Sportsturf; Garry Jukes, Lutterworth GC; Peter Walker, Lacey Manor.

With the National Education Conference not too far away, let's hope to see as many members as possible from our section supporting this important event.

ANTHONY BINDLEY

## SOUTH WEST

Who'd manage sportsturf? That question must have been on many people's minds after the

**The countdown to Westurf has begun. The south west's premier trade show takes place at Long Ashton Golf Club, Bristol, on Wednesday April 27. Westurf is RAC signposted from the motorway and when you arrive parking and admission are free. Most of the main local and national dealers will be there to answer your questions, you will also be able to see the latest machinery being demonstrated on the large demo area which includes a golf green.**



rainfall we have been blessed with over the winter. Several inches of rain over short periods has disrupted many winter course programmes and restricted playing. Filton was no exception with large areas of instant water features appearing overnight. It pleased only the local seagulls who on numerous occasions could be seen paddling around the 16th fairway.

On a brighter note, the Spring Tournament which is the regional qualifier for the Hayter Challenge Tournament will be held on Thursday April 21 at Chippenham GC. Application forms will soon be dropping through your letter boxes to register for this and other events. I look forward to meeting you then and throughout the season.

The following week it's Westurf. Its success in the last few years has been quite outstanding but it needs your support to continue to do this, so make the effort and bring someone interested in turfcare with you. We will also need some assistance in its organisation, particularly in the car park and on the entrance, so if you can spare some time please contact me at home on 0272 793127.

Anyone interested in playing in the match on June 28 at Clevedon GC against the secretaries, please contact me and I will pass your name on to our team captain, Dave Neale, for possible selection.

The two-day chainsaw maintenance course recently held at Long Ashton once again proved very successful. Our thanks go to Ivor Scoones and the club itself for allowing us to use the greenkeeping sheds for instruction. Please maintain an interest in this and the other educational courses and services avail-

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able. For the experience and qualifications gained they are extremely good value for money besides the fact that some are legal requirements.

KEVIN GREEN

### LONDON

The BTME once again proved to be a great success and it was encouraging to see a good turnout from our section. It was also nice to see an increase in trade stand numbers and this is a reflection of a well organised event.

The evening entertainment was very enjoyable and well worth the late nights.

Our first golf event of the year is April 18 at Porters Park GC. The Hayter qualifier will be the main event but various prizes will be up for grabs. Entry forms will be with you this month but do not hesitate to call me if you have not received one. Finally, will anyone interested in becoming an NVQ assessor for the industry please contact David Golding at the GTC headquarters.



TONY DUNSTAN

### NORTH SCOTLAND

Only ten months until BTME '95, Yes, this

year's was that good. The whole week was excellent. The 'Evening Gang' is growing bigger each year. Soon there will not be a restaurant big enough to accommodate us all at once!

What a place Harrogate is for pubs with 12-hour Happy Hours and a pizza restaurant letting you eat as much as you can for £2.25! Entertainment was first class, if you missed the Paterson and White trick involving a jacket, an overhead fan and a pint of lager, then I feel sorry for you, although not as sorry as the poor bloke who finished up wearing the pint.

The workshop I attended on health and safety will keep me busy all year. Thanks to Jon Allbutt for a very informative two days. The show was so big this year, I just wish more Scottish firms were in attendance; I'm sure it would be worthwhile. The seminar programme was first class and congratulations to all the speakers. The new BIGGA staff were all very friendly and helpful and I wish them a long association with us.

Congratulations to Colin Mackay of Cruden Bay for winning the BTME competition in the magazine, I am sure he enjoyed his week. To anyone who has not been to BTME yet, I advise you to get yourself there next year, combine some work with a lot of fun and a great opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones. I am sure the National Conference next month will be just as good and there is always Turnberry in July.

No new members to welcome this month so come on - get recruiting, you could win airline tickets for a holiday. All you need for the chance to win is to recruit two new members and get them to say that you recommended them. It is as easy as that.

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Finally, some advance warning – the Scottish Region North Section one-day conference will take place in Aberdeen on December 1.  
IAIN MacLEOD

### NORTH WALES

For those of you who attended BTME, I trust you enjoyed yourselves and those that stayed for the week have recovered from any excesses. It was encouraging to see so many section members in attendance and I hope to see you all at the National Education Conference in April.

The first golf competition of 1994 will be the match versus the North West section on April 14 at Oaklands GC. Anyone interested in taking part should contact either myself or Terry Adamson.

On April 26 we will be holding the Spring Competition at Carden Park near Chester. The cost is a little higher than normal but access to the driving range and nine-hole academy course is included together with coffee on arrival and a meal after the game. Tee off time is from 8am and the fee is £17 to members and £22 to guests. As an additional feature, John Garner, the ex Ryder Cup player will be presenting his golf show in aid of the Fight Leukaemia in Chester charity. All entries to be in by April 14. Members will be sent further details shortly.

Congratulations go to Peter Gabriel (Carden Park) and Zoe on the birth of their first baby, a boy called Jacob weighing 6lb 6oz. A future apprentice greenkeeper no doubt seeing as I have been given the responsibility of godfather!

The committee wish a speedy recovery after her operation to our chairman Brian Anderson's wife.

Welcome to the area Andy Peel, who has moved from Ellesmere GC, Manchester, to take up the head greenkeeper position at Bull Bay GC on Anglesey.

That man Bronco (Gareth Williams, Porthmadog GC) has been on his travels again with his dog, this time finishing fourth in the National Sheepdog Trials. I wonder if he has trained it to recover errant tee shots?

ANDY CAMPBELL

### NORTH WEST

How have your courses stood up to the wettest winter for years? I have spoken to many greenkeepers, the fortunate ones having understanding members and committees, who have had their courses closed for weeks at a time, and these courses will obviously benefit from the rest, even though normal winter work has not been completed due to the wet conditions.

I have also spoken to greenkeepers who have to put up with members who insist that they pay subscriptions for 12 months and want their money's worth. I only hope the greens committee will back the greenkeeper when, in the spring, the complaints start coming in because the course is not as good as they would like. Many courses in the south have been completely flooded, but at least they had a rest from tramping feet and buggies.

The golfing calendar has now been completed, so please make a note in your diaries of the dates, even though you will be reminded each month in your section notes.

Thursday April 14 – N/W v N/Wales, Oaklands GC (team required); Tuesday May 24 – Spring Tournament, Sale GC (Hayter qualifier) Mon-

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day July 25 – Summer Meeting, Stockport GC; Wednesday August 10 – Roses Match, Mottram Hall (team required); Monday September 12 – Autumn Tournament, Royal Birkdale; TBA – Stewards Match (team required).



If you would like to be in the team of 16 to play North Wales, give me a ring on 051 7245412  
BERT CROSS

### DEVON AND CORNWALL

Over 65 members attended our February meeting which was held at Trevoze GC by kind permission of Peter Gammon. Members who had travelled from the east of our section were pleasantly surprised to see that there was no covering of snow over the championship links course as they had to battle with that fluffy stuff to start with. The morning's bogey golf competition saw some 40 members compete for the Avoncrop Trophy. After an excellent lunch John Palfrey of Avoncrop presented the prizes to: 1, Cary Rawlings (Padbrook) +1; 2, David Manley (Mullion) -1; 3, Richard Hall (Padbrook) -2 on back nine.

The section would like to thank Trevor Bennett and his staff who had the course in such fine condition, and everyone else at Trevoze who made our day so successful.

Our afternoon educational talk was presented by John Bradley of Barenburg Seeds. It was on the development of seeds from start to finish with a lively question time making our day very interesting and enlightening. The section would like to thank John for his presentation.

Congratulations go to Richard Hall who has taken a greenkeeping position in Germany. Many thanks for your support over the years and the section would like to wish you every success in your new position.

This year the section will be replacing its Guest Day meeting with an afternoon summer meeting to be held on Wednesday June 22 at Yelverton GC. The section is hoping to provide a workshop for non-golfing members with golfing and raffle prizes being of educational value. The afternoon will be sponsored by Jacobsen & MST.

RICHARD WHYMAN

### WEST SCOTLAND

After 38 years a head greenkeeper at Whitecraig GC, Bob Fitzpatrick has decided to retire. The section wishes him all the best. With Bob leaving, the position of head greenkeeper was soon filled by Peter Hall, previously of Hamilton GC.

But surely the biggest story of the month has to go to Roy Auld, in a sensational move from Toro (AM Russel) to Ransomes (Scottish Grass Machinery). This will surely test his qualities as a salesman. Good luck, Roy!

The Claremont Bowling Club was the venue for the West of Scotland section games night. The competition was fierce with darts, dominoes, bowls, pool and snooker being the pro-

gramme of events, and as the dust finally settled on the green baize, there was only one pairing left undefeated from the evening: Scott Ballantyne (Cowglen GC) and David Mowatt (Killermont GC). Second place went to Steven McGeachie and Jim Dunne, both newcomers to the games night and both from Pollock GC.

Thanks must go to John Scott and Drew McKechnie for organising another great night!

The spring outing will be held at Dougalston GC on April 28. Numbers will be restricted to around 50, therefore applications will be dealt with on a first come, first served basis. Under no circumstances will entry fees be accepted on the day of the competition.

Lastly, Richard Cuthbert, assistant at Cowglen GC, is now on the road after an above average number of attempts at passing his test, so beware Glasgow residents.

SCOTT BALLANTYNE

### SOUTH COAST

Our January winter lecture – "Communication Within a Golf Club" by Ed McCabe and Arthur King of Brockenhurst Manor Golf Club – should have been a must for all golf club committee members and greenstaff. Unfortunately, only 15 members attended. What has been achieved at Brockenhurst in communication is a lesson for us all. Our thanks to Ed and Arthur.

It was good to see a few more South Coast members at BTME this year. We ran a minibus to Bristol to connect with the main coach to Harrogate. Nine South Coast members travelled on the regional coach – five more than last year, but still leaving room for more. What about a coach from the South Coast next year! BTME is a great show and super social event so make a note in your diaries for next year.

Our thanks go to Gordon and Marion Child who do so much of the organising work. Without them our region would not be in the position it is.

It is hoped there will be a coach to Westurf this year paid for by section funds. This is the most important event of the year for the South West and South Wales region and helps keep us financially secure so that we can offer such a good deal on the trip to BTME. All bookings to your chairman, Ken Lodge (tel: 0329 282362).

April 21 is the date of our spring tournament at Test Valley GC. Call the organiser, Bob Cully on 0489 782976.

ALAN MITCHELL

### MID ANGLIA

The section's first lecture of the year, at the Family Golf Centre, Stevenage, featured Guy Longshaw of Symbio. He spoke in some depth about a new product called Green Circle, which is applied to greens. It's basically a mineral with micro-organisms attached to it which are so voracious they break down thatchy, fibrous material and make the resulting nutrient available to the plant. The benefits in the short term are less incidence of disease and good colour and, in the long term, a reduction in fertiliser needs.

For those who were unable to attend (almost everybody judging by the poor turnout), Guy's phone number is 081 669011.

The BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition has been and gone once more, and was once again an undoubted success. It was pleasing to see so many section members attending. Harrogate is an excellent venue for such an event and I hope it will stay there in the future.

Next month – April 27 – sees our first golf

fixture at Harpenden Golf Club. This will be a qualifying event for the Hayter Challenge. Entry forms should be with you by now for all upcoming events, and please note that the cost is £20. As the cost was £17 for the last three years, the committee felt a rise was due, so the day can pay for itself without the need for subsidisation. Entry forms should be sent to Chris



Brook with a cheque by Wednesday April 13. If anyone has any queries, call me on 0582 490746 (work) or 0525 402550 (home)  
PAUL LOCKETT

#### CLEVELAND

Envirogreen provide a service for the collection and disposal of empty pesticide containers, in a legal manner. This protects the greenkeeper who will be finable (from April 1) and also his club. I recommend this service.

I have completed 30 years service as head greenkeeper at Eaglescliffe GC. During all these years our agronomists have been STRI whom I would not like to be without. This is a wonderful service for our benefit. We get an annual visit followed with a detailed report of findings for us to follow. They will also do soil tests, pH tests and if we need top dressing, root zone or sand testing for particle sizes this can also be done. Diseased turf can be examined and identified so we can use the right treatment. Subscription to the STRI is good value.

Gary Munro, our secretary, is working on future events including the Spring Tournament/Hayter Qualifier on May 19 at Dinsdale Spa GC.

Members will be visiting the new Gem Top Dressing base in South Yorkshire and to Jacobsen in Kettering.

BRUCE BURNELL

#### SURREY

Our Spring Meeting at Malden GC is not far off – April 20. After that it's the Cresta Cup at Laleham GC on June 1. We may even see some new faces.

Please make sure all entries are in on time and remember, entry forms are only available from the section secretary.

Congratulations to David Paterson, formerly of Abridge GC in Essex, upon his appointment as deputy head at Woodcote Park GC under Eric Green. Welcome to Surrey.  
DAVID GIBBS

#### SOUTH WALES

Firstly, I'd like to thank Richard Minton of ICI (or is it Zeneca?) for presenting last month's evening lecture/slide show at Pencoed College. The subject was the history and use of chemicals on sports turf.

We were indeed lucky to have Richard, let alone the 20 or so in attendance taking into consideration the weather conditions. But the evening was enjoyable and indeed educational and I thank all of those who were present.

Our first GTC-approved, newly-formed liaison meeting held at Pencoed College was deemed a success by all those in attendance and is definitely a step in the right direction for greenkeeper education in South Wales. On a personal note, I look forward to developing a closer working relationship with the WGU, GTC and the secretaries in the very near future.

The seventh BTME and seminar programme was again seen as a total success for the greenkeeping industry as a whole. Many of the

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exhibitors that I spoke with were busy for the whole three days with no let up at all and had no doubt that the show was busier than last year.

The seminar subjects were varied with topics ranging from the humorous 'How to get your way at work' to the hilarious 'Light at the end of the tunnel', to the more serious educational 'The history of golf and greenkeeping'.

Gordon and Marion Child must again be congratulated for their efforts in organising the Westurf-sponsored trip for it was thoroughly enjoyable and extremely well organised.

Colin Murphy has asked me to pass on his sincere thanks to all those who not only attended the funeral of his late wife but to all those who sent cards, flowers and kind regards. Dates for your diary: April 13 – South Wales Seminar; April 20 – Hayter Qualifier, Newport GC; April 27 – Westurf, Long Ashton GC, Bristol.

#### CENTRAL SCOTLAND

Hopefully the worst of the winter is behind us now and we can look forward to better weather as the days lengthen. We 'tee off' this season's events with the Spring Tournament at Monifieth Links on Tuesday April 26. This is also the section qualifier for the Hayter Challenge Tournament and a large entry is anticipated, please return your forms (with the correct remittance) in plenty of time. No form, no fee = no play.

Another social night is being arranged for the G-X Superbowl in Falkirk. Entry forms should reach you soon. This is a great night if you enjoy a laugh as there are no 'experts', so bring along your partner or just come yourself and meet other members away from work.

Are you interested in attending courses on health and safety, first aid, chainsaws, COSHH Regulations etc, if your committee organises them for you? If so, please complete the form enclosed with your golf tournament entry form and if enough members are interested courses will be arranged for later in the year.

Having attended the BTME at Harrogate, it was pleasing to see so many Central Section members there, everyone appeared to be enjoying themselves with those who were there for the first time attending the seminars during the day and then being 'educated' on Harrogate's nightlife by the 'Auld Hands' in the evening. Who's booked up for next year?

Best wishes from everyone in the section go to the Association's former education officer, Debbie Savage, who has moved to Cambridgeshire. Here's wishing you every success and happiness. Keep in touch!  
JOHN CRAWFORD



#### BERKS, BUCKS & OXON

Many thanks to Mark Chesman for organising our winter lecture programme – they were very much appreciated by all.

Mark is currently getting to grips with next year's programme and would be only too

pleased to hear any of your ideas. Please contact me on 0628 829208 and I will put you in touch with him.

Another big thank you to Mark Barthelmie of Risborough Turf Supplies who generously sponsored all the trainees for the section coach trip to Harrogate. In all, 18 members of the section travelled to Harrogate and although it was a long day they all enjoyed it.



Forthcoming events: March 16 – Gentlemen's dinner, Beaconsfield GC; May – Spring Tournament and Hayter Qualifier, Mill Ride GC.  
RAY CLARK

#### EAST OF ENGLAND

For the first time, the section's AGM was held in conjunction with a golf competition, which was sponsored by John Deere and took place at Sleaford GC.

A thoroughly enjoyable day's golf was had, with 20 players venturing out on a remarkably dry day and superbly presented course. The format of the day was greensomes with a draw for partners. The worthy winners were Mike Feeney and Ted Lake. My thanks go to Ted, chairman of the greens at Sleaford, for expertly guiding us round the last three holes in darkness!

Out thanks to John Scotney and all his staff, the course was a treat to play, especially after all the rain we had during December. Thanks also go to the captain and vice-captain who joined both for the golf and evening meal.

Next followed the AGM where there were a few changes made to the section committee due to members standing down.

Our chairman, Graeme Patrick, handed over the chair to Dave Walden. Our thanks go to Graeme for all the hard work he has done for the section. After the AGM, your committee is as follows: Chairman – Dave Walden; Vice-chairman – Graeme MacDonald; Secretary – Mike Finney; Treasurer – John Scotney; members – Barry Anderson, Ian Morton, Mike Wood.

Finally, it was good to see a few section members at BTME and I would suggest that any member who has not been to the exhibition make an effort to attend in '95 because it is by far the best show for greenkeepers.

MIKE FEENEY

## No names, no pack drill

■ So you missed Harrogate this year, but you're thinking of going in '95. Want to know what a trip to the BTME is really like? A south-west greenkeeper reveals all (except for the names, to protect the guilty)...

6.30am: A dark grey morning but spirits light and sunny as the car speeds on towards our first destination. "Left, right, right at the roundabout," the driver needs very explicit instructions or we will end up taking the scenic route.

First stop – a large cholesterol breakfast, a few cups of coffee and a lot of conjecture over the trip. Back into the car, more instructions to the driver, and on to the coach pick-up point.

First ones there for a change. Other greenkeepers arrive in dribs and drabs from all points of the compass. Banter and greetings. The coach arrives on time, another first, we all load suitcases and climb aboard. We greet the other travellers and settle down for the next stage of the journey.

With talk of the AGM and reps' fat wallets,



the time passes quickly as we speed on to our next stop. "45 minutes break," shouts the driver so we rush en masse to the toilets. More coffee and cakes then we meet up with the last lot of travellers to board the coach. ("That chap from Wales has brought his wife and the ex chairman has brought his too.") We are accustomed to *one* female on our trip, but this is stretching greenkeepers' hospitality too far! But who am I to complain? Would I? *Moi?*

A desperate situation – we are one short. Count again. One person is meeting us at journeys end. No, we are still one short. Wait a minute, we forgot to count the driver. Onwards ever onwards we travel, banter, boiled sweets and fun.

One more stop for toilets and coffee, then into the "Father-Land". Cooling towers, coal mines and slag heaps.

We arrive on time with no mishaps and pile into the hotel. Nice hot shower, a change of clothes and down to the bar.

Talk and drink, drink and talk ("Look, there's the new rep on the trip, looks very smart in his suit and shiny shoes.") We lighten his wallet with profuse thanks for his hospitality.

Out into the damp and drizzle, 15 hungry people in search of food. We sit around one big table and eat, drink and laugh. On again to find a bar. More drinks, more chat. Back to the hotel to meet up with all the others, some go to bed and some have a nightcap or two.

#### The show

Fortified with breakfast, we stroll to the show. *What a show!* Bigger, better, more people, the best yet. Congratulations to all concerned with the organisation. This must be the best show of its kind in the UK. With lectures as well, what

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more do you need? The National Conference maybe?

Machines from all over the world. The large and small. The good and not so good. All vying to get your custom. The chemicals and fertilisers. When will one of the manufacturers come up with a survival kit for this week's entertainment?

A good evening meal with 20-ish in the party. Plenty of drinks to wash down some good steaks. Some go off dancing and some return to the hotel for more meaningful dialogue and the odd drink.

The next morning produces some funny heads and funny eyes. Breakfast is taken by some but not others, then off to the show again.

We move around to see the reps on various stands and listen to talks on all manner of subjects. The last talk of the day was the highlight of the week. When he asked if anyone had tried to find an underground drain with a bent coat hanger, I thought, "I've been there". You could say I was hooked. What a talk, excellent.

Back to the hotel to wash and change then off to the banquet for some of us. Well I enjoyed myself and, despite having to ask people to be quiet during the entertainment, had a very pleasant evening. Then it was back to the

hotel where some fool told jokes and drank too much.

Breakfast was a fragile affair for quite a few. Some did not even make it. Bags packed and loaded onto the coach. A steady walk to the show, gently does it. But looking around, I'm not the only one.

"Be on the coach outside the halls by 12 noon" was the instruction. So, zombie-like, we did as we were told. But there is always one – we had a right one. By 12.15, he who must be obeyed is telling the driver to move off. But she who *will* be obeyed overruled this and went in search of the lost soul. Needless to say, it was the tall rep of a firm near Bristol who got shepherded onto the coach amid catcalls and jeers.

A stop at Tamworth was much needed, by me anyway, and after some food I felt my usual self again. She who will be obeyed was thanked at this point for all her hard work and was presented with a bunch of flowers by our Welsh friend.

Our next stop was just outside Bristol. Here we deposited some of our fellow travellers, and said our goodbyes and vowed to meet again next year. More tea, then on once more.

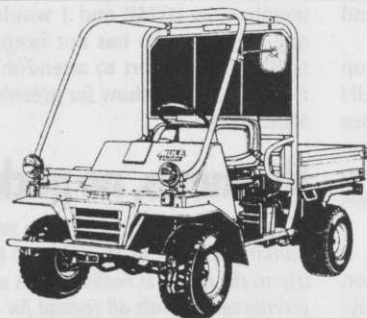
We dropped one chap at another services. He was the one who stayed up for two nights drinking and never used his bed thinking he could get a discount on his bill.

The next stop is where I get out with my lift. We say goodbye and walk to our cars only to find that two of them have been broken into, thankfully nothing has been taken.

More explicit instructions for the driver and we are on the right road for home. A final stop for a big roast meal at a transport cafe. We count up how much we have spent. *How much?!* Roll on next year.

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