

# Reflections on a special week



**SUNDAY 22 JANUARY**  
 Arrive at Majestic Hotel in Harrogate. Nervous – a new Headquarters hotel; will it be up to standard? Relax as greenkeepers are seen with towels in hand heading to the swimming pool and sauna. Off to a good start despite non-arrival of courier with some 30 conference badges. Never mind, Sami's in control. Meet up with our American and Swedish guests and enjoy their company throughout the week. Good dinner and conversation – the mood seems set fair. End the night with our two Russian visitors from Moscow – retire as the caviar and vodka begin to flow...



**BIGGA in focus**  
 BY NEIL THOMAS

**MONDAY**  
 Impressive conference set creates right atmosphere. All speakers present and Conference is sold out. Many compliments regarding hotel – excellent food and accommodation together with first-class service and friendly staff – a big worry lifted off my shoulders. Successful first day highlighted with conference dinner and presentation of ninth Master Greenkeeper award to Richard McNabb from South Carolina. Many disappear before cabaret by Willy Hirst and Rainbow Jazz Band – a pity as it was an excellent act. Noted to review for next year.

**TUESDAY**  
 Conference off again on time. Thanks to Dr Peter Hayes for being an excellent Chairman. Audio/visual presentation a great success. Delegates have had an informative two days and many are looking forward to the Exhibition. Short Board of Management meeting to elect new Chairman and Vice-Chairman then off to cheese and wine gathering for the exhibitors. Hayter dinner follows splendidly organised by Kim Macfie and Barbara Garton. Late night call on first Past Chairmen's dinner in the Majestic – seem to have missed an excellent night with the world being put to right.

**WEDNESDAY**  
 The first ribbon-cutting ceremony goes off well, recorded on video

for a promotional presentation. Amazing numbers through the doors. Pleased to welcome our President Viscount Whitelaw to the Chairman's luncheon. New shields for Golden and Silver Key sponsors are attractive. Rousing speech by our President who then tours the exhibition leaving just before the snow starts. Back to the Majestic as a white blanket descends. Off to AGM. Excellently attended with members locked in by the snow. Unanimous support for the continuation of the BTME in Harrogate in 1996. Good to see Bill Lawson elected as a Trustee and Eric James and Bert Cross as Life Members. Karaoke night disappears as the snow falls – never mind the lads are having a great time in the bar led by the Men of Harlech under the baton of one T Adamson. A good time was had by all whilst the blizzard continued...

**THURSDAY**  
 7.45am Steering Committee meeting – but who will be there? Just about everyone it transpires. Fortright meeting with the show scene clarified. Overwhelming support for BTME '96 is great encouragement. Off to the exhibition through the snow. Will anyone be there! You bet – everyone astonished by the numbers through the doors and the day is off to a great start. But will our entertainers make it for the banquet, the climax of the week? The agency has done a great job with a late replacement in Linda Nolan and with Tom O'Connor setting

off the night before to ensure his arrival. Capacity attendance at banquet – what a night! Perhaps the best cabaret I've seen. Many present overcome with the appearance of Linda Nolan and in a state of near frenzy by the time Tom O'Connor appeared for a quite brilliant 75 minute stint. A truly memorable evening discussed long into the night.

**FRIDAY**  
 Bleary eyed but happy, attendees descended again on the exhibition halls to attend Jim Beard's lecture and for a final walk around. Good numbers for the last morning. Dire weather warnings keep me on my toes. Plug pulled at 12.45pm instead of 1.30pm. Just about get it right as snow sets in again around 2pm. Speed of evacuation of personnel and equipment is excellent. We've made it and thanks to our exhibitors for their stoicism and their continued backing, also to our members and other visitors for the determination to make it to Harrogate and contribute to the week's success.

**And seriously**  
 Whilst there had been unconfirmed rumours since before Christmas of the English Golf Union's possible participation in the new "Landscape & Turf Professional '96" exhibition planned for 16-18 January 1996, at Olympia, London, BIGGA members arriving for the BTME were surprised both by the timing (23 January) and the nature of the press release announcing an agreement between the EGU and P&O Events. The agreement between the two organisations means that the EGU will be responsible for the golf education and training seminars at the show. The BTME in Harrogate has yet again been a great success and we believe we have a solid base for the further development and expansion of the exhibition which is planned for next year's show. We are encouraged by the ongoing support of our exhibitors, many of whom are requesting additional space for 1996.

Whilst the issues concerning the EGU's participation in a rival event are discussed elsewhere in this magazine, it is not too late to ask the EGU to reconsider its position.

Surely their place is at Harrogate supporting greenkeepers and their education and training seminars as well as their National Education Conference. How much more beneficial if they contributed positively to an expansion of those programmes and urged every Secretary and Chairman of Green to visit Harrogate where they would learn much that would be beneficial to their respective roles at their golf clubs. The excellent paper presented by Brian Carnie, Managing Secretary of Broadway Golf Club during the recent Seminar Programme and much appreciated by our members is indicative of the way forward. What can be achieved by the EGU attempting to establish a rival show at the expense of the BTME and to the detriment of greenkeepers and their profession? If the EGU's present position is divisive and not in the best interests of the game, BIGGA's position is clear. The Association wants the EGU's support at the BTME, it wants the EGU's backing for greenkeepers and their profession and it wants the EGU's participation at Harrogate in the educational programmes. We would see the participation as a cooperative effort to include the Irish, Scottish and Welsh Home Unions as well. BIGGA will be at Harrogate in 1996 and we hope so too will the EGU. Come and talk and let BIGGA and the Home Unions move forward together.

**And finally**  
 An abiding memory from the week. An audience of 300 at the closing banquet on their feet, some standing on chairs, hands linked singing along with Linda Nolan, "We'll meet again don't know where don't know when". It stirred the emotions. But we do you know. It will be in Harrogate from 22-26 January 1996. See you there.