



Above: The many faces of Frank Dick.



Above: An audience held spellbound by Frank Dick's performance



Left: The week was graced by the presence of Carl Burtner, President - Worldwide of Textron Turf Care and Specialty Products who paid a flying visit. Andrew Sunaway, Sales Director, Gordon Child, Carl Burtner and Peter Bell, Marketing Director

**Sunday January 17**

Can this really be our 11th exhibition? It surely is and time to hit the road again for Harrogate. For me it is a very short journey but I am mindful of all those already on the road from distant parts. The weather seems set fair but on past experience I take nothing for granted. Already my Education and Training Manager has taken to his sick bed and I know we are going to miss Ken this week with five days of continuous educational programmes. Still, on with conference registration which seems to run more smoothly than ever thanks to Sami. The early comers are already well bedded in and many heading for the swimming pool. Tonight is informal and an enjoyable dinner is followed for many by the traditional late night at the bar - just building up for the week ahead.

**Monday January 18**

With Ken absent I suddenly find myself in conference mode checking that all is in order. A new Chairman, this year in Dr Mike Canaway, and we agree on the need to keep the programme running to time - this always contributes to the professionalism of the event. Mike proves to be an excellent Chairman giving his expert opinion when the need arises. I determine to make sure that he is reinvented for BTME 2000. The speakers present a varied programme and again one is impressed with the presentations of our own members. The highlight for me is the presentation of the Master Greenkeeper Certificates to David Hannam, David Duke, Sidney Arrowsmith and John Quinn. Our Master Greenkeepers now total 20 since the incep-

tion of the scheme in 1990. The workshop programme is proceeding well and the lunch break confirms yet again the quality of the food at the Majestic. With many of the bedrooms having been refurbished all is well at the hotel now under the control of a new group. Thankfully Frank Flaherty is still in charge and he knows only too well what greenkeepers like...! If the food and accommodation are good, then my worries are far less! This certainly applies at the Majestic and I believe at the other hotels we use. So to one of the highlights of the week, the Conference Dinner. Our after dinner speaker Ian Shuttleworth, the solicitor from Ilkley, proves a great hit - getting it just right for our particular audience. We welcome Andrew Sunaway and Peter Bell from Textron mindful of the fact our Learning Experience programme would just not happen without the company's great support. It is then the second late night of our stamina-sapping programme. It is telling on the staff as well before the exhibition has even got underway. Tony is flat on his back and won't be in this week. Two down.

**Tuesday January 19**

Conference and workshops continue. Down at the halls it is getting very busy but Jenny is taking the flak and keeping cool. The conference ends with a lively question and answer session. Short Board of Management meeting to elect Chairman and Vice Chairman. It is no change. Gordon has enjoyed his year so much that he offers to stand for another and is unanimously re-

elected as is Elliott as Vice Chairman. We all rush off to see Hall Q which will welcome our exhibitors and visitors in 2000. Parties are shown around while beer and burritos are consumed. Early impressions are that Hall Q is being favourably received judging by the queue of potential exhibitors jostling for Jenny and Cheryl's attention (or are they handing out signed photographs?). A quick change and off to the sixth Hayter Dinner in the George Hotel ably hosted as usual by Kim Macfie and Barbara Garton. Meanwhile the Past Chairmen's Dinner is conducted in its normal lively style but, I am assured, in slightly lower key than the previous year's event which was rather exciting by all accounts!

**Wednesday January 20**

We are ready for the off at 9am when the Chairman cuts the ribbon. This year we have reintroduced the Keynote Speaker session and the event has received maximum publicity. Frank Dick proves to be quite brilliant in front of a large audience. If people aren't motivated by this session then they never will be. It is clear that videos of the session are going to be in great demand. We'll put this one down as a success! Off to the Chairman's Luncheon which finishes in record time at 1.45pm. I am always conscious that, while enjoying a pleasant lunch, our company representatives are naturally keen to get back to their stands with as little delay as possible. Frank Dick makes the Golden and Silver Key company presentations. Back to the halls which are busy and a great atmosphere. Time to prepare for the AGM. This

goes smoothly and is enlivened with the new customary contribution from Cecil George. Jim Fry receives his Honorary Membership plaque. The Chairman welcomes Kerran Daly to the Board of Management in place of Robin Greaves and also Mark Dobell, Financial Secretary at the R & A, as our new Guardian. I am not finished yet as I have a final FEGGA Board meeting to attend. I have been providing back-up support to FEGGA since its inception in March 1996 and now with the basis of its administration in place it is time for me to cease my direct involvement. I shall miss the company of Dean, Per-Olof, Elise, Claus, Roland and Tommy but I guess I will continue to meet up with them on the greenkeeping circuit.

**Thursday January 21**

Ken reappears - excellent news - or does he just want to come to see Showwaddy? No BTME Steering Committee meeting over breakfast by popular vote but I am up early anyway preparing for the day ahead. The sun has got his hat on - quite the best weather at any BTME - I can't quite believe it! Off to the FEGGA AGM. Per-Olof Ljung elected Chairman with Claus Detlef Ratjen elected as Vice Chairman. Roland Favrat remains a Board member and is joined by Jean Michel Herrissé from AGREF and Jo Bedford from GCSAI. Tommy Lindelof is appointed Honorary Administrator and Dean Cleaver Honorary PR Officer. Mid-afternoon brings a press briefing where Scott announces our major competitions and awards for 1999. Then I link up with Sami to ensure that preparations for

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Above: Showaddywaddy gain a new recruit in the shape of BIGGA's very own, Sarah Sowerby

Right: The Banquet sponsors, Stylo Matchmaker line up for a photo call



the great social event of the year are complete, the BTME banquet. The sense of anticipation has been growing throughout the day. This year is a rock 'n' roll theme and the setting looks good with pictures of James Dean, Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe et al adorning the walls. The jukebox is keeping the workers happy as they set up for the evening ahead while in reception guests will be welcomed by the front and back ends of a Chevrolet and 1950's traffic lights. It is surely going to be a fun night! 6.30pm and a brief visit to the Chairman's pre-banquet reception for VIP guests. Then a final check on banquet arrangements. At 8pm it is underway and just before 10pm I introduce the Chairman to say a few words having for my part already declined to undertake a repeat performance of the ding-a-ling song!

On time at 10pm Showaddywaddy duly appear with a full blast of the dam busters march as they tune their instruments. They haven't found the secret of eternal youth since their heyday in the 70s but their professionalism abounds in a great performance. Within minutes the dance floor is engulfed and yours truly does not sit down again until the performance ends. I note the number of ladies dancing the night away and reflect on the ever-increasing female presence at the BTME - a most welcome development and a far cry from the early days when they could be counted on one hand. The exhibitionists (if you see what I mean!) are in full flow and I fear for the safety of one or two of my staff! Welcomed back for an encore, the final number is Mony Mony and lo and behold my PA, Sarah, is up there with them strum-

ming a guitar and joining in the vocals. Truly a night to remember and thanks to Stylo and particularly Managing Director Trevor Walker for their much appreciated sponsorship of the banquet. Not a night for going to bed either unless you are staff on duty next morning. I give in at 2am.

#### Friday January 22

The pace is slower particularly among those who have been there since Sunday. Friday morning I always find quite enjoyable. Less traffic in the halls, a sense of "end of term" and more time to talk informally with visitors. I always think that those attending on the Friday get to see who they want a little quicker and probably succeed in getting done the business they set out to do. It is winding down at 1pm and goodbyes are said for another year. It has been a great start to 1999 and already there is much talk of BTME 2000. At 2.30pm I meet with staff for a quick debrief. Exhaustion has set in and I think most will sleep for the weekend. Thanks to everyone who supported BTME this year and particularly to our exhibitors.

#### And finally...

It's the Monday after and we are already thinking about BTME 2000. With an expanded exhibition and our educational theme of 'Greenkeeping Past, Present and Future' it is going to be a very special event. Come for the week, 17 to 21 January. I look forward to seeing you there. By the way, any ideas for our banquet entertainment next time around...?

