



# Happy Harrogate

Record Education numbers; Packed Halls; Happy Exhibitors. That is probably the best way to sum up Harrogate Week 2007.

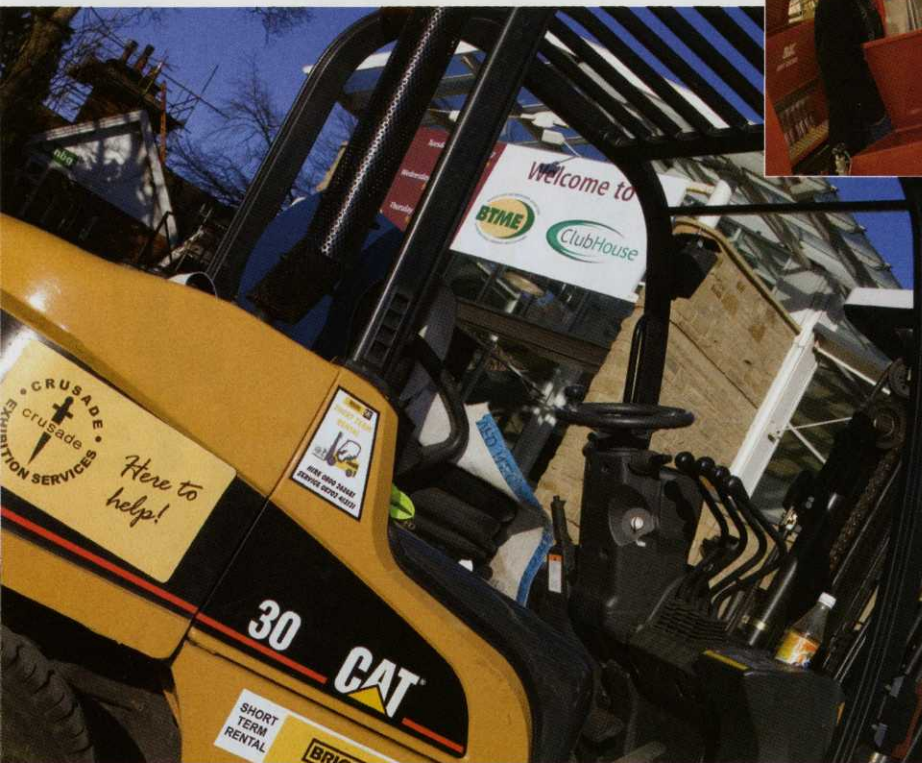
There was a genuine upbeat feeling with everyone who made the effort to attend the week with many exhibitors doing some brisk business – not just leads, but sales as well.

The overall attendance figure was 6653 for the three days with education and networking at the forefront of the minds of those who attended and you can be sure that they returned home as satisfied and fulfilled as those exhibitors.

## Harrogate week

# A week like no other

Scott MacCallum takes you through a week like no other on the BIGGA calendar.



No detail is overlooked in making a product shine

## SUNDAY

It's not often that you put in a little more time and effort and still feel you are coming up short but Harrogate Week is one of those. I arrived at about 6pm on Sunday evening, ready for the Association's biggest week knowing that some of my colleagues – namely John, Ken, Pauline and Sami - had been there, working hard since Saturday.

One of the great things about Harrogate Week, and there are many great things, is the opportunity for BIGGA staff to show how good they are at working as a team. As you probably know the entire week is organised and run by the BIGGA staff – we don't employ specialist companies thus ensuring all money made can be ploughed back into the Association – and it's great to know that everyone pulls together to ensure it all runs smoothly. The bulk of the staff arrived on Monday morning with everyone knowing exactly what was expected and happy to go that extra mile if they spotted a job to do or a gap to fill.

Sunday evening proceeded with a meal in Grant's Hotel, not far from Harrogate International Centre, for speakers on the workshop programme which had begun earlier in the day and staff who had been involved in the setting up of the Show. The dinner is always a good way to begin the week and the conversation spanned the prospects for the week ahead to the more specialist areas of expertise brought by the speakers and current affairs in the world at large. However, it was also tinged with sadness with the news that BIGGA Board of Management member, Raymond Day, had died the day before following a short illness.

# Harrogate Week



Harrogate  
week  
Media Centre

The new look Media Centre, beneath Hall A, proved to be a huge hit.



Registration was brisk from early on Tuesday

## MONDAY

Monday and everything moved up a notch. As the workshops continued in the superb Queen's Suite, of the Conference Centre which was first used by us in Harrogate Week 2006, build up in the four Halls continued apace with empty shells turning into Aladdin's Caves before your very eyes. It is easy to underestimate the effort, skill and imagination, not to mention the efficiency, which goes into creating a stand which is a key element to a successful week. Those who excel in that department are more likely to draw the crowds over the three days.

It's the same every year. At lunchtime a tour of the Halls reveals much to be done and the same questions are always asked, "Will everyone be ready on time" and "Who's not arrived yet" but by the close of play on the Monday there is always a calm serenity which descends upon the Halls

My own task, together with Assistant Editor, Melissa, during the day

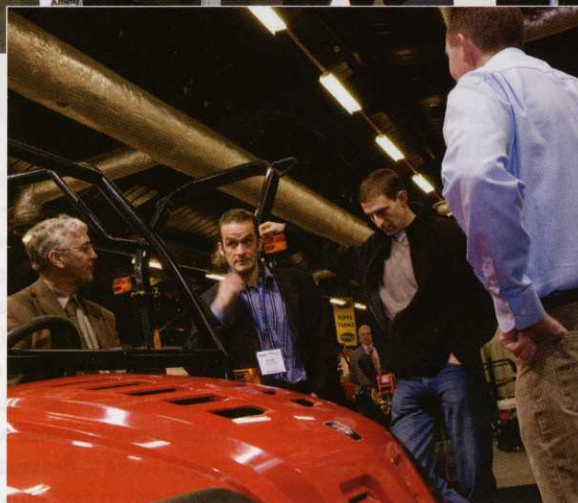
this year was to ensure that the newly-sited Media Centre would be ready for the start of action on Tuesday morning. Located under Hall A, the Centre was a big improvement on the previous year with a large informal area for meeting and greeting and an interview/press conference area towards the rear, complete with plasma screen and sound system, which offered the ideal venue for product launches and press statements. The new press facility was welcomed by the press, PR people and exhibitors who used it and hopefully we have found a new permanent home.

With opportunities to catch up with people wishing to talk about BIGGA business Monday goes quickly and this year the staff headed to Pizza Express where they were joined with BIGGA President Sir Michael Bonallack OBE, a regular visitor to Harrogate Week and a man who enjoys his annual opportunity to meet up with everyone connected with the Association.

## TUESDAY

Tuesday morning, and there is very much a feeling of "Thunderbirds are Go". No matter how detailed the advanced planning there is always a feeling in the pit of your stomach that something has been forgotten. In fairness there usually has been, but more often that not it's something fairly inconsequential.

By the time Richard Whyman had wielded the official shears, in a manner befitting a genuine master of the art, and cut the green ribbon at the door to Hall M everyone was raring to go. From that point – at 9am on Tuesday morning until late on Thursday afternoon – it was one mad frenzy. As the Halls filled the volume of chatter rose as acquaintances were made, friendships renewed and deals struck – by all accounts the level of business conducted during the three days was at an all time high. The Show's latest innovation the Park & Ride service was also doing brisk business alleviating the problem of both a shortage of parking spaces within the town centre itself and the general cost of parking. Users parked in the Yorkshire Showground on the outskirts of the town and could leave their cars there until they went home at the end of the week – for free!





Northern Patrons collect their awards from Ian Holoran



The Brighthouse Bay team who won the BIGGA Environment Competition



The Bernhard's sponsored GCSAA delegation was a wonderful addition to Harrogate Week 2007

With record numbers attending Workshops and Seminars and solid numbers in the Halls, it was hard not to feel the job was done but during Harrogate Week it never is and you can't afford to take a deep breath until it's all over.

There is so much going on. In one corner Northern Region Chairman, Ian Holoran was presenting plaques to Northern Patrons, Aitkens and Vitax with Richard Aitken and Clive Williams respectively receiving and in another Clive Nottingham, of Lloyds, launching a new product.

The presentation of Awards is always an uplifting occasion with this year four new Master Greenkeepers recognised for their achievements - Bob Ehrler, Chris Lomas, Gavin Kinsella and Ken Seims and a further 10 receiving CPD Diplomas. The winners of the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition, sponsored by Ransomes Jacobsen, Scotts, Syngenta and Course Care, received their awards culminating in Brighthouse Bay Golf Club being presented with the top prize and it was pleasing to see the entire greenkeeping team on hand. The last Award was to the winners of the new BIGGA Golf Photography competition with Steven Tierney, from Switzerland picking up the top award.

The day was topped off by the Exhibitors' Reception which gave stand holders the chance to compare notes on the day's events and BIGGA staff a chance to chat with them. It was a real pleasure to meet first time exhibitors John and Christine Hunter, of Hunter Promotions, who had travelled all the way down from Wick to display their hand made course accessories, as well to chat to regular attendees, Andrew Cornes, of Acorn Golf, and Mike Dooner, of Thorntrees Amenities, who, in addition to their regular duties provide the magazine with Section Notes for North Wales and East of Scotland respectively.

From there to another Reception, this time for the BIGGA Scholarship winners hosted by Bernhards, who this year brought 10 GCSAA Superintendents to Harrogate for the first time. The 10 mingled with the latest group who will be travelling across the Atlantic in the other direction to attend the GCSAA Show in Anaheim later this month. With many of the "Old Boys" from previous years delegations also in attendance the Reception becomes a larger and larger affair and, each year the pride in what has been achieved can be seen writ large in the face of Stephen Bernhard and his team. It really does epitomise all that is best about the greenkeeping profession – camaraderie and networking.

## WEDNESDAY

Wednesday is generally regarded as the busiest of the three days and this year it was no exception, rendering it virtually impossible to negotiate the aisles without becoming closely acquainted with a wide range of deodorants. It was gratifying to be spotted by a number of exhibitors just to tell us how well they had done the previous day.

One of the highlights of the second day is the Unsung Hero Award, organised by Terrain Aeration, and Linda Green, ably supported by Carol Dutton, was on hand to ensure that two men could no longer be described as Unsung. Ronnie Bunting, of Ballochmyle GC, received the greenkeeping award and Brian Firman, the groundsman prize, with each received holiday vouchers so they could take a well deserved break.

Later in the day the annual BIGGA Press Briefing hosted its largest ever audience with outgoing Chairman Richard and soon to be appointed Chairman Billy McMillan in attendance, along with John Pemberton. The main talking point was the proposed strategic merger between BIGGA and the IOG.

The meeting was also attended by Geoff Webb and Alex Miller of the IOG so the press had ample opportunity to learn of developments first hand.

As the pace of the day seemed to increase it was straight onto the Queen's Suite for the launch of the BIGGA/AGCS Safety Management System which will be a huge benefit to members of both Associations.

The AGM which followed immediately afterwards in the same auditorium saw Billy succeed Richard as Chairman and welcomed Kenny McKay, of The Belfry, as the new Vice Chairman. It provided the perfect opportunity to present BIGGA's first Chairman, Walter Woods, with a token of the Association's appreciation. Walter stood down as an Association Guardian after many years' sterling service and Richard presented him with a stunning watercolour of his beloved St Andrews.

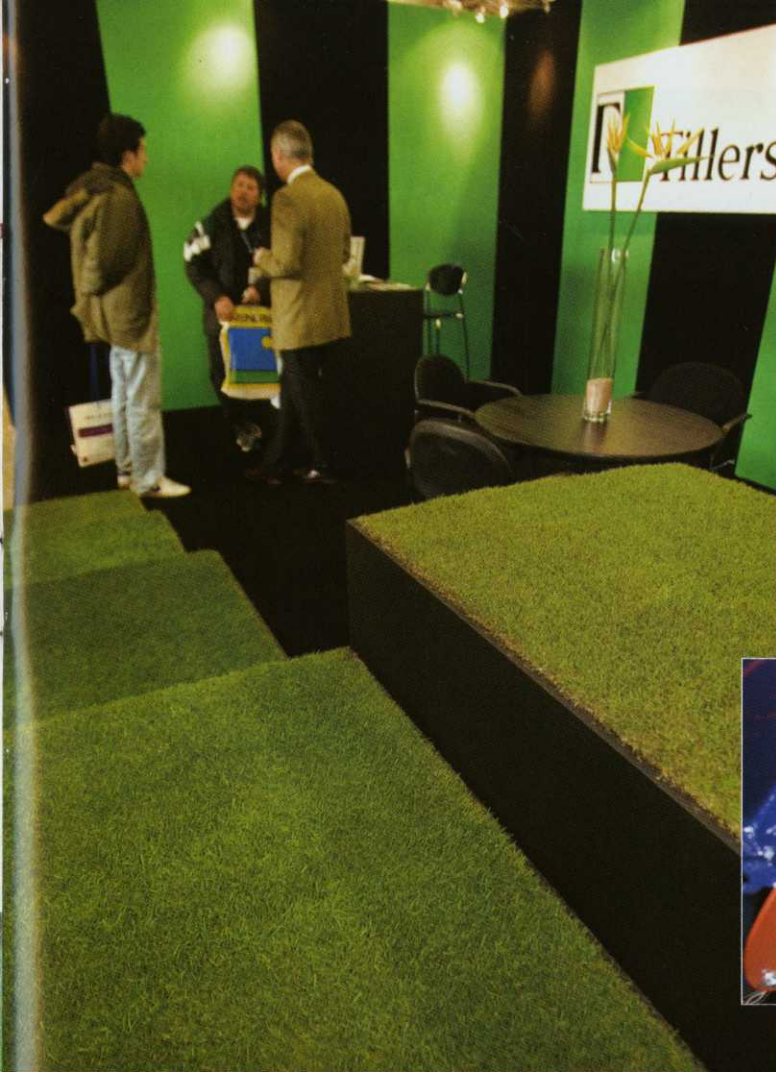
The Past Chairman's Reception which followed on from the AGM was a new addition to the programme but was an extremely convivial occasion and a chance for the guests to relax, enjoy a glass of wine with each other and chat.



John Pemberton and Keith Lloyd, of the AGCS, launch the new Safety Management System.



# Harrogate Week



Comedian Adrian Walsh had Banquet guests in stitches on Thursday evening

## THURSDAY

Thursday always has a slower pace with everyone having the opportunity to catch up with those they hadn't had a chance to see earlier in the week. That's not to say it wasn't a productive day and again it was pleasing to be stopped by exhibitors keen to tell us of the leads they had made and business they had done on the final day.

When the final whistle went the mad scramble to dismantle went into overdrive with the knowledge that it was only a few hours until the start of the Banquet. It's quite something to see the transformation in some people from 4pm to 7.30pm as they move from working gear to glad rags.

As usual the meal provided by the Majestic Hotel was superb and the entertainment provided by comedian, Adrian Walsh, was inspired. Rarely have I heard an audience laugh so much and hopefully the campaign, started by Adrian, to get Andy Whyman, the Past Chairman's son, an ipod will gather pace. The disco which followed had many well known faces from the industry throwing some marvellous shapes on the dance floor. There would have been a few aching limbs the next morning, not to mention the odd sore head!

Overall Harrogate 2007 will be remembered as an enjoyable, well run event but next year if I'm to match the efforts of some of my colleagues, I'm going to have to get there a little bit earlier!