



ALL OF HARROGATE'S A STAGE, AND ALL THE MEN AND WOMEN MERE PLAYERS...

Scott MacCallum butchers Shakespeare just to get a heading for his Harrogate Week review...

Every Harrogate Week is different but at the same time every Harrogate Week is the same. It may sound silly but it's true. It's almost as though BIGGA provides the stage – Harrogate International Centre and the town itself - and the cast are the exhibitors and visitors. The subject of the play we put on is always centred around the fine turf industry but it is the variations each year which makes it all so compelling.

For many, Harrogate Week starts on the Saturday when they arrive in town ready for one of the Workshops which start on the Sunday. With many people still in town on the following Friday it is indeed a full Harrogate Week!

As Editor I leap into action on Monday morning, so I arrived late afternoon on the Sunday ready for dinner with some of BIGGA's Board of Management Members and the speakers who had conducted the Sunday workshops, and those who were about to start on the Monday.

A suitably early night followed – you have to pace yourself during Harrogate Week, a hard lesson learnt several years ago – and I was ready for action on Monday morning.

An early breakfast where the conversation was dominated by the weather - It was absolutely abysmal and made me exceptionally pleased that I'd travelled the night before and not that morning. The torrential rain was to have a major impact on what was the busiest day of the Show build-up and HIC staff did say that it was the worst set-up day they'd ever experienced. The build-up teams were exceptional, however, and over the course of the day the Show began to take shape, although it wasn't until extremely late into the night that everything was completed.

Travelling was also extremely difficult on the Monday with roads close to Harrogate, and in many locations beyond, flooding and making driving extremely difficult. Indeed even the main railway line between York and Harrogate was closed due to flooding for a period.



Initially I assisted Sami Collins and Rachael Duffy as registration provides an excellent opportunity to meet and greet many familiar faces and a significant number of people for the first time.



Once everything was underway I, and then the “real photographer”, Steve, took shots of the Workshops in action which provided us with some unusual potential images for the magazine.

The highlight of the evening was BIGGA’s latest event “Have We Got Views For You!” (below) held in the Majestic Hotel.

Five of the best known and most agronomically knowledgeable personalities in the industry – Walter Woods BEM; Jack McMillan MBE; Andy Campbell MG CGCS; Ken Siems MG CGCS and Stan Zontek, from the USGA, were provided with comfy chairs and an unlimited supply of water and peppered by questions from HWGVFY Chairman for the evening, Roger Greenwood, and the audience.



What an entertaining evening it turned out to be.

Roger kicked off by asking them what their fondest memory was? Andy's was hugging Walter after he'd received the Old Tom Morris Award in America a few years ago; Walter's was his idol, Nick Faldo, winning The Open over The Old Course in 1990 when the course couldn't have been in better condition; Ken's was the first time he'd visited a Maintenance facility at the age of 14, while Jack's was seeing all the faces he'd worked with and was comfortable with over the years. Stan's was a family scrapbook.

Roger followed up by asking about the worst memory, the highlight of the answers being Walter's 1984 Open when the weather turned against him and Ken, who spent a Christmas Eve with his team hand washing 7,000 metres of turf.

The first question from the audience came from Ian Semple, of Old Fold Manor, who asked about the viability of using creeping bent turf in the UK and he was quickly followed by Andy Mellon, of Elmwood College, asking for views on the Disturbance Theory.

The evening raced on with anecdotes for all quarters with Frank Ainsworth, of Hilton Templepatrick GC, from the body of the audience. BIGGA President Sir Michael Bonallack OBE was also in attendance and enjoying every minute of it, particularly Walter's stories from St Andrews when, of course, he was Secretary of the R&A.

Kerran Daly, of Gog Magog GC, asked what lessons the panel had learnt over the years with Andy saying to take more time, not be such a demanding boss and that a career is a game of snakes and ladders, not just ladders. Ken felt that he'd become more humble since the arrival of his first child.

David McIndoe of Killarney, asked where golf would be in the future. Stan said there were more golf courses closing down in the States than opening and that they would renovate old courses and introduce new grasses to them; Andy felt that conditioning would continue to improve; Ken felt there would be more attention paid to environmental management and that "forget oil – water is the biggie!" Walter felt that there were too many courses and Jack said that the "crazy popularity" that golf had enjoyed was over and that it was now Dad's army who were playing the game with an average handicap of 18.6 and no desire to play overly long courses.

After over two hours the evening was over. Thanks went to all participants and it was agreed that it had been a great success.

A great prelude to the opening of the Show at 9am the following day with National Chairman Billy McMillan (below) wielding the official shears and slicing the green ribbon stretched across the door to Hall M, thus declaring the Show open. Billy became the first of what was to be 2800 visitors on the Tuesday.

The first main event of a day, which was to feature Royalty, was the presentation of Awards in the Queens Suite.

Those honoured included the winners of BIGGA's Golf Photography Competition; Hollinwell Golf Club the overall winner of the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition, sponsored by Ransomes Jacobsen, Scotts and Syngenta and the other regional and special winners; CPD Certificate winners and the 47th and 48th Master Greenkeepers – Darren Anderson MG of Abergele GC, and Steve Okula MG, from Golf de Joyenval, in France.





Hollinwell GC, overall winners of the BIGGA Environment Competition award

The final presentation was to the latest recipients of BIGGA's Lifetime Achievement Award the aforementioned Walter Woods BEM and Jack McMillan MBE. They followed in the footsteps of Sir Michael who was BIGGA's first Lifetime Achievement winner and fittingly it was Sir Michael who made the presentation to two very emotional greenkeeping legends.

If visitors felt there was a little more security around HIC on the Tuesday than usual it wasn't anything we'd done. HRH The Prince of Wales was in town in the afternoon to open the newly refurbished Royal Hall. He didn't visit any of the Halls but he did stop and chat with some of the crowd gathered outside which included Lawrence Gale, Editor of Pitchcare, who was rewarded with a handshake. Who said Lawrence would never amount to anything!

With the Halls going like fairs it was a shock to discover that it was now 5pm and time to venture down to the Ransomes Jacobsen Underground Food Court for the Exhibitors' Reception. It is a wonderful new facility which provides plenty of food options and seating for visitors and exhibitors alike.



The next event on the schedule is one which grows every year. It's the Bernhard Reception which has been a fixture at Harrogate Week for the last eight years. A total of 80 BIGGA members have now travelled across the Atlantic to the GCSAA Show or in the case of the first group the Canadian Show as part of the Bernhard-sponsored BIGGA delegation, while in the last two years 20 GCSAA Superintendents (below) have made the reverse trip to Harrogate.



Darren Anderson receives his Master Greenkeepers certificate



Steve Okula receives his Master Greenkeepers certificate



Jack McMillan MBE & Walter Woods BEM receive BIGGA's first Lifetime Achievement award



With many former members attending the reception the numbers just grow and grow and it is a huge tribute to Stephen Bernhard and his team that so many former Delegation members are now prominent members within BIGGA.

The evening was topped off with an admittedly rushed pizza in the company of fellow BIGGA staff and our Board of Management Guardian, Mark Dabell, who had travelled down from St Andrews for the Board Meeting and the AGM.



Wednesday, traditionally the busiest day, witnessed record numbers with 3959 visitors through the doors. The Park n Ride, in its second year, is gaining in popularity as people realise that in addition to it being free and saving on parking charges, it is a simple way of getting to the Halls.

Once inside though, getting from A to B always took much longer than anticipated with human obstacles and familiar faces keen to talk in every corridor.

The Kubota-sponsored Media Centre was a buzz of activity with the press being informed of new products and company initiatives throughout the day.

Close of play brought the AGM where following an eloquent and well prepared proposed by Life member Cecil George, it was agreed that a



Billy McMillan hands over the reins to Kenny Mackay

fund should be set up with the purpose of ultimately purchasing land for the Association to build its own golf course, clubhouse/HQ and Centre of Excellence. Immediately after the proposal had been voted through Cecil presented Billy McMillan with the first donation to the fund. It was during the AGM that Billy handed over the reins of the Association to Kenny Mackay, Director of Golf Courses for The Belfry, who in turn introduced his Vice Chairman, Peter Todd, Courses Manager for The London Club.

From there to the Past Chairman's Reception back in the Majestic Hotel. Among the guests were Gordon and Marian Child, both looking extremely well. Gordon is about to become Vice Captain at Churston GC. He's playing regularly off 5 and he's broken his age a mere 18 times! Even Tiger can't claim that.

The final day witnessed 1882 visitors through the doors over 500 more than in '07 and a few dozen more than in '06.

Among the highlights of the day was the R&A Conference which attracted delegates from clubs all over the country and beyond. The audience of 100 comprised Golf Club Officials, Chairmen of Green, Association



Life members, Cecil George and Past Chairman, Billy McMillan



Duncan Weir of the R&A

representatives as well as a number of Course Managers. It was good to meet up with Mike Harris, Editor of Golf Monthly, who has just agreed to become a Media Sponsor for the Golf Environment Competition to join fellow sponsors, Ransomes Jacobsen, Scotts and Syngenta.

And so to the grande finale and the banquet, which this year was graced by the tallest man ever to visit Harrogate Week. Martin Bayfield is a former England and Lions second row and at six feet and 10 inches is the old man who can make BIGGA's own England and Lions second row, Peter Larter, look a little on the short side.



Martin Bayfield

Martin, now a journalist and broadcaster gave a hilarious insight into the differences between football and rugby and some interesting nuggets from rugby and his previous life as a policeman. With his range of accents he had everyone in stitches and when The Blue's Brothers took to the stage – late replacements for the unwell Diana Ross tribute act – everyone was in the mood to party.



The Blues Brothers

The following morning and no-one could quite believe that another Harrogate Week had come and gone. Breakfast was taken and goodbyes were said and we looked forward to Harrogate Week 2009 January 18-22.

The stage will be the same but the cast and storyline slightly different.

See you there!

EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT MANUAL...

BIGGA's Education and Development Manual has been re-launched with the sponsorship support of John Deere.

The on-line manual provides users with the information they need on recruitment, induction, training and career progression using video clips, written information downloadable documents and useful web links.

"The manual took many months to develop and we feel is one of the most valuable tools available to BIGGA members. The support of John Deere has enabled us to ensure that the Manual is promoted as widely to the people who it is design to assist – the greenkeeper. Our sincere thanks go to John Deere for their support." said John Pemberton, BIGGA's Chief Executive.

"John Deere is delighted to be sponsoring the new BIGGA Online Training & Development Manual," says the company's Commercial & Consumer Equipment Division Manager, David Hart.

"We have been supporting BIGGA's educational activities for a number of years through donations raised by the John Deere Team Championship golf tournament, and we felt this was an ideal way of making a specific contribution in a vitally important area of the Association's work."

The Manual is available to BIGGA members on the BIGGA Website – www.bigga.org.uk



SAD NEWS...

The week started on a very sad note when Ian Cowie, one of the contracted staff brought in to prepared the Halls, collapsed and died while fitting carpets.

Ian was only 34 and the condolences of all BIGGA staff and all who attended Harrogate Week to out to Ian's family and friends.

RECENTLY FORMED...

Duncan McGilvray, Managing Director of enviropro H²O, outlined the aims of the recently formed company during a press call at the Show.

Duncan, a well known greenkeeper prior to his move into the irrigation industry, explained that he and Operations Director, Simon Leathley, were well placed to provide a bespoke service to golf clubs.

“We offer all aspects of irrigation system design, installation service and repair and with a combined 52 years experience of golf course irrigation we are confident that we can assist golf clubs,” explained Duncan.

AMENITY FORUM...

John Allbutt, Chairman of the Amenity Forum, described the lobbying work which had gone on prior to the important Brussels’ vote into possible pesticide bans during a press briefing at the Show.

“We personally wrote to and emailed every MEP in the country and then fielded all the subsequent calls from the MEPs themselves or their advisors and I firmly believe that had a significant say in how the vote eventually turned out.”

John, who was joined by Ken Seims and Gavin Robson, BIGGA’s representatives on the Amenity Forum, and the Forum Secretary Bob Joyce, said that despite the vote coming down in against the blanket ban on pesticides in public much work had to be carried out to ensure that good practice was in place in all aspects of pesticide usage to lessen the chances of the amenity sector being targeted again.





FIVE YEARS OF UNSUNG HEROES

Kester Clarke, Head Groundsman of Ipswich Cricket Club, Suffolk and Tim McCreadie, Course Manager of Royston Golf Club in Hertfordshire are the latest turf professionals to join the ranks of Terrain Aeration's Unsung Heroes, all of whom were invited to attend this year's awards.

Tim McCreadie, nominated by past STRI judge Tim Lodge of Agrostis, along with Royston Club Secretary Sean Clark was praised for his painstaking, ten-year restoration of the course, which is on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Steve Gingell, agronomist and Southern Area Manager for the STRI, speaking on behalf of his fellow judges Gordon Child (BIGGA) and Derek Walder (IOG) said that Tim has done a splendid job working under strict specifications. "As the course hosts both Anglo Saxon and Bronze Age burial mounds, is owned by The Conservators of Therfield Heath and Green, and home to the rare Chalkhill Blue Butterfly he has



had to keep it as 'natural' as possible, while maintaining it to a high, playing standard," he commented.

Kester Clarke, nominated by Club Chairman Graham Denny has turned what was, in 2002, two fields of corn, into a ground, which is fast becoming the envy of other clubs. "Kester has planned and planted boundary hedges, shrubs and trees, installed fencing and spent numerous hours ensuring the grounds and wickets are in immaculate condition for weekend and midweek representative matches," said Gingell. "The club, in the words of the Chairman, owes him a huge debt."

The Unsung Hero Awards are organised by Terrain Aeration in conjunction with their sponsors Pitchcare and Greenkeeping Magazine. The winners receive holiday vouchers, a framed certificate and lapel badge from Terrain Aeration and a cheque for £200 from the sponsors.



Many thanks to this year's sponsors – Ransomes Jacobsen, who sponsored the Careers Fair, Job Shop and Underground Food Court; Kubota, who sponsored the lanyards and Media Centre; John Deere, our badge sponsors; The GTC, who sponsored Continue to Learn and Toro, our bag sponsors.

