



WHAT A GREAT WEEK!

Scott MacCallum takes you through a week at Harrogate

With every newspaper, television and radio station filled with doom and gloom about the world economy it was with a degree of trepidation that I collected my colleague, Melissa, and drove to Harrogate for Harrogate Week 2009.

What would the week be like? Would signs of the downturn be obvious? Would anyone have the money to come? Would it have that old Harrogate magic?

Well, we needn't have worried. All the hard work and preparation paid off. Harrogate Week

2009 was a success. Exhibitors were happy; visitors were there in solid numbers; good business was done in the Halls and the educational workshops and seminars were extremely well attended.

As ever, the week began for some of the BIGGA staff on Saturday, including Chief Executive, John Pemberton – indeed Pauline Thompson was on site from Friday evening so she could be in the Halls first thing on Saturday morning for the hand over from the previous week's show to ours.

What BIGGA hires from Harrogate International Centre for the week are four basic stripped down

halls and the Queens Suite. Everything that goes to dress up the halls and make them as attractive as possible has to be added... and paid for!

It's a little like Disney World, if you get an opportunity to look behind the scenes you'll know that the magic is reserved solely for the areas people are supposed to see.


The workshops began on Sunday with Sami Collins and Rachael Duffy from BIGGA's Learning and Development Department welcoming speakers and delegates from all over the world. Speaking at Harrogate Week is something that many in





Education, education, education...



			
2009 Attendance Figures			
	2007	2008	2009
Day 1	2274	2800	2645
Day 2	3041	3959	3346
Day 3	1338	1882	1647
Total	6653	8641	7638

the fine turf industry aspire to do at some stage in their speaking careers and being invited to be a speaker on the Continue to Learn programme looks very good on a CV.

While the delegates' heads were being filled in the Queens Suite, Halls A,B, C and M were being filled downstairs with the larger companies manoeuvring their machinery into place and ensuring the stand looked as attractive and inviting as possible.

Sunday evening is an opportunity for delegates to head off into town for some well earned sustenance and a chat about the days events while the speakers come together with BIGGA staff and officials for an informal dinner. It's often the only opportunity those speakers get to meet and chat together and the dinner, in the Cairn Hotel, usually fizzes with chatter.

Monday has often been a weather man's dream and an exhibitor's nightmare. In recent years there's been snow, there's been gale force winds, there's been torrential rain. It's then that

you rejoice in the fact that it's an indoor show but everyone has to get themselves into place and the doors to the enormous halls are invariably open to the elements.

The good news is that the weather this year was better than last year. The bad news is that that's not saying much. Heavy rain and strong winds made Monday's chores less than pleasant but as usual everyone pulled together and the race to get ready for the grand opening on Tuesday morning was won.

The traditional BIGGA staff meal on Monday night in an Italian restaurant in town was again graced by the presence of BIGGA's President Sir Michael Bonallack OBE who rarely misses a Harrogate Week. Sir Michael was in fine form chatting to the staff and BIGGA's Chairman, Kenny Mackay, and soon-to-be Chairman, Peter Todd.

An early night was called for and, in the majority of cases, heeded, with a big day, indeed three days, ahead of us.





The official opening of the show: Kenny MacKay cuts the ribbon



Caldy receive the Golf Environment Competition trophy



George Brown receives the Lifetime Achievement award



Daniel Lightfoot becomes the 49th Master Greenkeeper



Tuesday morning and that most important of jobs is down to me – making sure the sheers and the ribbon are in place for the official opening, which is now held at the Hall M entrance. Kenny is instructed to do a few dummy cuts for the sake of the photographer and is then surrounded by some well known BIGGA faces as he makes the final snip. Job done he is given the piece of ribbon as a memento.

Officially underway, the Halls quickly fill and that Harrogate Week buzz begins to permeate the building. It's soon obvious that Harrogate Week 2009 will live up to its predecessors.

Down in the Media Centre, under Hall A, the industry press begin to gather, having travelled to North Yorkshire from all corners of the country. Companies book the Media Centre to give press briefings and make announcements as they know, with all the publications represented in one place, it is an ideal opportunity to push a message to as many as possible.

Tuesday morning is the chance for BIGGA to

pay tribute to its high achievers with the annual Award ceremony. The winners of the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition, sponsored by Ransomes Jacobsen, Scotts, Syngenta and Golf Monthly, including overall winner, Caldly Golf Club, and the BIGGA Photographic Competition winners received their Awards as well as those people who have earned Continuous Professional Development Certificates. Daniel Lightfoot, Course Manager of Bearwood Lakes Golf Club also received his badge and certificate for becoming the 49th Master Greenkeeper. Other achievements are all applauded during the event including Matthew Wormald's Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Award, who is currently studying in the States, and Chris Whittle's presentation of Royal Birkdale for the Open Championship. The highlight for many however was the presentation of the BIGGA Lifetime Achievement Award to George Brown, of Turnberry by Sir Michael, a former recipient of the Award. George, as ever, had the audience in stitches as he regaled tales of his career.



The casino tables proved a hit with the crowds on Tuesday night

Around lunchtime the magazine team and some invited BIGGA members got together for a Magazine Forum to discuss Greenkeeper International and share ideas. It was a well attended, extremely constructive, meeting with over 30 greenkeepers taking time out of their busy schedule and some super ideas emerged. Hopefully you will see these in future issues of the magazine.

Tuesday evening saw a Harrogate Week innovation. Having taken heed of feedback, and knowing that for people to remain in Harrogate for the traditional Thursday night banquet often meant another night's accommodation, the BIGGA Social Night was born and having witnessed such a successful evening I'd bet money – not just the free chips that were available for the roulette, blackjack and poker – that it will be back next year.

Around 350 people stayed for the entire evening lapping up the gaming tables and revisiting their youth on pinball machines and old fashioned video games. There was also a Nintendo Wii with

a massive screen so the tennis, tenpin bowling and golf could be even more realistic.

One of the stars of the show though was the raging bull bucking bronco machine. Not to be put off by having to sign a disclaimer many intrepid cowboys, including my good self risked life and ridicule to ride the bull. Tougher than it looked boasting an extremely slippery hide it bucked and spun and usually chucked the jockey off as soon as the lady operator became a little board. I managed 27 seconds but was easily beaten by respected PR guru, Charmian Robinson, who stayed on for a full 41 seconds before dismounting in an extremely lady-like manner.

The ace gambler of the night was Kevin Stott, of Carnoustie, who won £100 for having the most chips at the end of the night. Second was Elaine Golding, who won £50.

With excellent food and subsidised beer helping to fuel the evening everyone had a whale of a time and many headed off to continue their night in town.



Showgirls greeted guests at BIGGA's Social Night



Ronnie Bunting gets a leg up



Keeping in touch

Wednesday is always the busiest day of the three and this year was no exception. With four halls in operation rather than the five in the alternate years the visitors are more compacted and it certainly helps to generate a superb atmosphere.

The day started with a contract signing involving John Pemberton, on behalf of BIGGA and Jerry Kilby, Chief Executive Officer of the Club Managers Association of Europe. The CMAE has agreed to open its door to BIGGA members to enable them taking the internationally recognised Certified Club Manager (CCM) qualification.

The day continued with more press briefings including a renewed challenge to the press from New Holland at cricket. Last summer the press, in controversial circumstances it must be said, clinched a last ball victory over the men from New Holland and it looks very much as though they won't rest until the result is reversed!

Jon Albutt, Chairman of the Amenity Forum, and Bob Joice, Secretary, gave a very valuable update on the latest vote from the European Parliament



Billy Mitchell, Head Greenkeeper at Perranporth GC, was this year's Unsung Hero

on pesticide usage and announced that they were both to be retiring from their prospective positions. Professor John Moverley OBE, former Principal at Myerscough College, takes over as Chairman with BALI handling the secretariat.



The press take time out in the Media Centre



The Park & Ride proved to be a huge success again this year

The annual Terrain Aeration Unsung Hero Awards are always a joy and no more so than this year with Billy Mitchell, Head Greenkeeper at Perranporth Golf Club, in Cornwall, and Adrian Kay, Head Groundsman at York Racecourse, being recognised.

Billy was nominated by BIGGA Past Chairman, Richard Whyman. Billy has been in greenkeeping for over 45 years and led Perranporth to be recognised as a true links course and a benchmark for clubs in the area. Passionate about greenkeeper education, he was involved at the start, helping Dutchy College to assess trainees, giving his time and travelling expenses free of charge and often providing reference books paid for out of his own pocket.

Billy was supported at the presentation by a huge contingent from Devon and Cornwall. The winners received holiday vouchers and framed certificates from Terrain Aeration and cheques for £200 each presented by sponsors Pitchcare and The English Golf Union. BIGGA supplied the champagne which help to make the occasion special.

BIGGA's AGM was held in the late afternoon and it was the occasion when Kenny MacKay handed over the Chairmanship of the Association to Peter Todd. The meeting ran smoothly with the constitutional amendments going through unanimously.

Past Chairman, Billy McMillan, stepped down and Paul Worster came onto the Board as Vice Chairman, while Gary Cunningham replaced Gavin Robson as Board of Management member for the Midland Region.

Following the AGM it was a quick turn around before the Past Chairman's Dinner, in the Majestic Hotel. It was great to see so many familiar faces from within the Association and many from the wider industry. I sat with Gordon McKillop, of the STRI, Simon Elsworth, of Syngenta, and John Richards and Dave Saltman, of Pitchcare, for the very convivial evening.

Harrogate Thursdays are really enjoyable days. Much more relaxed, it is generally my only opportunity to walk the Halls and catch up with some of the exhibitors I hadn't already seen during the course of the week. This year was no exception and after a BIGGA press briefing where John Pemberton, Kenny Mackay and Peter Todd offered an overview of the week and Peter gave

a background of his life and hopes for his year as Chairman, I made it to Hall M for the first time.

At 4pm Melissa and I packed up the Media Centre, loaded up the car and headed home. The newspapers, television and radio stations were still filled with doom and gloom, but we could not have been more pleased with the way Harrogate Week 2009 had gone.

During Harrogate Week, BIGGA signed an agreement with The Club Managers Association of Europe that could enable course managers to develop their careers and become club managers.

"This is a significant new opportunity for management development and another building block for greenkeepers aspiring to senior management and club manager positions," said John

"In today's job market, just being a good course manager isn't enough. CCM is an opportunity for greenkeepers to demonstrate their skills and professionalism in management and we welcome the signing of this agreement with the CMAE."

CMAE Chief Executive Officer, Jerry Kilby, said: "This is good news for qualified greenkeepers and Master Greenkeepers who have reached a point in their careers where they say, 'What next?'"

"The opportunity to take CCM, which is a globally recognised qualification, means that the step up to general manager level is now a realistic possibility and career ambition for greenkeepers and course managers."

A small number of senior greenkeepers have blazed a trail and risen to prominent club manager positions, including David Roy, at Crail Golfing Society in Scotland, while others have already expressed their desire to move into club management, viewing CCM as an opportunity to prove their professionalism and qualify for top jobs.

To sit the CCM exam, greenkeepers must first attain a minimum number of CCM credits, for which membership of BIGGA plus previous professional education courses automatically counts.

The Certified Club Manager qualification is open to suitably experienced managers and involves a two-day review and examination focusing on key club management disciplines. There are approximately 10,000 clubs with professional managers in Europe, half of which are golf clubs, the remainder being sports, leisure, health and fitness clubs, plus city and dining clubs.

For more information about CCM, entry requirements and to download the registration form, visit: <http://www.cmaeurope.org>

