



A Rookie's Guide to Harrogate Week

You're about to attend your first ever Harrogate Week and are understandably apprehensive about how you will get on. This Rookie's Guide to Europe's Biggest (and best) Indoor Sports Turf Week will help sooth the nerves, according to Scott MacCallum.

It can be a daunting prospect if you are facing it for the very first time. You've listened to countless stories, increasing in frequency and decreasing in believability, as January approaches and with Christmas now behind you Harrogate Week is about to start.

So how do you make the most of trip and what can you expect from your first ever visit to the "Greatest Show in Sports Turf".

To make the most of the week, you will have booked your Continue to Learn programme well in advance securing your place on

one of the popular Workshops and making sure you have a room in one of the many hotels, guest houses or B&Bs. It's always best to speak with your BIGGA Regional Officer—numbers are in the magazine – to see if any block bookings or other arrangements have been made of which you can take advantage. You will have also pre-registered for the week to prevent you from having to queue to get into the Halls on Show mornings.

Getting to Harrogate cannot be easier. Again, speak with your Regional Officer and ask what options are available. It may be that a bus has been arranged, either by

the Region or sponsored by one of the companies within the industry and you can book a place on that either free or for a charge that would beat any other method of getting to your destination.

If you drive, you can take advantage of the Park and Ride Scheme, open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, which enables you to park on the Yorkshire Show Ground on the outskirts of the town free of charge and take a free bus to the Exhibition Halls. It means you avoid having to pay parking charges in Harrogate. Even if you are staying in a Hotel it may be worth considering as some of the





Hotels now charge to leave a car in their car parks.

So you've arrived at the fabled North Yorkshire Spa town, checked into your room and are ready to start your Harrogate experience. What next?

Well, if you have arrived the evening of the night before to be in good time for the start of your Workshop you are in for a treat. A stroll into town for a bite to eat is always an experience. Chatter in the bars and restaurants has a real agronomic flavour and wherever you look you will see familiar faces – colleagues from your Section or people who you recognise from the magazine or website.

But you will be no outsider. Harrogate Week is the most inclusive of all events. No fellow turf professional is left to sit in the corner of a room alone, at least not if they don't wish to be. However, an early night is a smart move as you will wish to be on top form for the start the next day.

In the morning, after a hearty Yorkshire breakfast, you will make

your way to Harrogate International Centre and the Queen's Suite where your Workshop will take place. Once you have registered with the BIGGA staff and grabbed your first coffee you will meet your tutor and your fellow students.

If you haven't met any of them before you can be sure that by the first break you will be firm friends – such is the togetherness created by approaching a new challenge or task as a group. From that moment on Harrogate will never again be a daunting prospect but merely one which sits penned into your calendar until the final date has been ticked off and you can meet up with your friends again.

With CPD points on offer, and the quality of the trainers used at Harrogate Week top notch, the Continue to Learn programme is unrivalled in Europe and by taking advantage of the Workshops and some of the excellent Fringe Seminars which have become a part of Harrogate Week in recent years a career boost is often a consequence.

Having made new friends during



the day and met up for dinner in a local restaurant that evening you are more than ready to "Hit the Halls" the following day.

With so much to see it is best to take a little time to sit down and plan your campaign.

Another useful tool in this regard is the Harrogate Week website – harrogateweek.org.uk – where you can pre-register but where you can also take advantage of the Product Guide which will give you a guide as to what you will see in the Halls.

There is a load of useful information on the site and it is well worth logging on regularly to see what's new.

Once you have arrived you can use the map you are provided with either at the Show or in your magazine and find out in which of the Halls the companies you wish to see are located and plan the order in which you hope to visit them.

There is a good chance the person you wish to see will be involved with someone else when you get to their stand but it is still best to plan your visits. An ad hoc approach can





easily lead to you missing out a chunk of the show not going on to a stand you had originally intended visiting.

A show is the ideal opportunity to clinch a deal for a piece of machinery or product as often there are "Show Deals" available which can end up saving you quite a bit of the club's budget. Seeing representatives at Harrogate is also an ideal opportunity to set up demos at your place of work for later in the year when you will be able to see the machines operating in their natural environment.

As you will have discovered from earlier in your week much of what you take for the Week is what goes on "après show" in the bars and restaurants but it is wise to ensure that you don't burn the candle at both ends and are sharp for the following day.

More often than not your visit will have been funded or part-funded by your employer and you owe it to them to make as much of your show hours time as you possibly can.

That said it is worth considering the BIGGA Social Night on the Tuesday night which is a fun evening. This year is has a Wild West theme, featuring gaming tables with a prize to the person who accumulates the most chips, arcade games and a bucking bronco.

When you return to your place of work it would be a wise move to write a report on your Harrogate trip outlining what you learned from your Workshop and how it will benefit you in your day-to-day life and what you gleaned from your time in the Halls – new machinery or materials that may improve the product for which you are responsible.

It may be something that you can put into your budget once you've given it a successful demo.

The last thing you will see when you leave the Halls will be the dates of Harrogate Week 2011 and you will be desperate to return with all your new found experience

Tips for Harrogate Week

- *Speak with your Regional Officer when you decide to attend Harrogate to see if there are accommodation and/or travel opportunities in place.*
- *Make sure you book any Workshops you wish to attend early to avoid disappointment. Popular Workshops do book up extremely quickly.*
- *Pre-register. It will avoid you having to queue up at the Halls when the Show starts.*
- *Take advantage of the Park and Ride Scheme if you are bringing a car to Harrogate.*
- *Don't be shy. You are only the "Newbie" for a very short time and everyone is very quick to bring you into the fold.*
- *Decide upon whom you wish to see during the Show in advance and plan accordingly. Wandering around looking for a company wastes time and there is a lot to pack in during Show days.*
- *Write a report for your employer on your return identifying what you learned and have taken from your time away in Harrogate.*
- *Enjoy yourself! But always remember the reason you are in Harrogate.*