

Harrogate diary

Steve Castle runs through the week at his first ever BTME...

SUNDAY

My first BTME began early on the Sunday morning. After briefly helping out with registration I joined a group of ten greenkeepers – mostly deputies - in the ‘So You Want to be a Golf Course Manager’ Workshop in the Queen’s Suite on the first morning.

This two-day Workshop was jointly presented by Peter Jones, Principal Consultant at PJA Golf Consultancy and Kevin Munt, Principal Consultant at KMGc – and they immediately instigated an ‘ice breaker’ where the delegates interviewed each other to put everyone at ease.

What struck me immediately was how forthcoming and honest the attendees were. All manner of subjects – from politics in the golf club to health and safety issues – were discussed within the framework of a series of modules designed to prepare you for a Course Management role. It was well-paced and highly informative – and the group of ten meant that all the attendees mingled well and had considerable input.

After the sessions Craig Wilson, greenkeeper from St Andrews Links Trust, said: “It’s been very worthwhile. The presenters were very well-prepared and I can take so much knowledge from it as I progress my career.”

All the other sessions covered a huge range of the skills required at all levels of the industry including ‘Improve Your IT Skills’ hosted by Jacky Lowe from Training Gem, ‘Irrigation System Design and Water Management’ with Adrian Mortram of Robin Hume Associates and Frank Newberry’s ‘Moving Into Management’.

The evening saw turf professionals from across the world mingling with BIGGA HQ staff at Albert’s restaurant.

Remarkably, the restaurant was marking its final night of business. It was a microcosm of BTME – board members mingling with greenkeepers, international turf experts and motivational leaders. I took the opportunity to have a quick chat with Curtis Tyrrell, who revealed he had thrown himself into British culture by sampling curry, then fish and chips for the first time in his life!

MONDAY

The Workshops continued on Monday and overnight snow did not deter greenkeepers from across the UK attending the third Turf Managers’ Conference – held for the first time outside the main Halls at The Crown Hotel, a mere snowball toss from the Harrogate International Centre.

Some delegates showed superb commitment to drive long distances to Harrogate in tricky conditions and were rewarded with an opening presentation from the charismatic Dr Thom Nikolai concentrating on lightweight rolling.

Meanwhile, the HIC was a hive of activity as the final preparations were made to transform the previously empty halls into a suitably impressive showcase for new products and machinery.

It was remarkable to see how physical exertion and meticulous planning combined as contractors worked throughout the afternoon and early evening to build stands, roll in machinery and prepare for the biggest turf exhibition in Europe.



TOP: Kevin Munt and Peter Jones present the ‘So You Want to be a Golf Course Manager’ Workshop

SECOND TOP: Adrian Mortram in full flow at the ‘Irrigation System Design and Water Management’ Workshop

ABOVE: The Soils for Fine Turf workshop

RIGHT: Final preparations on the Wiedenmann stand

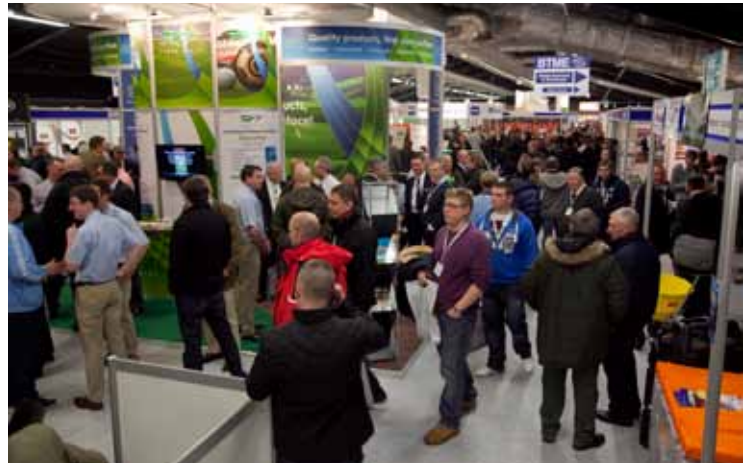
RIGHT: A final lick of paint at the British Seed Houses stand





The BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition

Tuesday 22 to Thursday 24 January 2013



TOP LEFT: BIGGA Chairman Tony Smith opens the exhibition with CEO Jim Croxton and Vice-Chairman Chris Sealey
LEFT: A packed press briefing on the Everris stand



BELOW: Myerscough College Stand
RIGHT: The impressive hall and dancing the night away at the BIGGA James Bond Evening

TUESDAY

As the education continued, BIGGA Chairman Tony Smith cut the ribbon to officially open the exhibition itself – joined by Vice-Chairman Chris Sealey and CEO Jim Croxton. He would later describe as one of the “greatest honours” of his life. Visitors immediately poured into the halls, with a real buzz developing through the morning as hundreds of greenkeepers, exhibitors and all manner of turf industry professionals mingled to talk business, examine new and exciting products, or catch up over a quick coffee.

The Media Centre – lighter and more spacious due to its new home in Hall E – swung into action with a packed schedule offering the likes of Syngenta, Headland Amenity, Charterhouse and Rigby Taylor the chance to showcase new products and initiatives. Personally, I was rapidly realising that snatched half-conversations were likely to be the best way to network this week as people busily moved through the halls.

After a successful yet tiring day, a celebratory evening was required and the main hall at the Old Swan Hotel – the BIGGA team’s base for the week – was transformed into an impressive 007-themed arena.

The ‘Golden Girls’ proved predictably popular, as did the professional dancers and the excellent meal. As the evening progressed various curses could be heard emanating from the busy gambling tables – fortunately no real money was frittered away.

For the more competitive, a virtual Aston Martin driving game was also on show with a few controversial corner cutting manoeuvres resulting in the odd ‘road rage’ incident on the track!

Top gambler proved to be Helen Russell – wife of Geoff from Golf Business News – who won a bottle of champagne. She narrowly pipped Carl Chamberlain from Rigby Taylor. Fastest lap on the driving game – also scooping a bottle of champagne – was Phil Chadwick from Bailoy Irrigation Controls.

WEDNESDAY

With the roads clearing and snow warnings vanishing, the middle day of the exhibition saw things really accelerate in the halls. I attended a packed media briefing mid-morning on the Everris stand and was genuinely staggered to see how busy the halls had become, with some visitors having to jostle for space. As Lee Price from Myerscough College commented – the halls were “saturated” as unique visitors arrived joining those who were returning for a second day.

The evening saw success rewarded at the STRI Golf Environment Awards dinner at the terrific Hotel du Vin, while the hardier visitors continued enjoying the restaurants, pubs and bars of Harrogate. It’s no exaggeration to say the local economy enjoys a considerable boost when BTME rolls into town.

THURSDAY

Traditionally the quietest day, visitor numbers held up in comparison with previous years and with



ABOVE: From the BIGGA James Bond Evening:
TOP: Are you feeling lucky?
ABOVE: Drama on the virtual track



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no activity in the Media Centre it gave me a chance to speak to some of the exhibitors to gauge the mood. I was pleased to see many still busy and deep in conversation with visitors, although I had chance to grab a quick chat with Richard Fry of Rigby Taylor, who pronounced himself "very, very happy" with how the week had gone.

Another feature of BTME 2013 was the proliferation of international visitors – statistics showed 10% of delegates had flown in from overseas reinforcing the association's claim it was truly a global show.

It was a tired but happy BIGGA team that slowly returned home after the event which the rest of the year always leads up to. There was a real feeling of a job well done – but it would be foolish to be complacent. Trade shows must continue to evolve, and the hundreds of comments gathered this week – both positive and negative – will be taken on board as preparations begin for what promises to be an even bigger show next January.



Exhibitors thrilled with BTME

121 exhibitors travelled from far and wide to BTME 2013. The staggering variety of exhibitors is unsurpassed in the turf industry – from colleges to major machinery companies, from sustainability and charitable organisations to golf art stands. I finally took the opportunity to tour the halls as the exhibition due to a close on Thursday and was amazed to see the variety of stands, products and items on offer.

We were very grateful to Baroness – who were located close to the BIGGA stand in Hall B - for sponsoring the promotional bags and lanyards and it was clear that they were enjoying a successful BTME.

Baroness Managing Director Ian Kerry, below, said: "I can honestly say it's been a fantastic show. We've had quality visitors expressing genuine interest, for example we've had enquiries about demoing some of our products in February with a real view to buying in March and April.

"The exhibition really is complemented by the education BIGGA put on, which in my opinion is the pinnacle of the turf industry, it attracts greenkeepers who then attend the exhibition later in the week."

Thanks to all the exhibitors who defied some difficult travelling conditions before the exhibition to make the journey to Harrogate. For more exhibitor viewpoints, please turn to page 26 where Jim Cook speaks to several at the show.





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Exhibitors in pictures

A snapshot of the exhibitors on show in the packed halls of the Harrogate International Centre

