

MISCELLANY

## BIGGA – 2000

*By Lyle Christopherson, President, Wisconsin Turf Equipment Corporation*

The British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association held its annual BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition & Educational Seminar Programme January 24 – 26, 2001 at the Harrogate International Centre, Harrogate, England.

This fall I attended a joint National/Smithco/Turfco dealer meeting in the Twin Cities. I was taking part in the most enjoyable part of the meeting – sitting around taking part in our favorite beverage. As the evening progressed, our conversation grew more intelligent. We got on the subject of trade shows and the vast amount of local, regional, national and international shows that pertain to our industry of turf. The shows cover golf, sports turf, parks, landscape, schools, sod growers and more. We all were discussing our favorite and notable shows. Bill Kenny of the Smithco Co. was telling of the BIGGA Show. While it is not the biggest one he takes part in, it is a very enjoyable show to be a part of. I mentioned that I would like to be able to attend the British show some year. So here I am, some 8,000 plus miles later.

My wife Darlene and I left Chicago's O'Hare Field at 5:00 p.m. Friday, January 19, 2001. We stayed just a few blocks from Buckingham Palace. This is where we met up with our traveling mates. The group grew a little from conception, consisting now of Stan Kinkead of National Mower, Bill Kenny of Smithco, Scott Kinkead of Turfco, and Dan and Maggie Miller of North Star Turf. Also with us were five superintendents and two assistant superin-



Royal Hall, convention center site of BIGGA 2001.



Buckingham Palace





**Old Swan Hotel**

tendents, some of whom were accompanied by their wives. The group now totaled 18.

We met at the corner pub to determine the best strategy for each to absorb as much of London as we could in a short time. Darlene and I chose the double decker bus tour since we had already done a three hour walking tour past Buckingham Palace, Piccadilly Circus, Leicester Square, Trafalgar Square, Westminster Abbey and a walk along the Thames River while we were waiting for the others to arrive in London. The Big Bus Tour worked well as the ticket is good for 24 hours and we were able to get on and off as many times as we wanted. Saturday night we all met at the corner pub again to compare notes.

It was raining on Sunday, so before leaving the hotel I purchased an umbrella. Of course we had many umbrellas at home, but why bring them to London? We boarded the Big Bus and off to Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum and another walk in the rain. At

this point my wife decided it would be nice if she could have an umbrella too! She really didn't look all that wet, but I did break down and purchase a second one.

On Monday Dan Miller and I joined Stan Kinkead, Scott Kinkead and Bill Kenny to call on a dealer at Didcot, which is about an hour north of London by train. We were met at the station by Peter Bateman and Lance Bassett of Allen Power Equipment Ltd. Allen Equipment is an importer, distributor and manufacturer. They explained they sell to approximately 50 dealers that supply some 2,600 golf courses in the United Kingdom. After touring their facility, they took us to a pub that dates back to 1352 AD – The Barley Mow – on the banks of the Thames River. The dining room ceiling was so low I could not stand upright. The building was the only one I would see with a thatched roof.

We boarded the train to York, some three hours north of London, on Tuesday. We toured the York Ministry, built between the years

1291 and 1350. We also found a very unique pub in York for lunch. Pub hunting became one of the highlights of the trip. From York we boarded a small two-car train to Harrogate – standing room only! We checked into the Old Swan Hotel (note: heavy on the old part of the name). Dan Miller and I had made arrangements to have dinner with Harold Pinto, President of Textron UK. We were also invited to the Textron Dealers awards banquet the following evening. The guest speaker for the evening was Jackie Stewart.

The show itself was similar to but a smaller version of our GCSAA show. Along with the normal big three equipment suppliers, there was a heavy showing of deep tine aerators and equipment that is used to remove narrow strips of soil and replace it with drainage sand or gravel while doing minimal course damage. Soil drainage is a larger problem in the UK than here in the States.

From the eyes of a short time observer, it looks like the UK is coming up with some very strict chemical regulations in the very near future.

In a nutshell, most products are the same as at our national show. Most of the dealers are faced with the same challenges as we are here. The superintendent and the greenkeeper are both trying their hardest to turn out the best conditions they are capable of with the tools they are given.

Yes, the world is getting smaller and knowledge can pass around the world in seconds. But yet the more things change, the more they stay the same.

We headed back to London to prepare for the long flight home. ♣