

# BIG Conference 2007

## Challenging the Status Quo

16th-18th May 2007  
Marriott St. Pierre Hotel, Chepstow  
www.bigconference.org

## The Social Scene

When you almost trip over a pair of ducks trying to get into the bar, you'd be forgiven for thinking something strange was going on. When you have to step over a delegate passed out on the grass at 3am you know it's par for the course for a market research conference. But the BIG Conference weaves its own special magic and the idyllic setting of the St Pierre Hotel not only provides the perfect backdrop for three days of learning and discussion, but also for catching up with old friends and making new ones. Guy Browning, always ready with a pithy putdown, might have seen BIG as being "at the cutting edge of ... [LONG PAUSE] alcohol consumption", but Richard Collins put his finger on it when he talked about the "wonderful mixture of business and fun" which is the hallmark of the annual event.

The Conference couldn't take place without our generous sponsors, and this year it was Ciao who kicked off proceedings as sponsors of the golf tournament. While the rest of the delegates were making their way down, a hard core of seasoned swingers donned their most stylish V-necks for 19 holes of fiercely contested competition. Jason More was proud to have made the longest drive, but length isn't everything – "*the only birdie I saw out there was a duck*" he admitted later. By 4.30pm the winner, Richard Collins, was sinking his final putt in a round of 73.

Travel is a thirsty, hungry-making business, and delegates arriving in the evening were welcomed with drinks, courtesy of *Munro Global*, in the St Pierre Suite foyer. After-dinner entertainment took the form of a quiz where cries of, "*Does anyone speak fluent German?*" were interspersed with secretive meetings on the terrace to trade answers to fiendish anagrams posed by *Critical*, the organisers and sponsors. "*Woman Hitler*" anyone? Yes, of course it's "*Mother in Law*"! But all agreed that the prize for best clue was 'Twelve plus One' which, unscrambled, as we all know, becomes 'Eleven plus Two'. Winners 'the threesome' celebrated over a refreshing round of crème de menthe while losers berated themselves for mistaking a Scandinavian capital for "the place where the Pope lives".

Sore heads and Web 2.0, the first session on Thursday morning, might not make the best bedfellows, but *Research Now* were on hand with coffee and bacon butties to soak up any traces of the night before, as they were throughout the conference breaks. After a drizzly first evening, the sun got his hat on and smiled on the St Pierre – lunch was an alfresco affair complete with barbecue and silver platters. Ducks pootled around while delegates digested their coleslaw, and those who opted to sit out an afternoon session soaked up the sun and traded jokes on the terrace for the next few hours. Others took advantage of a quick massage or pedicure in the health centre.

Half-cooked and half-cut, a gaggle of spectators and aspiring Andre Agassis took to the tennis courts for *Pulse Train's* all-comers tournament. Birthday boy, Duncan Wells, had decided to make up for any lack of practice by turning up in dazzling whites in an attempt to confuse the opposition. But quality would out, and there was serious competition in the form of *Jigsaw's* Ann Morgan, a former Wimbledon Junior, who won the women's competition and Richard Collins of *Pulse Train*, the men's winner. All suspicions of a fix, given that his company sponsored the tournament, were set aside by Trevor Wilkinson, who not only worked out the scores on headed hotel paper, but also kept us entertained with his bawdy sense of humour. Pene Healey was clearly excited to be asked to "*pick a man you haven't played with before*".

Thursday night was Conference Gala Dinner night, with wine kindly selected, re-labelled and supplied by *Kudos Research*. Forty raffle prizes (thanks to all those who generously pitched in – there were too many to name here) were distributed by Steve Wills, doing his best gameshow host act. A pink Nokia phone was one the highlights, as was a Samsung VCR & DVD player, but there were also signed books, cuddly toys, a murder mystery game and – inevitably – enough champagne and whisky to keep the party going till late. The *Insight Show* sponsored disco saw delegates burning off the cheese course while Neil McPhee swapped

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his camera for a guitar to the delight of all the Proclaimers fans in the foyer. Even the ducks were having a blast.

For everyone who turned in at a sensible time there were about three people still standing in the wee hours and some who still had enough hand-eye co-ordination to be able to raid their mini-bars and keep on going till dawn.

We're grateful to everyone who made the extra-curricular events such a success and 2007 a memorable vintage. Thanks also to all the other sponsors – *Accent, businessvista, Elizabeth Norman International, Excell Business Systems, GfK NOP, Illuminas, NIPO, SKOPOS Market Insight, The Wire and Viewpoint* - who provided cameras, mouse mats, memory sticks and a whole host of other goodies.