

Modern marquees

MARQUEES CAN MAXIMISE THE AMOUNT OF SPACE YOU HAVE TO OFFER



The weather's seemingly constant assault on outdoor events has tested many an organiser's wit to the max. No doubt, each and every one of you will have been affected by the summer weather but spare a thought for the marquee contractors, which have had to cope with the worst of conditions – if it wasn't for a marquee, visitors would have nowhere to stay warm and dry. Waterlogged fields, muddy and wet equipment and traversing vehicles have been the norm this year. Like temporary structures and traditional tents, the marquee market has been extremely active. Michael Bottrill, director of Chichester Canvas, suggests that a busy marketplace can be attributed to the public's appetite for more leisure time and that there is a current trend towards canvas marquees, compared to aluminium-framed pavilions, as organisers look for environmentally friendly solutions.

"At the Goodwood Revival Meeting we are being asked more and more to provide a substantial proportion of our 150,000 square foot plus tentage in traditional canvas structures," explains Bottrill. "This event attracts in excess of over 120,000 people and recreates racing from a past era. The exacting

brief on our tentage is for a high proportion of our supply to feature cotton canvas covers, exposed wood poles and natural rope. These tents are then often themed in World War II regalia and serve as restaurants and bars for the public and press attending the event. Evocative tent names such as Spitfire, Hurricane and Lancaster stir the public's memories of the era.

"As part of our contract we also supply aluminium pavilions, but this unique event looks to unique tentage, which is slowly returning to popularity both in the event and wedding markets. We all know frame tents still rule at events, but the re-emergence of traditional canvas tentage as exemplified in this event is a trend that cannot be ignored."

Use your imagination

According to Lee Harvey, operations director of Piggotts Company, the modern design of quality clear span structures means that marquees can now be used for all types of events. The only factor, which limits their use is imagination. "Traditional shows and events are focusing more and



more on quality and are moving away from cheaper traditional marquees favouring suppliers of quality clear span frame structures capable of undertaking large scale events," explains Harvey.

Piggotts were contracted to supply in excess of 20,000 square metres to the recent World Scout Jamboree – Centenary of Scouting event at Hylands Park. A number of clear span structures were used, everything from a simple three metre by three metre up to a 40 metre by 55 metre warehouse. Once again, the weather conditions stretched the 25-man crew as the rain caused issues with the ground conditions from day one. Whilst build schedules were produced for the entire month-long build period, they were adjusted almost daily to accommodate for the rain.

Perfect facilities

This year, Piggotts has also been involved in a number of sporting events, providing marquees for the Tour de France on its first visit to London, the Festival of Speed at Goodwood, the opening of Chelsea Football Club's training academy, as well as supplying an 800-seater marquee for Manchester United FC at the FA Cup Final.

Marquees

The use of marquees within the sporting events and hospitality arena in particular has meant an increase in business says Paul Limb, sales director, Mar-key Marquees. Likewise, GL events Owen Brown is enjoying similar success within the sporting arena as marquees provide organisers with the ability to entertain large crowds in large outdoor spaces. Financial advisors Investec has supported English rugby since 1998 and it currently sponsors The Investec Challenge Rugby Matches, which see England take on touring sides at Twickenham. In August, England played matches against Wales and France in what was a climactic occasion as the teams prepared for the Rugby World Cup.

Twickenham Experience approached Owen Brown to construct a luxury hospitality area available for VIP guests attending the Investec Challenge matches at the ground. The solution was to provide an elite hospitality marquee for VIP guests, which comprised an eight metre by eight metre mercury structure entrance hall leading into a 16 metre by 30 metre main structure. The front side of the main area was glazed giving guest optimum viewing and natural light, as were two-thirds of the front of the entrance hall, creating a spacious visual effect.



Mar-key Marquees was recently asked to provide suitable coverage for Madison, the UK's largest distributor of branded cycle parts, for an exhibition and hospitality event at its distribution centre in Milton Keynes; two main structures were built to maximise the space available in the car park and involved building walkway areas to miss flower borders and trees. Around 250 industry VIPs were invited to the event, along with exhibitors from all over Europe. The event comprised a hospitality area where food and drinks were served all day, an exhibition area and an internal, blacked out, sound proofed area for seminars. Over 800 square metres were shoehorned into the space available, and the event was such a success that the client has already rebooked for next year.

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RR 62

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