Warm welcome in land of the ice bears

The Chairman and myself were recently invited to attend the Conference and Exhibition in Jonkoping, Sweden organised under the auspices of the Swedish Golf Federation and the Swedish Greenkeepers Association. Four years ago I had the opportunity to address a conference of the S.G.A and one could not fail to be impressed by the progress made in the intervening period. The S.G.A is a forward-looking organisation with a broad vision for the future of the profession and for its members working within it. With a large geographical area to cover the choice of Jonkoping was a good one being reasonably central and accessible. The exhibition was exceptionally well attended and the accessible. The exhibition was exceptionally well attended and the

The Swedish nation is renowned for its organisational and admin-

tractive skills and they were on display in abundance during our visit.

It is not difficult therefore to see just why the S.G.A goes from strength to strength under the capable leadership of President, Per-Olof Ljung and Chief Executive, Tommy Lindelof. BIGGA and the S.G.A enjoy a close relationship and we currently have some 30 Swedish greenkeepers in membership of BIGGA. In meeting some of them in Sweden, their commitment to and enthusiasm for the profession shone through and we can look forward to welcoming a delegation from Sweden to the BTME in January. One interesting aspect is that the S.G.A boasts no fewer than six lady Head Greenkeepers and there is no doubt that the ladies are on the move in Sweden.

In Scandinavia as a whole greenkeeping is making rapid strides forward and it was interesting to talk to a lady Golf Course Superintendent, Elise Jarvinen from Helsinki, who chairs the Finnish Greenkeepers Association. Finland currently has 83 golf courses while the Finnish Association has 1,500 members from each and every one of those golf courses. We still have some way to go in BIGGA! Talking with Tor Svensstad from Norway, the impression again was of much development in that country with the Norwegian Greenkeepers Association gaining in strength. Returning from Sweden, the Chairman and myself had come firmly to the conclusion that the greenkeeping associations in Scandinavia are in capable hands, there is an eagerness for education and training programmes and an outward looking perspective which augurs well for future European cooperation. We were warmly welcomed and to our hosts Per-Olof, Tommy and his wife Helen, herself a Head Greenkeeper, a big thank you is due. We look forward to seeing them again at the BTME.

The Season and the Reason

As I write the season of “mists and mellow fruitfulness” is once again upon us and also the season when the great majority of our members will be asked to renew their membership of BIGGA for another year. BIGGA’s membership has been on an upward curve since 1987 and we now fast approach another milestone of 6000 members. BIGGA is a buoyant organisation with a standing within the game of golf which would not have seemed possible ten years ago. As an organisation it is only as good as its members and the old adage continues to develop on all fronts.

Scepticism may be less of a problem but equally needs to be rooted out. It manifests itself in the “what can BIGGA do for me?” syndrome and a philosophy that feels comfortable with greenkeepers knowing their place. I would urge members, therefore, at a local level to make every effort in this membership “season” to convert the doubters and give us added strength. If we are not providing services which you need please tell us. Initiatives from members are encouraged and please let us know.

If you can identify a worthwhile project or a need that is not being met, please let us know.

Greenkeepers need the backing of a strong, professional Association and please read on within this issue to find every reason for renewing your membership. There is also every reason to convince the sceptics and let’s look forward to an ever stronger membership in 1996.

BIGGA in focus

BY NEIL THOMAS

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO ECOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT OF THE GOLF COURSE

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