

# 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 facilities were excellent. The Seminar Programme attracted a thousand delegates and Billy McMillan presented an excellent paper.

The Swedish nation is renowned for its organisational and adminis-



## BIGGA in focus

BY NEIL THOMAS

trative 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 purposeful 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 includes members from each and every one of those golf courses. We still have some way to go in BIGGA! Talking with Tor Senstad 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.

tional I hope each and every member will find good reason to renew his or her membership. BIGGA essentially remains an organisation in being to serve its members and if any member feels that his voice is not being heard, please let me know and we will ensure that the particular viewpoint is considered within the democratic structure of the Association. However, despite our progress as an Association and the year on year increase in membership, there remains a concern that a large number of greenkeepers have still to join BIGGA and enjoy the benefits of belonging. A good number of golf clubs are still without any BIGGA members. So much can be done at local level by existing members to enlist new members and I would venture to suggest that nearly every current member will know a fellow greenkeeper still to be convinced of the merits of joining our Association.

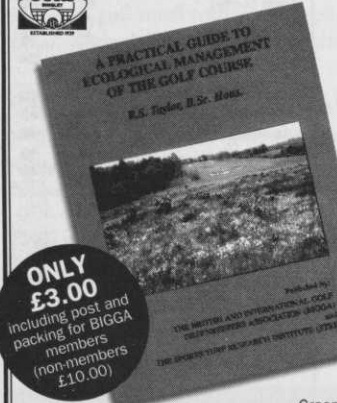
Apathy is, I believe, one of the fundamental problems facing both BIGGA and the profession. Within BIGGA we need to tackle it at all levels for in this day and age an insular, "laissez-faire" approach to greenkeeping simply will not do and indeed threatens the stature of the profession as the game of golf 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 welcomed. Let me give just one example. We are currently seeking worthwhile projects in 1996 on which to expend monies in the Education and Development Fund. 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 as yet unconvinced and let's look forward to an ever stronger membership in 1996.

### 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 remains true that there is strength in numbers. Within the pages of this issue of *Greenkeeper Interna-*

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