Where have all the birds gone?

They didn’t tell me when I took on the role of Chairman that I’d be quite this busy. We’d only just returned home from Harrogate and we were packing up again to head for the States and the GCSAA Conference and Show in Atlanta, Georgia.

But it was well worth the effort. It was a very successful week, particularly from BIGGA’s perspective, as our stand was extremely busy with overseas members and prospective members while we spent a great deal of time fielding questions on BIGGA, and particularly the Master Greenkeeper programme which is very popular with American Superintendents.

There were a tremendous number of British greenkeepers in Atlanta this year. In addition to the BIGGA Scholarship Delegation of 10, and thank you to Bernhard for sponsoring the Delegation for the third time, there were many others there as guests of other companies, including Ransomes Jacobsen.

And it wasn’t just as visitors that we made our presence felt. Eddie Adams, Head Greenkeeper of the Old Course, St Andrews, delivered a fine presentation on revetting bunkers.

I also spent a few hours in the company of Murray Long, Coombe Hill’s Head Greenkeeper, and the winner of the Toro Student of the Year Competition in 2002. Murray visited Atlanta during a break in his studies at the University of Massachusetts which formed part of his prize. He was having an unforgettable time and is extremely grateful to both BIGGA and Toro for making it possible. It is a superb competition and the prize is well worth becoming a Specialising in bunker maintenance, Eddie was ready - tee markers and flag pins painted or renewed.

One of the highlights of the week was the Banquet at which renowned golf course architect Pete Dye was presented with the Old Tom Morris Award. Seeing that to me before we went I would never have believed it. They was lovely to get home and hear all the birdsong.

As I write it is still February and the weather is very mixed. We are still cutting grass occasions and are nearly finished the revetting of the bunkers on both the Ailsa and the Arran courses at Turnberry. It’s the same with the aerating and turfing programmes and although the bunkers need topping up with sand it is too early as the March winds are still to come which will soon empty them again. Those winds will be very handy, though, when it comes to drying the course out and we have our fingers crossed for some early growth to enable the top dressing to smooth out the winter scars and even the putting surfaces.

By now, of course, all your course furniture should be ready - tee markers and flag pins painted or replaced while your irrigation systems should have been overhauled and ready to spring into action. Don’t leave it until it’s needed before finding out that there’s a problem. Planning ahead is the secret.

Good luck with your final preparations for the new season and I’ll keep you up to date with the work we are doing at Turnberry.

George Brown
Chairman