

# Martyn Jones replies...

I WOULD like to respond to Jim Arthur's article 'My patience is exhausted' in the June issue of *Greenkeeper*, in which he viciously attacks me and the contents of an article I wrote for *Golf Greenkeeping And Course Maintenance* (May) entitled 'Where is the tradition in Golf Greenkeeping'. I have provided details of the article, so that readers can obtain a copy of it and familiarise themselves with my message. This is necessary because Mr Arthur, as usual, has completely distorted the facts and attempted to mislead the reader by misquoting, omitting important and relevant points and introducing fallacious statements. On occasions, the distortion is so ludicrous that, if it were not for the fact that some greenkeepers may misconstrue the statements as educational, it would be laughable.

One such statement is that he has "refrained from criticising" me. Does he really expect anyone to believe this ridiculous claim? Greenkeepers and members of the trade who have regularly attended conferences and seminars are familiar with Mr Arthur's outbursts and scurrilous attacks on me and other people. It is considered to be almost a 'trade mark' of the man.

In my article, I did not decry any maintenance procedure. I did not comment on whether they were good, bad or indifferent. However, I did suggest that many of the practices currently claimed as 'traditional' are NOT traditional and that many of the criticisms of 'American' greenkeeping are unfounded and inaccurate.

Mr Arthur states that some form of worm control has always been practised. True, but does he really think that we should, therefore, consider all worm-killers to be similar and ignore the impact on the environment of such toxic chemicals as Lead Arsenate and Chlordane? In their turn, each has had a significant effect on the turfgrass environment and cannot, and should not, be lightly dismissed in this way. Chlordane is not a 'tradition' in greenkeeping and environmentalists are very concerned about its continued use. But then Mr Arthur may dismiss these people as a 'manic minority,' a term he is fond of using about people who do not entirely agree with him.

Similarly, Mr Arthur implies that deep, frequent slitting during the winter months is traditional because some form of aeration has been practised for many decades. Such a claim is as illogical and irresponsible as a claim that a motor car is no different from a horse-drawn carriage because they are both forms of transport.

While on the subject of aeration, Mr Arthur misquotes me, as he so often does, whether deliberately or unintentionally, and informs the reader that I state that "soils should never be aerated unless they are absolutely dry." Unfortunately, space does not permit me to discuss the question of aeration in detail, but clients who are familiar with my advice will know that I place great emphasis on aeration and that I go to great lengths to explain the timing and methods that should be adopted.

I doubt that Mr Arthur's dogma would ever permit him the time to listen to what I say and, therefore, I am not surprised that he misquotes me. However, I find it laughable that he should patronise the reader with a comment such as "No one disagrees with the fact that details and even methods are a matter for personal choice and debate."

I do not accept that many of the so-called 'traditionalist's' claims and methods are traditional. I believe that such claims distort the truth, misinform and confuse the reader. My article was not aimed at any individual but, if Mr Arthur has decided to wear the cap, then he should debate the point by demonstrating that his methods are traditional. Instead, he concedes that "there has always been a cyclic pattern, since greenkeeping began." It is illogical to claim that traditions have been established in cyclic patterns.

Irrigation is an excellent example and Eddie Park clearly supports my view that there has not been a tradition because, in his article in the same June issue, he provides a comprehensive history of irrigation 'theories,' with all the changing opinions.

If Mr Arthur has constantly advocated his present thoughts on irrigation, they must have been in conflict with his superiors at Bingley because, as Eddie Park points out, "R.B. Dawson was recommending as much as four gallons per square yard two or three times per week." Tradition cannot be established when such conflicting opinions abound.

One statement in Mr Arthur's article I strongly refute is that, at one course where I advise, my methods have resulted in a 100 per cent annual meadowgrass sward and that, if it were true, I have stated that it "does not matter." I consider *Poa annua* to be a most undesirable and pernicious weed species but, possibly unlike Mr Arthur, I am sufficiently patient to adopt a process of gradual elimination, while ensuring an acceptable turf density during the eradication period. I do not agree with inflicting an extreme attack of 'Arthritis.'

Mr Arthur does not name the course he claims is now 100 per cent annual meadowgrass but, if he is implying that it is the Wentworth Club, it is a gross distortion of the truth. It is true that, prior to my advising the club, the greens were virtually 100 per cent *Poa annua* but, in response to treatments and over-seeding, *Agrostis* is now very much in evidence. Although Mr Arthur was advisor to the Wentworth Club before me, I have never implied that the 100 per cent *Poa annua* greens were the result of his advice! However, the club was dissatisfied with the condition of the greens and, therefore, they sought alternative advice.

Wentworth stages two major tournaments each year, has a very discerning membership and many hundreds of visitors. I believe that it is the advisor's and the club's responsibility to provide all players and sponsors with good putting surfaces. In this respect, the course has been highly praised and all agree that the surfaces have greatly improved, all the year round.

If Mr Arthur considers me to be "outrageously different" because I insist on factual education without clouding the issue with wildly inaccurate, misleading and dogmatic claims of being 'traditional,' I will continue to be outrageously different. It is not a matter of being 'noticed' or of being pernicky, it is a genuine concern for the future of greenkeeping and a deep-felt desire for good, honest and informative education so that greenkeepers can advance to a highly professional status. I am a great advocate of unbiased and factual education, as opposed to dogmatic and inaccurate indoctrination. I am surprised that Mr Arthur should accuse anyone of trying to be noticed by being outrageously different.

As a response to similar outbursts and attacks from Mr Arthur, Peter Alliss wrote "Get off my back Jim Arthur." Perhaps Mr Arthur heeded the request but, like a hungry leech, he seems unable to survive without attacking someone. Currently, I must be The Flavour Of The Month.