

**To Neil Thomas:**

■ Thanks very much indeed to you and members of the Association for their very valuable service provided at Royal Birkdale during The Open Championship.

Certainly the bunker raking between matches has now become an accepted part of The Championship and makes things much easier for the players and their caddies. This is so important to those in a following match, who find that bunkers have been left in a fair and consistent condition.

We look forward to having you all with us again next year.

**MICHAEL F BONALLACK**

Secretary, Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews

■ Thanks to all those who gave valuable help at The Open, particularly with divoting and bunker maintenance.

All BIGGA greenkeepers were very smartly turned out and a true credit to the Association. I am most grateful and again my sincere thanks.

**TOM O'BRIEN** Head Greenkeeper, Royal Birkdale Golf Club

■ I was most concerned to read in your interview feature (July, pp. 23-25) with Bruce Jamieson, that turf sterilisation using methyl bromide is suggested as a greenkeepers technique to kill *Poa annua* in greens. Gassing greens with methyl bromide by greenkeepers is illegal in the United Kingdom and is also a highly hazardous process.

Special equipment is needed for its application and the chemical may only be used by professional operators trained in its use and familiar with the precautionary measures that must be observed. Methyl bromide is subject to the Poisons Act 1972 and Poisonous Rules 1982.

I consider your article to be lacking by the omission of this important information and request you publish this letter in order that greenkeepers may be aware of the hazard presented by gassing with methyl bromide.

**NEIL BALDWIN** Plant Pathologist, Sports Turf Research Institute  
*The point is well taken, though it should be noted that the article offered the viewpoint of one respected individual and was not intended to be definitive instruction on methyl bromide gassing. Taken further, my understanding is that such operations have only ever been undertaken (by expert operators) in the British Isles on new green constructions prior to seeding, with results that were most encouraging. Its application remains untried on any established British green. Since Clubs are, understandably, reluctant to act as guinea pigs, especially as gassing is viewed by some expert critics as impractical for our climate, perhaps there is a case for official field trials to be held in Britain - Editor.*

■ The R&A Championship Committee have failed miserably in one of their main briefs, namely as the body 'responsible for organising and running the Championships'. I refer to the poor state of a number of greens at Royal Birkdale during The Open Championship.

The main complaints from players were: inconsistent green speeds and differences of colour on individual greens, making them difficult to read.

The question must be asked: has the Championship Committee ignored the advice set out in the R&A's document 'The Way Forward', compiled by leading greenkeepers, agronomists and others concerned with the condition of our championship courses or, as seems more likely, have they succumbed to pressure from the PGA and media? The latter seem heavily influenced by American values including colour and lightning-fast greens.

If the pro. golfer requires putting surfaces that have constant stimpmeter readings, without regard for the location or climate he is in, then surely he requires synthetic turf to play upon.

If we are to take the advice of Payne Stewart and 'tear the greens up and replace with bent grass', the outcome would be greens suitable for play over just four months each year. The remaining eight would be taken up with overseeding, causing constant disruption to the putting surface, and die-back as a result of winter play on dormant grass. I find it incomprehensible that someone earning vast sums on the putting surface knows so little about the surface on which he works.

As the oldest golf championship, The Open has always been played on traditional links where bent and particularly fescue are commonplace. This will remain as long as our putting surfaces are not shaved to meet the demands of a stimpmeter, cam-

# Letters

**■ Hero at the Nationals... yes, a golfing greenkeeper made hero status at Royal St Davids, though not especially for his golf.**

**Two young children were stuck on a sandbank, unaware that an incoming tide was rushing in, the water around them dangerously out of their depth. When their calls for help were heard, our hero played it cool, (twirling round three times in a 'phone booth) peeled off his shirt before calling for the assistance of another to take one child, then swam semi-clothed to rescue the other. Safely to shore, the children were returned to their much relieved mother.**

**Who was this hero? No, not Superman swathed in a red and blue cape but denim clad Ian Holoran of the Cleveland section.**

**Well done Ian, we are proud of you!**

**ROGER AND VALERIE GLAZIER  
Cuddington GC.  
Surrey**

era lens or golfer who cannot change his game to prevailing conditions.

I hope this will not be regarded as pompous, rather a viewpoint from the practical stance of a greenkeeper who understands the burden places on our courses and upon those who maintain them once the cameras and professionals have had their fill.

**BERNARD FINLAY** Course Manager, Portstewart GC.

*This letter also appeared in The Daily Telegraph under the heading 'pampered pros must adapt'.*

■ As the August issue had nothing to say about Birkdale, I feel some statement is necessary about the sorry state of Birkdale's greens for The Open. Surely it is in the interest of every greenkeeper in the country to know exactly what went wrong.

I am prompted to ask this after reading (Tom O'Brien profile July) that the aim was to have firm, fast greens for The Open. To my mind they certainly were not firm!

**JAMES PEACE** Head Greenkeeper, Newburgh on Ythan GC.

Scotland

*Mr Peace implies that Greenkeeper International has failed by keeping quiet. Not so, as he will see in this issue. This magazine, like most monthlies, is prepared and laid for press at least two weeks before publication. The Open finished on the 21st July, one full week after editorial deadline. It speaks wonders for our production team that two colour pages were set aside in order to include my late photo montage of BIGGA's activities at Royal Birkdale, this being achieved without delay to publication day. The luxury of overnight reporting is something that must be left to the national dailies - Editor.*

■ I heartily agree with your astute comments (July editorial) but feel one point of contention was overlooked. The so-called consultant was saying that he would like to see more university graduates overseeing young greenkeepers. Not so, say I, for after finishing college and passing exams these younger greenkeepers need the guidance of older and more experienced greenkeepers, men capable and willing of passing on their wide knowledge of local soil conditions and weather patterns.

As an example, the spring of '91 caught out many greenkeepers with little prior knowledge of the effects of cold, dry conditions on the growing cycle. I myself run a small upland 9 hole course single-handed and by using my knowledge of such spring conditions, often experienced in this corner of the country, managed to keep my greens in excellent condition whilst others were suffering with bare greens.

On a different subject, I think the industry is losing sight of golfers' real needs and that maybe they don't want to play on huge, fancy complexes. My own experience suggests that the ordinary golfer is happiest on a simple parkland course where he can tee off on grass, play two shots to the green and putt out on a good putting surface, all at a reasonable green fee.

**E GRAINGER** Melrose, Roxburghshire, Scotland

*The exchange of information and knowledge is one that BIGGA positively encourages. Perhaps the greatest stumbling block is a reluctance on the part of many greenkeepers to admit to a colleague that they have a problem and could use some guidance. On so-called championship courses, you touch a raw nerve. Having teed up on some architectural nightmares built only for Supermen, especially those in America, I have no desire to return and lose another cluster of golf balls - and my self-esteem - Editor.*

**FOOTNOTE:** *The receipt of so many letters of congratulation for the National Tournament is hugely satisfying and I join with those involved, especially at Royal St David's, ICI and Head Office, in acknowledging the writers concerned. Space limitations prevent the publication of such letters, encouraging and flattering though they are, and so with heartfelt appreciation for your generous comments, we thank you one and all.*