



Letters to the editor are always welcome. They should be signed and carry the writer's address and telephone number. The editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, clarity, libel and good taste. Please send letters to: The Editor, Greenkeeper International, 13 Firls Close, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 2HL

# Letters

## ■ An Open thank-you ■ Credit where it's due ■ Get off the bandwagon

■ On behalf of all the officials and members at Muirfield, I wish to place on record our appreciation of the efforts of the BIGGA staff and volunteers who gave up so much time to ensure The Open Championship ran smoothly.

Having been a BIGGA member for 21 years, I was very proud to be able to share with my fellow members what was for me a very special week.

Once again, many thanks.

**CHRIS WHITTLE**

Course Manager, Muirfield Golf Club, East Lothian, Scotland

■ An otherwise excellent article (Hawthorne & Driver on Environmental Assessments, August 1992) was marred by the unethical failure to mention my name as the golf course architect who designed the Meon Valley course, used as a 'how it should be done' example on all three photographs featured.

The reader is left with the impression that either Hawthorne or Driver were the golf course architects, or that the features shown were always there and merely preserved.

Actually, the greens, lakes and most of the trees were planned by me on what was largely very flat, featureless farmland. Even the wild flowers shown in the rough areas were sown down using a British Seed Houses specially prepared 'Hamilton Stutt Wild Flora Seed Mixture'!

The fact that features at Meon Valley look as if 'they have always been there', I take as a compliment as it shows that I have succeeded in one of my two prime design aims - to provide beauty of a natural kind. The other is to provide the opportunity for enjoyable golf for all standards of golfer.

**J HAMILTON STUTT**  
Poole, Dorset

■ Whilst readily acknowledging the generally high standard of contributions to Greenkeeper International, I am forced to observe that a few articles are in effect merely vehicles to bring some product or name to the readers' attention.

In greenkeeping we have our share of ecology fanatics. The arti-



cle on Environmental Assessments is all too typical of those leaping onto the conservation bandwagon, giving themselves airs and authority by implying that they are first on the scene. This is hard to bear when some of us have been carrying out such surveys for 20 years and more, parallel to those surveys assessing feasibility and viability, partly because we are genuine conservationists and partly because we need to have the answers to planners who frequently have objected to golf courses on grounds of their environmental impact, not just today but for the past 30 years! The correspondents' expertise can be assessed in their advice to "avoid the use of bunkers if possible or locate them where they will be unobtrusive".

Doubtless we shall seriously (in contrast to the April fool's joke earlier this year) be asked to dye the sand green. Clearly the writers (are they golfers?) fail to understand that bunkers should be sited strategically to catch long drives from the best players, which stray off line, but are sited so far off the tee that poorer players never reach them with their drives and hopefully carry them with their second shots.

But it is the article on watering techniques to which I and many others take most exception. It is full of demonstrably untrue statements supporting a false theory.

We have had all this before!

Watering more heavily but less

frequently may appear to work in the laboratory but it does not in practice. One statement with which we all agree is Al Radko's comment that "over-watering is the cardinal sin of greenkeeping". Equally we must agree that it is essential to keep the capillary connection between top and bottom of the root zone. Thirdly, there can be no argument that a combination of deep frequent routine aeration and proper root zone specifications to ensure good drainage comply with sensible moisture and nutrient retention is essential for efficient irrigation techniques.

We must assume that management techniques are capable of sensible water control - withholding water in spring until soil temperatures warm up (cold wet greens start growth later than cold dry ones) and then making sure water penetrates fully by juggling longer irrigation periods and aeration. Once that is achieved, the proper method is to water sparingly every night in dry periods to maintain that capillary connection, without over-watering.

Ask yourselves - what is better for grass, periodic torrential thunderstorms or a nice drop of rain at night, every night?

Consider also the practical side. With systems set to apply say up to 10 min/night on full circle (6 min on greens only) on say 19 greens, 18 approaches and 36 tees, it takes an early start to finish the cycle over the night time

period - especially with golfers queuing to start at crack of dawn.

Reducing the argument to absurdity, watering once a week heavily means you have a choice. If it takes 6-8 hours to complete the cycle on a nightly basis with a weekly interval the irrigation period would be 42-56 hours! Even allowing the unproven saving of 20-40% this is still 25-44 hrs. Even watering twice a week means nearly a day and a night. Furthermore, since greens could not possibly take for an hour at a time virtually monsoon conditions, it means one has to devise three or four cycles over the period - obviously impracticable.

What do we do, close the course completely for a day, or water say 6 greens on Monday, 6 more on Wednesday and 6 on Saturday? Thus, six greens would be waterlogged and saturated; six would be drying out and six would be rock hard. How do you play such greens? How do you get the water to penetrate next time on greens which have dried out, except by deep aeration.

Furthermore, suppose you do water heavily as suggested early in the week and by mid-week, we get an unexpected thunderstorm? Gross over-watering is then inevitable, - the essence of good irrigation being finger tip control, efficient weather forecasting, accurate timing and luck.

I agree that "many will scoff at this suggestion". We have heard it all before and I had hoped that the unarguable logic and knowledge of practical men would by now have routed laboratory boffins, some of whom do not even know how to sample greens to measure root-depth and permeability!

Well-constructed and well-managed greens with proper root zones will in fact suck the water down and all we need to do is to top-up each night and make sure what is applied penetrates by routine slitting before it evaporates next day.

Finally little and often is the way all our best courses are irrigated, so your correspondent is apparently the only one of the Army in step!

**J H ARTHUR, B.Sc.(Agric.)**

Budleigh Salterton, East Devon