BIGGA BOARD MEMBER AWARDED CLUB CAPTAINSHIP

Jez Hughes, Head Greenkeeper / Course Manager at Vale of Llangollen Golf Club, has completed an unusual hat trick after being awarded the Captaincy.

Three handicap Jez, who is also a BIGGA Board Member for the Northern Region, has been at the North Wales course for 25 years. His tireless work has ensured that the Championship venue has become one of the best regarded in the area. His father was also a member of the club for many years.

It now means Jez is Head Greenkeeper / Course Manager, Club Captain and BIGGA Board Member at the same time.

Jez marked the occasion with a drive at the first followed by an event in the clubhouse. He said: “It’s a massive honour, and it’s made even more special by the cold weather!”

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A War De D Club
M e M b e r

LACHLAN SCOOPS JIMMY NEILSON TROPHY

The Scottish East Section’s annual Jimmy Neilson trophy was contested over Gifford Golf Club in December – the fourth year this excellent competition has taken place, this time in a Stableford format.

The winner was Lachlan Innes, greenkeeper at The Renaissance Club, pictured above left, who was presented with his trophy by Jimmy himself (right).

Thanks to Jimmy for presenting the now famous trophy and well done to Lachlan who scored an impressive 19 points for the 9 holes played.

SOUTH EAST GOLF & DINNER

Don’t forget that Walton Heath Golf Club is hosting this event on Friday 8 March. As well as golf at this fine heathland course, a superb dinner will be laid on for all attendees.

Places are going fast so to book your place please contact South East Regional Administrator Cllr Ogood at cllrogood@yahoo.co.uk or call him on 01737 819343 or 07841 948410.

DREADED DANDELIONS NOW IN DEMAND

Dandelions with their long deep tap roots are one of the most tenacious weeds of sports turf. Dandelion’s low profile means the growing points Vuck under the mower’s blades making herbicide sprays essential. However, every ‘dandelion has its day’ with a close relative of English dandelion now a strong candidate to become a source of European-grown natural rubber for tyres.

With natural rubber tappled from rubber trees Hevea brasiliensis) on huge plantations in West Africa and South East Asia now in short supply, international consortia are considering alternative sources, including the milky glutinous sap (latex) in the roots of a ‘Russian’ dandelion (Taraxacum kok-saghz). First prototype tyres made from European sourced rubber were rolled out in July 2012 by Apollo Vredstein’s Indian Dutch Company.

T. kok-saghz is a 12-inch tall yellow-flowered dandelion, native to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. It will grow in a range of soils and climate conditions but prefers the cool conditions in its native homeland and areas of northern Europe with a similar climate.

In addition, to its tolerance of cool climates T. kok-saghz can be farmed as a short term annual crop according to need. The tropical rubber tree requires at least 10 years of growth before being tapped for latex. Furthermore the dandelion’s roots are rich in inulin, a polysaccharide of fructose sugar units. Inulin is peculiar to the dandelions (including English dandelion) and other members of the plant family Asteraceae (Compositae) such as the Dahlia, and is under investigation for use as biofuel.

So where does the English dandelion (Taraxacum officinale) originally called ‘Dente-de-lion’ in Norman French (‘Lion’s teeth’ after its jagged leaves) stand in all this development? As planting now renews the answer. English dandelion contains the ‘same’ glutinous sap in its roots but there is insufficient to make extraction commercially worthwhile.

Not to worry because English dandelion has drawn its teeth in different directions. Japanese scientists complain how English dandelion, having got into Japan, is spreading like fury and hybridising with another close relative, the native Japanese dandelion Taraxacum japonicum called ‘Kansai tampopo’. The more vigorous English dandelion is overwhelming its Japanese ‘cousin’ and the hybrid plants are indeterminate. However, perhaps Japan is being paid back for giving us ‘Japanese Knotweed’ currently spreading across the UK environment including golf courses.

Come spring when greenkeepers deliver the first dose of herbicide to dandelions across the green they should spare a thought for the Taraxacum genus in general, which could soon be supplying the rubber to make the tyres on their wheeled sprayers.

Dr Terry Mabbett