**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 Irvine, 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 held on for all attendees.

**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 Veuk 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 tapped from rubber trees [Hevea brasileni] in 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-saghyz). First prototype tyres made from European sourced rubber were rolled out in July 2012 by Apollo Vredestein’s Indian Dutch Company. T. kok-saghyz is a 12-inch tall yellow flowering dandelion native to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. It will grow in a range of soils and climatic 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-saghyz 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’) from 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

**BIGGA BOARD MEMBER AWARDED CLUB CAPTAINcy**

Jez Hughes, Head Greenkeeper/Course Manager at Vale of Llangollen Golf Club, has completed an unusual hat trick after being awarded the Captaincy 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 fact that I’m a working Head Greenkeeper. It’s terrific to be recognised in this way and I’m very proud.

Three handicapper Jez, who is also a BIGGA Board Member for the Northern Region, has been at the Vale of Llangollen Golf Club, has completed an unusual hat trick after being awarded the Captaincy.

**South East Region Administrator Clive Oggo had this to say:**

Everyone at BIGGA congratulate Jez on his appointment.

“I hit my drive around 200 yards. It ended up in the rough on the left but I’m blaming the cold weather!”

Everyone: BIGGA congratulations, Jez on his appointment.

**MG SCOOPS GCSAA AWARD**

In recognition of their commitment to environmental stewardship, Golf Park Nuolen in Wangen, Switzerland, and its golf course superintendent, Steven Tierney, MG, an international superintendent member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), have been named the overall winners of the 2013 GCSAA/Golf Digest Environmental Leaders in Golf Awards (ELGA).

Steven, an international BIGGA member, is superintendent at Golfpark Nuolen. He masterminded a water-saving project that featured seven miles of drains to divert run-off into irrigation ponds. The facility no longer needs water from nearby Lake Zurich, and it has saved the course $20,000 a year in electricity. The new maintenance facility, due to open in 2015, will be almost completely self-efficient from solar panels and deep-drilled wells to utilise natural heat.

**The local wildlife benefits from a tunnel built underneath the main road leading to the golf course.** Constructed by Tierney and his crew, the tunnel allows amphibians to safely take advantage of the golf course’s natural areas.

“This year’s winners are to be commended for their commitment to environmental stewardship on the golf course,” GCSAA President Sandy G. Queen, CGCS, said.

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