



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.

Three handicapper 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 at 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.

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

Everyone at BIGGA congratulates Jez on his appointment.



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 Imrie, 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 finer 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 Clive Osgood at cliveosgood@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 'duck 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 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' an 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 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-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 officinalis*), originally called 'Dente-de-lion' in Norman French ('lion's teeth' after its jagged leaves) stand in all this development? Apparently nowhere is 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 infertile. 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



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 2012 GCSAA/Golf Digest Environmental Leaders in Golf Awards (ELGA).

Steven, an International BIGGA member, is superintendent at Golfpark Nuolen. He masterminded a water-farming 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 pilings to utilize 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 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. "It is evidenced by our overall winner that the idea that golf courses can be compatible with the environment, and in many cases enhance it, is seen around the world."

FROM PARIS WITH LOVE...

In the last issue of GI Tony Martin offered advice for greenkeepers thinking of working in Europe. Well last summer Ben Kebby left his role as Deputy Head Greenkeeper at Gatton Manor Golf Club to move to Golf de Joyenval – one of the top courses in France. This was despite not being able to speak any French... here's his story.

I studied the BSc (Hons) Turfgrass Science at Myerscough College and worked at various clubs including Royal Melbourne until I applied for the role of Assistant Golf Course Superintendent at this course, which is west of Paris. It was the biggest decision of my life, but the lure of an exclusive Championship 36 hole complex, the challenge, and the opportunity to learn and develop under Steve Okula (who holds both the GCSA and MG certificates) proved too much. So, after long discussions with friends inside and outside the industry and most importantly my partner Francesca, I decided to accept the offer and start learning French!

Golf de Joyenval was designed by R.T. Jones Sr., and opened in 1992. The greens on both courses are sand-based with predominantly Poa/Creeping Bent based sward, whilst the tees are pure Creeping Bent. Both courses are situated on heavy clay throughout, and although the course boasts full fairway and tee drainage, the inherent drainage problems still persist after heavy rains.

Agronomically the course and maintenance practices are very similar to those in the UK, with an emphasis on fortnightly verti-cutting and topdressing alongside core aeration in both early spring and late summer. The main climatic difference to the UK is the disease pressure between the months of October and May.

Fortnightly and even weekly fungicide applications are absolutely essential in



keeping a clean surface, which, alongside the factor of green speed and the finer details, is the most important aspect of the clubs mission statement.

If I were to say the relocation abroad has been easy then I would be lying. Problems with banks, car insurance and pet passports added costs and stress. I took to learning French via audio CDs for a number of weeks prior to the move, but in no way did this prepare me!

This was a complete shock to the system for the initial weeks, with the language barrier and the differences in greenkeeping culture being the most difficult. Unfortunately there is little or no career progression or educational path to follow within France for the trainee greenkeeper and apprenticeships are extremely rare. Most disappointing however, is the attitude towards the position of a greenkeeper, for most it is seen as a last resort.

The UK is extremely privileged to have such a supportive body in BIGGA alongside the various education establishments who offer turf related educational pathways.

Nevertheless, after a few months, I was able to understand and most importantly, be understood. A year on, although far from fluent, I am much more confident with the language,

allowing me to manage the 20-strong team.

By far the hardest issue was leaving friends and family and most importantly for the first three months, Francesca. It was a lonely time, but luckily I was able to immerse myself into the new role alongside the online degree which I am currently studying.

The initial problems aside, the relocation has been fantastic and one that I would recommend to all. On top of everything, it's been a superb opportunity to network and make new friendships.

I feel extremely fortunate to experience and embrace changes that have occurred and do not regret for a moment taking the leap and choosing to relocate abroad.

I'd particularly like to thank Dave Edmondson at The Island Club, Jon White at Morfontaine and of course Steve Okula who has been a fantastic support from the beginning, and of course my incredibly supportive girlfriend.

It is rare to work within an industry that, if you allow it, can take you around the world. Make the most of it.



BIGGA SCOTTISH CONFERENCE ATTRACTS TOP SPEAKERS

The BIGGA Scottish Conference on Tuesday 5 March features an impressive and varied range of speakers from across the turf industry.

To be held at the Carnegie Conference Centre in Dunfermline, registration opens at 8.45am and the first speaker at 9.30am will be Ronnie Malcolm, Management Consultant with Malcolm International, who will be presenting on 'The Role of the Modern Greenkeeper'. This will include feedback from a UK survey of Course Managers.

Grant Frogley, Course Manager at The Roxburghe, follows by exploring how he moved from his role as Deputy at G West to his first Course Manager job and will look at the challenges he's already faced.

Next up will be Chris Haspell, Links Superintendent at Castle Stuart, with a fascinating presentation on the unprecedented landslide that hit the course in 2010. He'll also let the audience in on his future plans at the site.

The afternoon will see Bill Lawlor from the Xact Group lead an interactive Q&A session on 'The Importance of Health & Safety for Greenkeepers' using examples which have been documented in the media. Dr Christian Spring from the STRI – a regular contributor to Greenkeeper International - will then look at the facts, root causes and possible corrective measures surrounding Worm Control plus other topical subjects.

A highly interesting day will be rounded off by John Bambury, Course Superintendent at Trump International Links at Balmedie in Aberdeenshire. John will look at the technical challenges experienced in getting this exciting new development up and running.

All in all, a day not to be missed. Places cost just £35 which includes lunch, and refreshments throughout. If you need any further information please contact BIGGA's Regional Administrator for Scotland John Young on 07776 242120 or johnyoung@bigga.co.uk

THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT

Our latest featured greenkeeper blog comes from Josh Lester at Longside Golf Club – an 18-hole parkland course in Aberdeenshire. He began writing the blog less than three years ago, and was able to display images of the terrible flooding which recently affected the course. He says the blog has helped communicate with members from his club – and other clubs.

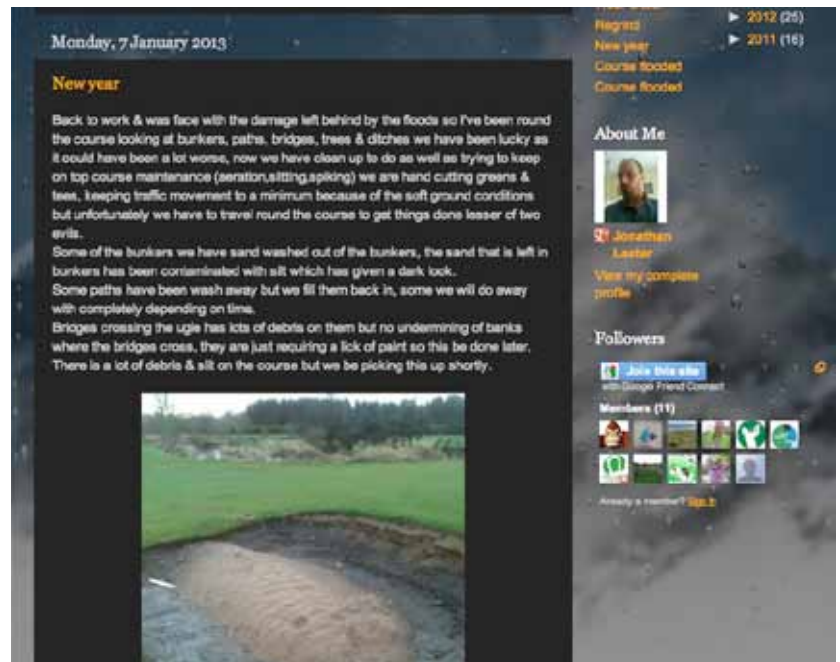
Head Greenkeeper Josh said: "The course is built on a flood plain with river running right through the middle but we managed to reopen five days later.

"We had sand washed out of bunkers, paths washed away and debris on the course. Loads of water came into the shed but everything was already up off of the ground in case there was a flood.

"I take photographs and post updates on my iPhone, so I can post on the blog while out on the course if necessary.

"The members tell me that they find my blog interesting as they like to know what's going on, ask questions or find out when I'm doing things. As well as the blog, I also use Twitter, which is also pretty helpful. I have a good number of followers including members from other clubs who have commented that they wish their greenkeepers would do similar work to what we've achieved here. In this day and age we need to be into social media and it's growing so quickly that we need to adapt. On a more personal note, I feel that a blog is great CV and most greenkeepers would benefit from keeping one."

Check out Josh's blog for yourself at <http://headgreenkeeperlongsidegolfclub.blogspot.co.uk/> - and remember to contact steve.castle@bigga.co.uk if you have a blog, or know of a greenkeepers' blog that has proved invaluable to you.



IT'S A WRAP

BIGGA have been speaking to the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) about the level of interest and debate among members about the use of compost on golf courses. As it happens, WRAP has been seeking information from a range of land managers about the use of compost & anaerobic digestate (biofertiliser). As part of this, they are keen to get the opinions of golf greenkeepers, so we have joined forces to set up a short online survey to

capture your opinions and experiences. We would really appreciate you spending five minutes completing this survey. Please visit <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WRAPBIGGAsurvey> to complete a quick and simple questionnaire.

Once we've got your responses we will publish an article covering your views and some data from WRAP's technical team. WRAP will use the information to help them understand what needs to be done to provide information and support to the whole range of potential users of recycled organic material for land management.

If you have any queries about the survey you can contact Tricia Scott, in WRAP's Research & Evaluation team, on 01295 817887. For further information about WRAP's work, please visit: www.wrap.org.uk/category/sector/landscape-and-regeneration

