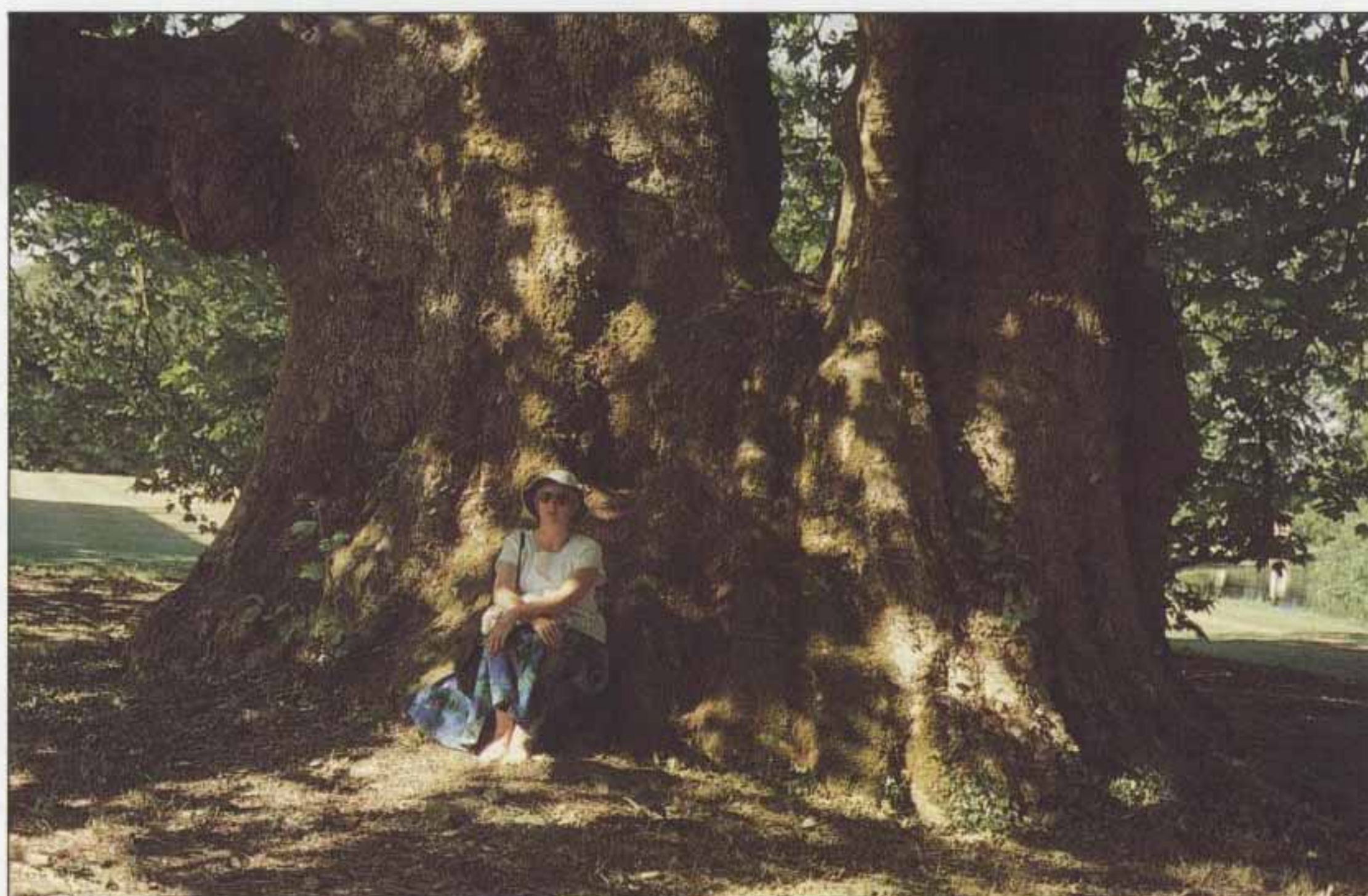


LEAVES FROM A TREE MEASURER'S DIARY

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE TREE REGISTER OF THE BRITISH ISLES



A. D. SCHILLING

The Platanus x hispanica (P. x acerifolia) London Plane growing in the grounds of Mottisfont Abbey National Trust Garden in Hampshire. This tree has an amazing girth of 367cm diameter x 38 metres tall, and is a National Champion.

As the tree world already knows, Alan Mitchell the co-founder and Chairman of TROBI died in early August following a long illness. His knowledge, enthusiasm and charismatic personality will be greatly missed by all who knew him. His immense collection of records are secure and form the core to TROBI's future work (see 'Alan Mitchell V.M.H. - A Tribute').

1995 has been both stimulating and demanding for TROBI's keyworkers and in view of this a few changes within the ranks have been deemed necessary in order to improve the various administrative activities. Mrs Victoria Schilling is now acting as Chief Registrar, with Mrs Phoebe Turpin as Assistant Registrar. Mrs Pamela Stevenson has taken responsibility for both Treasurer's and Secretary's activities and all future enquiries relating to such matters should therefore be sent to her at the address printed below. It is hoped that with these changes all your queries will be attended to with even more speed and efficiency than before!

Another important (and less bureaucratic) piece of news is that Trustee Mr David Alderman married Sue Thomas earlier this year and we wish them every happiness for the future (David has assured us that the responsibilities of matrimony will have no detrimental effect on the time that he commits to the workings of TROBI! Ed.)

The Bi-Annual Fund Raising Evening which was held at Leonardslee Garden in April was a great success and realised a net figure of over

£1,300 which has been put towards the on going task of computerising TROBI's immense amount of data. At this year's event the theme was Chinese in both cuisine and lecture content and we wish to thank everyone who came for their warm support and especially Mr Roy Lancaster for giving so generously of his time and expertise. Special thanks must also go to our hosts Mr and Mrs Loder and to those who provided such an array of rare trees for the auction. The bottle of Birr Castle Sloe Gin (kindly donated by Lord Rosse) eventually realised a price of £55, no doubt helped by Roy Lancaster describing it as "Prunus spinosa in a bottle". It is hoped that the next event, planned for 1997, will have a North American theme, the lecture on that occasion will be the first "TROBI ALAN MITCHELL MEMORIAL LECTURE".

Computerisation of Records continues apace (see David Alderman's report). Thanks to our ever productive team of Volunteer Tapers the Registration Department has been kept very busy and it is very satisfying to see Estates (many of which have not been revisited for some time) being officially updated. Many of the estates were new additions to TROBI's records and in view of this picture of continuous activity the list of Champions is in a constant state of flux.

VICTORIA SCHILLING.

Address of Treasurer/Secretary:
Mrs Pamela Stevenson
77a Hall End
Wootton, Beds., MK43 9HP

ALAN MITCHELL V.M.H. – A Tribute

The fraternities of foresters and dendrologists, indeed all who love trees, sustained an irreplaceable loss with the death of Alan Mitchell on August 3rd 1995. Above all, we of TROBI mourn our co-founder and friend who, through his vision and single mindedness, first set in motion the recording of the greatest trees in Great Britain and Ireland and, with Vicky Schilling, secured the future and continuing expansion of those records for the benefit of generations to come.

Alan was born on November 4th 1922 in Ilford, Essex. Having served during the Second World War with the Fleet Air Arm he studied forestry in Dublin before being appointed assistant geneticist at the Forestry Commission's research station at Alice Holt.

From 1954 onwards Alan started to travel the country measuring outstanding trees, and recording their dimensions in his meticulously kept card index register. Such was his encyclopaedic memory that he hardly needed to refer to it in order to inform an enquirer where the tallest Sitka Spruce grew, or the Beech with the greatest girth.

Not only did he seek out, measure and describe each giant, but frequently returned to where they grew in order to assess their progress, thus preserving vital information about growth rates of the various taxa in different localities.

Despite his many responsibilities Alan found time to compile for Collins 'A Field Guide to Trees of

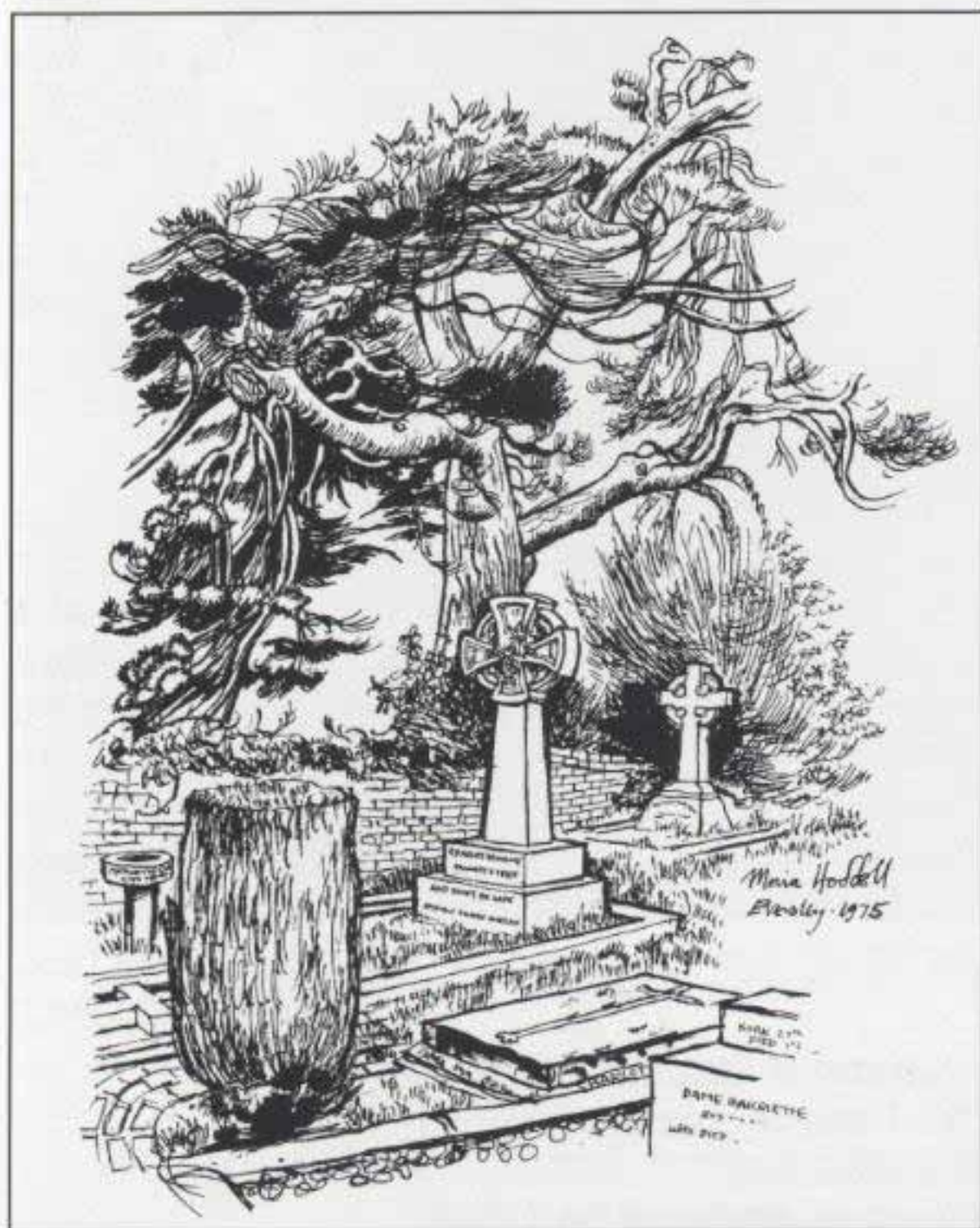
Britain and Northern Europe" (first published in 1974 and still available today), the more concise "Pocket Guide", and two beautifully illustrated Forestry Commission booklets on conifers and broadleaves, besides numerous articles. In 1970 Alan was awarded the sparingly given Victoria Medal of Honour by the Royal Horticultural Society.

On his retirement from the Commission in 1983 Alan was determined that work on the Register would continue and, with the help of Vicky Hallett (now TROBI Registrar Vicky Schilling), he achieved this by financing what had become a labour of love with funds from their consultancy work. However, as time went on it became evident that such income could never cover the considerable expenses incurred, and it was decided to set up a charitable body in order to continue the task. Thus TROBI was born, with Alan its vigorous and indefatigable Chairman.

Outside his chosen field, Alan had many other interests, holding strong and often controversial opinions, upon which it was a delight to hear him expound. He abhorred pretentiousness of all kinds and was not averse, on occasions, to puncturing a few bubbles, but to genuine seekers after knowledge he was kindness itself, happy to give freely of his time and knowledge, and was splendid company. Our hearts go out to his widow Philippa and their family.

SIR ILAY CAMPBELL, Bt.

THE KINGSLEY PINE



This last surviving Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) is one of a trio of such trees known to Charles Kingsley when he was rector at Eversley in Hampshire (1844-1875). It survived the 1987 hurricane and the gales of 1990, and is to be seen in the rectory garden beyond the churchyard wall as depicted in this drawing.

There has always been a tradition that the tree was planted in the reign of James I, but recent research at nearby Bramshill where Lord Zouche built his Jacobean house and is said to have introduced the Scots Pine to the area, shows that the oldest one there dates only from the 18th century.

Kingsley, author of "The Water Babies", "Westward Ho!" and "Hereward the Wake", slung his hammock from one of the trees and rested there on summer evenings – discussing many topics with family and friends. His little dog Dandy was buried beneath the pines and his own grave in the churchyard is seen in the centre of the sketch.

This drawing of Eversley Old Rectory Scots Pine was first published in *The Daily Telegraph* on 23rd January 1975, and is reproduced by kind permission of the artist, Moira Hoddell ARCA.

Tilia mongolica x *T. tomentosa* – new hybrid 'Alan Mitchell'

This attractive and exceptionally vigorous tree is likely to grow to the largest size. It originated in 1970 and in its first season grew 20cm (8in.) in the seed box, which is more than double the expected height of a first year seedling of lime; current annual increments exceed 1 m (3¼ft). It is an unusual and interesting cross between a very woolly and quite glabrous species but in most taxonomic features it favours the pollen parent.

The winter twigs are orange-brown with reddish, rounded buds; in the second year the bark is greyish brown. Shoots are pale apple green later tinged red. When the tree was in its first decade, the unfolding leaves in early April or late March were a bright golden green for a week or two. This character is not quite so brilliant today, although the foliage remains a rather pale or yellowish green throughout the season. The young shoot and unfolding leaves are at first densely covered with a rather short, straight, silvery pubescence, especially noticeable on the undersurface of leaves but within a few weeks it falls away completely except for rufous hairiness at the base and axillary tufts.

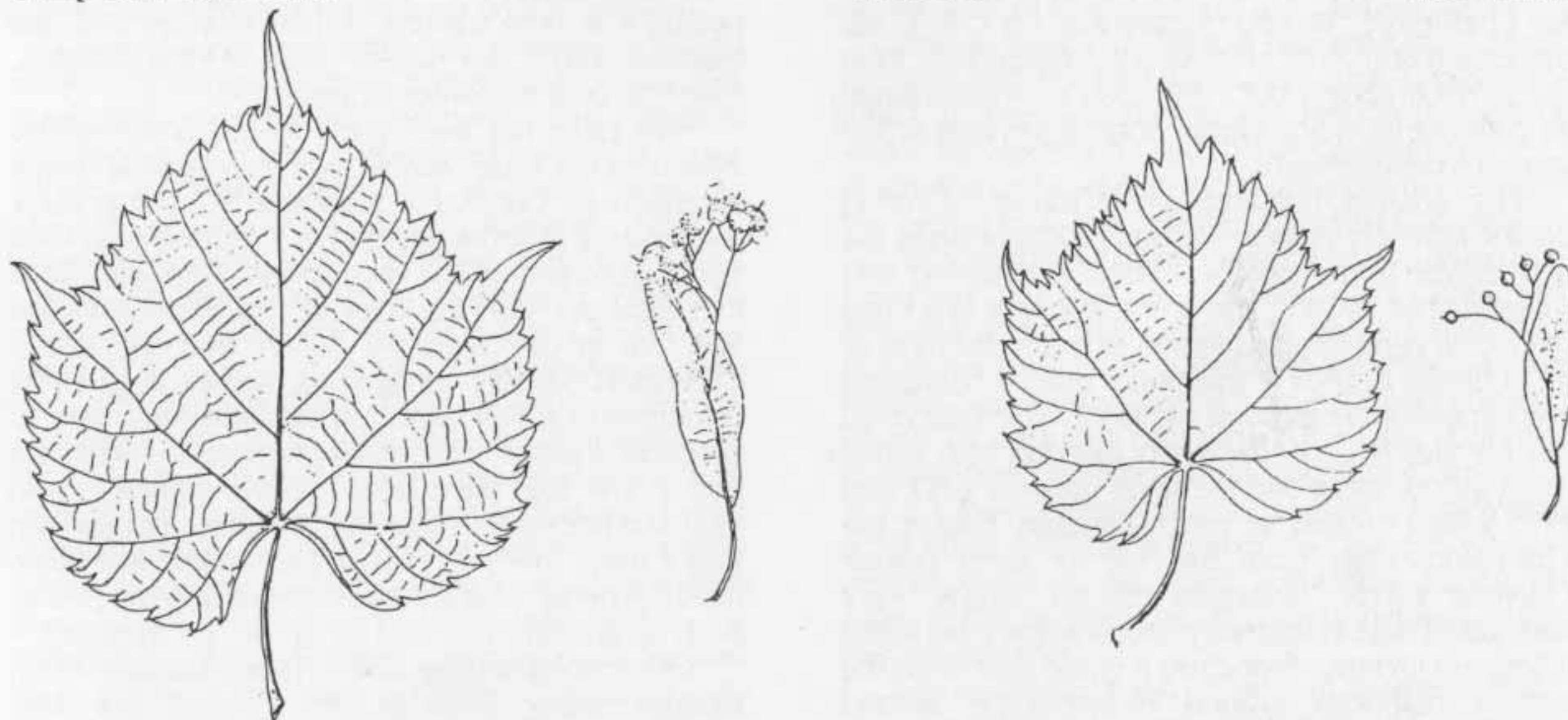
The leaf shape is somewhat maple-like. The blade is nearly as broad as long, the margins coarsely serrated with broad, callous-pointed teeth, a large denticle about 1.5cm long (¾in.) terminates the main nerve on each side, the apex is well tapered and the base is deeply cordate, very much like *T. tomentosa*. This is the only one of many hybrids where something more than a graded change has been observed. For the first 15 years the leaves gradually grew in size up to 10.5cm in length and 8.5cm in width (4 x 3½in.), with a petiole of about 4.5cm (1¾in.) and fruits remained undeveloped. But in its sixteenth year (1985) the leaf blade suddenly increased in size to 14cm long and 12.5cm wide (5½ x 5in.) and can probably be regarded as now mature. Leaves are fairly uniform in size.

In that year also the fructescence developed fully for the first time with an increase in bract length from 4.5cm to 6cm (1¾ to 2½in.) and the woolly, nearly globose nutlet enlarged to about 4mm in length and width. This lime started flowering in its ninth season but has not continued regularly nor prolifically until now. The flowers are intermediate between the two species, about 10 to 12 together on the cyme, which is up to 9cm long (3½in.).

The original tree is now in the beautiful gardens at West Dean College (The Edward James Foundation) some six miles north of Chichester in West Sussex. It has been propagated by layering and is also represented at Peasmarsh Place near Rye in East Sussex where Viscount Devonport is establishing the *Tilia* collection under the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens, and at Castle Howard in East Yorkshire.

This is a sample of the most important hybrid representatives which collectively may be called the Hanwell Hybrids. They all arose spontaneously in that district of west London between 1970 and 1975 and were selected for their distinctness. Several of the Mongolian hybrids, which in their early years appeared very similar, were planted out at the Stoop Memorial Rugby Ground in Twickenham (not to be confused with the international ground) and a few others elsewhere.

In addition, three more in which the Mongolian lime was the seed parent, remain in Chichester requiring further study. One has fine, very bright, orange-red twigs reminiscent of the red dogwood and may be of considerable ornamental interest. A second, with brownish twigs, is possibly the same as Hybrid 2, while a third, one of a group with stout, dark reddish black twigs, is perhaps a hybrid of *T. platyphyllos* 'RUBRA'.
NIGEL MUIR



Tilia mongolica x *T. tomentosa*. The smaller leaf is from the tree in its juvenile stage, when the fruits did not develop.

Champion Trees at Hergest

Hergest Croft Gardens celebrate their hundredth birthday in 1996. My grandfather, W H Banks, began to build his house in 1895 and moved in 1896 when it was completed. His sense of priorities showed in that he began to lay out the garden at the same time as the house was started if not before. He was planting at an exciting time. Ernest Wilson's collections for the firm of Veitch were coming back to England in the early 1900s and he bought extensively from them culminating in purchases at the closing down sale of the Coombe Wood Nursery in Kingston-on-Thames in 1913. After a four year gap during the First World War he began planting again in 1918 mainly in Park Wood, an old oak wood which he bought in about 1911, once again new plant introductions from China and Burma were coming in from collectors such as Forrest, Rock and Kingdon Ward. After his death in 1930, a catalogue of the collection was made by Bruce Jackson which provides a valuable source of historical information. Bruce Jackson continued to advise on the collection for W H Banks' widow, Dorothy, until her death in 1937 and bought plants for her from Aldenham, Woburn and Westonbirt. My father, Dick Banks, returned to Kington in 1953 and has planted many new plants over the last 42 years and continues to plant in Park Wood at the age of 93. My wife, Elizabeth, and I took a hand in the middle 1980s when we planted a new area, now known as Maple Grove, to accommodate the many new introductions from the 1980s when China was reopened to Western collectors, such as Roy Lancaster, Chris Brickell and Tony Schilling. It provides a fascinating counter point to the collections of 85 years before.

The planting has always been made for amenity purposes and for pleasure rather than being purely botanical collection. It covers a wide range of genera both broad leaves and conifers. However, both my father and grandfather had a particular interest in maples and birches and Hergest Croft Gardens have National Collections of both genera.

In a short article there is no time to mention all the Champions, indeed Hergest has 58 (59) in all, more than any other collection in Britain other than Borde Hill and Kew but I will cover as wide a range as possible including plants from all periods of the garden's development.

The original plantings were made by W H Banks' father, R W Banks around Ridgebourne, the first Banks home on the Estate. He moved into Ridgebourne in 1857, the first dated tree is a huge old *Abies cephalonica* planted to mark the birth of W H Banks in 1867 – this is not quite a champion but a marvellous grizzled old giant which survived the ice storm of 1940 when freezing rain broke many of our trees and the great gales of 1947 and 1975 which caused so much damage. Two of the Champions date from this era or even before. *Quercus cerris* 'Variegata' is no longer very variegated but occasionally sports some pure white foliage on its inner branches; it could date from the earliest plantings around Ridgebourne around 1806. A very fine *Zelkova carpinifolia* stands in the Workhouse Meadow, the park land between the

house and the Church. This is a multi stemmed vase shaped tree almost 100 feet tall, slightly spoiled on one side by its neighbours but otherwise a typical and beautiful specimen of a tree which deserves to be more widely planted. Incidentally none of our *Zelkovas* have suffered from the elm disease which has killed almost all of the true elms.

Two forms of the Dove or Pocket Handkerchief tree may date from the original Veitch introductions and are both champions. *Davidia involucrata* on the Daisy border at the southern edge of the garden is 52 feet tall whilst *Davidia involucrata vilmoriniana* in the Azalea Garden is a multi stemmed tree 62 feet tall. It suffered in the 1976 drought and looked as if it might die but it threw up a number of water shoots and fully recovered. It is now in robust health and a constant glory when in flower in late May and early June. Until the hurricanes of 1987 it was challenged for supremacy by the tree at Wakehurst Place which was badly damaged at that time.

In 1900 W H Banks planted an avenue of conifers leading from Hergest Croft up the hill through what is now the Azalea Garden. He took a photograph of the avenue when the trees were small and surrounded by the stockproof cages. His friends called it the Avenue of Crates and teased him that he had planted the trees far too far apart. 95 years later it is apparent that he made a mistake, he planted them too close together! We have a constant battle to keep the central view clear. Included in the Avenue are a number of specimens of *Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauc' with a number of variations in colouring – one of these is a Champion at 78' x 12'6" whilst another lovely grey form of *Cedrus atlantica* 'Pendula' by the gate to the Avenue is also a Champion at 78' x 12'7". The other Champion in the Avenue is *Abies cephalonica apollinis* at 111' x 13'7½". There are many other fine conifers there including *Abies grandis* which has lost its top twice, once in the 1940 ice storm and again in the 1976 drought when it couldn't pump the water all the way up its 140' height. It is now making a third attempt and has reached 130', the tallest tree in the Garden, towering over its contemporaries.

Two huge nut trees grow to the South of the Avenue. One hazel baffled us for ages until it was identified as *Corylus x vilmorinii* (*C. chinensis* x *avellana*). It is most decorative in spring with long dangling catkins all the way up its 66' height. Sadly, its neighbour, *Corylus colurna*, the Constantinople Nut, fell in the 1993/94 winter and we lost a Champion. Luckily a vigorous sucker is growing from its roots. The largest broad leaved tree here is probably *Juglans x intermedia vilmoriniana* (*J. nigra* x *regia*) now 102' tall x 13'10" showing great hybrid vigour. It has never fruited here with us though I am told it fruits freely in France and comes true from seed. I wonder why it is not more widely planted as both an amenity tree and for timber production?

Other notable trees in the Azalea Garden which extends either side of the Avenue are two specimens of *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, one from Veitch and the other from Vilmorin, the latter (var

sinense) is a Champion 62' x 4'8" with multiple stems. They are a lovely sight with pinky-bronze foliage in the spring and good autumn colour. *Toona* (*Cedrela*) *sinensis* has suffered much damage over the years and is a gaunt old tree 75' x 7'2". Luckily it throws up numerous root suckers and a young one has been planted in a field outside Hergest Croft Gardens and obviously has ambitions to succeed its parent as a Champion. The Japanese *Zelkova serrata*, in contrast to its cousin, is a wide spreading tree which has the engaging habit of growing epicormic leaves all along its branches. It is one of the last trees to lose its leaves in autumn often holding them until the first week of December before turning into a russet brown carpet. Sadly it does not seem to turn to the lovely reds and purples which make it such a splendid sight in the streets of Kyoto and Tokyo. From more recent plantings *Sorbus aria* 'Lutescens' dating from 1954 is already a Champion at 52' x 3'10½".

The extensive collection of maples started by W H Banks and continued by both Dick and myself contains a number of champions. Our favourite must be *Acer palmatum* 'Sango-kaku' ('Senkaki') on the lawn at Hergest Croft – this may have come from T H Lowinsky at Tittenhurst around 1910. It was catalogued as *Acer palmatum* 'cinnabarinum' by Bruce Jackson. It demonstrated its vigour by surrounding and destroying a Lawson Cedar which was left as a topknot on a tall stem before it was removed. A vase shaped multi stemmed tree, it stands 36' tall and is a constant joy at all seasons. *Acer circinatum* shows its woodland edge origins

by sprawling over a huge area, layering itself as it goes and produces a striking display of autumn colour turning red in patches whilst other parts remain green. *Acer mandshuricum* has reached 23' x 1'11" despite its habit of coming into leaf in late February which exposes it to frost damage. Sadly, the big champion *Acer griseum* at Hergest Croft succumbed to honey fungus after the 1976 drought but an avenue which includes some of its seedlings now graces the drive at Ridgebourne, best seen on a wet winter night with the bark shining in the car headlights.

I will end with three personal favourites of mine; *Arbutus menziesii*, from the west coast of the USA really has no right to survive let alone prosper at 750' up on the Welsh borders, but it has reached 85' x 7'0" and flowers every year. We have, however, been unsuccessful in establishing a successor. *Juniperus recurva* var *coxii*, in my opinion one of the most beautiful of conifers, (though Alan Mitchell violently disagreed,) has reached 52' x 3'11½" on the Chinese path in Park Wood. Finally, *Tilia maximowicziana* from Japan in open park land around Hergest Croft (70' x 6'5½") is the most beautiful of limes, covered in flowers and bees every year and with the white undersides showing when the leaves blow in the breeze.

Hergest Croft Gardens has many more champions and much more importantly many more beautiful trees and shrubs so I hope readers will come and see for themselves.

LAWRENCE BANKS

CHAMPION TREES in the BIRR CASTLE DEMESNE

We are greatly honoured to see Birr listed in the Forestry Commission's Technical paper 7 as having 54 Champion Trees. The situation is the more extraordinary when you realise that Birr is on alkaline soil, right in the centre of Ireland. This is about as far as you can go here from the warmth of the Gulf Stream, so the climate can be one of quite continental extremes, or at least cold in winter.

Despite these problems, my grandparents and parents built up a great collection of trees like magnolias, which are probably the greatest attraction now of all at Birr. Indeed another surprise for us is to see only two of these listed as Champions, even if one of those is what I personally believe to be the finest single tree in the whole of Birr: the truly champion *Magnolia dawsoniana*, somehow no older than I am! At the moment for instance, in mid November, we have over fifty flowers on a giant *Magnolia delavayi*. Although this is not yet rated a "champion" at eighty years of age it is far more impressive than one we were recently shown as a "thousand year old tree" in the precincts of a Buddhist Temple in Yunnan. There are also some quite impressive pterocaryas waiting as hopeful candidates for inclusion in the next list of Champions, as well as the actual *Juniperus rigida* illustrated in "Krusmann's Manual of Cultivated Conifers." What is really surprising in fact is how small many

of the official champions here seem to be, because the greatest numbers of them are *Crataegus*(6), *Acer*(5) or *Prunus*(5). More generally however, the modest size shows many of our champions still to be comparatively young and just so rare as apparently to have no larger competitors in these islands. This applies particularly to our *Carrierea*, *Ehretia* and at least some of our *Tilia* species.

Serious plant collecting at Birr only started with my grandfather's friendship with Augustine Henry, half a dozen years before the first world war (in which he was killed,) and the vast majority of Birr's champion trees were in fact planted by my father in the period from the nineteen twenties to forties.

Although the champions from earlier times may however be few in number, they are quite remarkable in their ways: the great "hedges" of *Buxus sempervirens* in the formal gardens, where visitors have been coming to see them for over a couple of centuries and where they are supposed to have been planted when our family arrived in 1620. Likewise the *Populus canescens* which rises a full 40m. from the banks of the Camcor, where it almost certainly put itself sometime during the reign of the second Earl, (and long before planting records began!)

The rarest and most interesting champions from my grandfather's time comprise the *Carrierea calycina* which is in our River Garden, and the *Tilia*

caucasica, where our Lilac Walk forks off our Upper Walk.

Whereas many other Irish gardens, like Malahide or Mt. Usher, either specialise in plants from the Southern hemisphere, or at least have many of their finest plants from there, the soil and climate at Birr have proved less conducive to them than to material from the eastern Himalaya and the Far East. Thus whereas dozens of eucalyptus have been planted, only four have survived in the whole Birr collection, of which fully half is now of Chinese origin. By far the highest number of our champion trees and literally every one of our greatest rarities, come from the different provinces of mainly western and central China.

To a large extent this reflects the fact that our family has either subscribed to, or actually taken part in, plant-hunting expeditions since the early part of this century and that though some of these have been to Chile and Mexico, most have been either to the Himalaya or to China. Thus my father not only subscribed to expeditions of those like Kingdon-Ward but was instrumental in setting up those of Yu and establishing the link with Lushan which provided many of our rarest trees. I have personally sought to continue this tradition, having

participated in expeditions to Nepal in 1984 and Yunnan in 1993 and am now just planting out the first Magnolias grown from seed I collected on this last expedition.

If I am asked which are my favourite trees at this (Autumn) and other times of year, I think I would have to say, (apart from the above *Magnolia delavayi*), our champion *Fagus orientalis* or even *Euonymus hamiltonianus* for colour; in Spring and Summer the other champion Magnolias, like *M. dawsoniana*, the *Tilia henryana* whose very unusual leaves I find particularly striking, and two junipers which I find incredibly graceful, namely *J. rigida* and *J. recurva*.

In case the above may have tempted any who may not yet have discovered Birr, may I emphasise that the demesne is open every day of the year (yes, including even Christmas Day!), and that "50 trees of greatest distinction" have been selected by the late D A Webb for a special little guide book which is available at our gates. This is popularly known as our Red Tree Trail, because these chosen trees are marked with red instead of black labels.

THE EARL OF ROSSE

PRUNUS 'TAIHAKU'

I have been the Head Gardener at Dartington here in South Devon for very nearly eighteen years now. Today's garden has developed since 1925, when Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst (the founders of The Dartington Hall Trust) first discovered, then fell in love with, the Estate which at that time was in a condition of decline.

Having both the vision and the finance, the Elmhirsts very quickly set about the task of restoration and refurbishment. They realised the potential of what was a 14th century building, set within an ancient landscape and to help with the experiment (their term) they sought the advice of experts. Such notables as H. Avray Tipping, Beatrix Farrand and Percy Cane all played their roles. In more recent times, Phillip Booth of the Falmouth College of Art, designed the Japanese garden, whilst Preben Jacobsen redesigned the long herbaceous border that overlooks the ancient tournament ground. Another project recently completed was the creation of an outer courtyard garden; this was the work of Georgie Wolton.

Dartington is primarily a Spring garden where cherries play their part. Two varieties were specifically chosen and positioned by Farrand, and are almost synonymous with Dartington, - *Prunus x yedoensis* within the courtyard and P.'Taihaku' on the Great Lawn to the South of the main buildings.

Taihaku has always been one of my personal favourites. Even before I knew of its amazingly precarious history, I was captivated by its immense pure white flowers set against the coppery red of its young leaves; to me it is a tree with unique presence and character.

At Dartington our Taihaku's (or "Great Whites",

as they are commonly called), were planted in bold groupings, with the occasional single tree, further afield. Beatrix Farrand certainly had a designer's eye; it was she who insisted on planting a lone specimen at the south-west end of the Private Garden, next to the rather formal Yew hedge. She foresaw what we take for granted today. That single bush was planted on a higher elevation than the ground beyond the hedge, where a further three Taihaku's were planted as standards. Today their boughs collectively form an extended matching canopy which straddles the hedge. When conducting guided tours of the garden, I invariably stop at this group, in order that I may recount the history of the Taihaku.

In the Spring of 1923 Captain Collingwood Ingram was invited to visit the Sussex garden of a Mrs Freeman whom he described as: "an elderly lady who, in her more active youth, had been a keen collector of plants". It transpired that in 1899 Mrs Freeman had bought a bundle of cherry saplings direct from Japan and early in 1900 a small bundled collection of saplings arrived in Sussex. On his visit Collingwood Ingram described one particular specimen as being "slowly but surely strangled by its neighbour". However, this moribund plant still had one or two living boughs that held the largest white cherry flowers that he had ever seen. Later that season, Collingwood Ingram obtained a few twigs of bud wood and was successful in propagating more stock.

In 1995, Collingwood Ingram found himself in Japan, again in search of cherries. On this visit he met with a Mr Funatsu who was said to be the world's greatest living expert on cherries. Collingwood Ingram described Mr Funatsu as

"knowing his cherries like he knows his own children". During their discussions a 17th century Kakemono or hanging picture was produced which depicted a large white-flowered cherry. Collingwood Ingram grew very excited by this as he knew he had the same cherry back home in Kent; however in Japan it was lost to cultivation, and only known in pictures. When he explained this fact to Mr Funatsu, he said "the old gentleman was clearly incredulous, but his good manners forbade any open expression of doubt; he merely smiled and gave a polite bow to acknowledge the statement". Unfortunately Collingwood Ingram was never able to prove the point to the old gentleman as Mr Funatsu died soon afterwards.

Following the creation of the Japanese garden here at Dartington, I too found myself travelling in Japan in early November 1995 (on a study tour, with The Japanese Garden Society) visiting Japanese gardens in and around Kyoto. As a part of the formalities associated with such tours, my group was invited to attend a dinner with various members of the Kyoto Board of Commerce and Trade. Amongst their delegation we met with a Mr Sano or, to use his Japanese name, Sano San. It was difficult to be precise about his age, but I would guess that he was well into his 80's. Sano San proved to be quite a character, and gave a very interesting lecture on the History of Japanese Gardens and the differences in our cultures. After the discussion Sano San asked who of our group would like to attend a traditional Japanese evening of entertainment; of course we all did! That evening we were Sano San's guests at a Geisha house in the

Gion district of Kyoto. We were treated with lovely food and too much drink, whilst the doll-faced Geisha performed traditional song and dance. To say Sano San was the life and soul of the party is an understatement for he certainly knew how to have fun and gone was the serious elderly gentleman who lectured us earlier in the day. The generosity shown towards us that evening was quite unbelievable, and has left me with memories that I shall never forget.

A day or two later our group was invited to attend a celebration at which Sano San was exhibiting his collection of cherry books, prints and memorabilia. It transpired that he was Japan's leading contemporary authority on cherries. As he addressed our group we ate sweets and drank strange drinks made from cherry blossom, and towards the end of his talk we had the opportunity to ask questions. I raised my hand and in broken English (ie. trying to sound as Japanese as possible) I said "Taihaku"; Sano San's face lit up, he rushed off and came back with a very old Kakemono print, clearly depicting the Taihaku. Sano San then went on to explain how, as a young boy, he accompanied his father to Kent where they collected shoots of the long lost "Great White Cherry". These shoots, it was explained, were inserted into potatoes to keep them moist for the long trip home on the trans-Siberian railway.

I still pause by our group of "Great Whites" at Dartington, but now the story I tell seems so much more poignant.

GRAHAM GAMMIN

The Great Beech at Lethen House, Nairnshire

I cannot hope to convey in words the wonderful character of this tree for there are few species with which more classical and pleasing associations are connected, than the common beech.

This "Patriarch" has curiously carved upon its mighty bole initials and dates going back over 200 years - a family history of "the Brodie's of Lethen", who have lived here since 1634.

To stand under the circuit of the branches and to look around is to feel and be encircled by a writhing mass of pythons, and shows to us in living form "such stuff as dreams are made of". I do not exaggerate, and think it to have seen at least 300 summers.

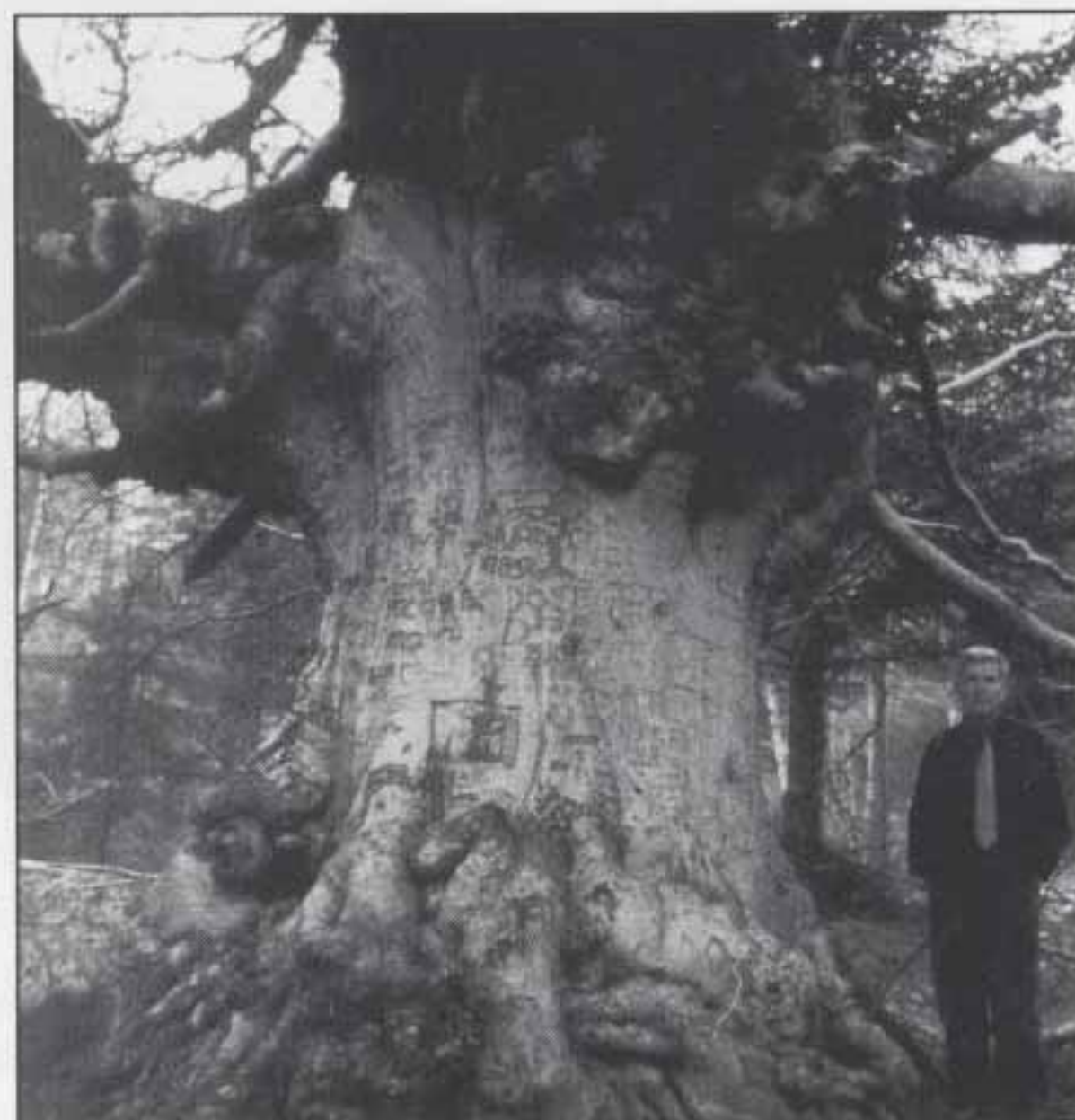
A photograph taken in 1884 by Valentines of Dundee (famous for postcards) shows the tree very much as it is today, and the date, 1779, clearly visible on its vast trunk. This date is still decipherable to the present day. With this in mind and, looking at the photograph of 100 years ago, perhaps 400 summers would be nearer the mark than 300. But no matter the age, it is well worth travelling a long way to stand under the shadow of its boughs and think of the long hot summers of yesteryear.

On page 352 of "The History of Nairnshire" by George Bain [1893] the old beech gets a mention and is also plotted on old estate maps.

An extract from Constance Brodie's "Lethen History" (she was the wife of J. C. J. Brodie) reads "The oldest date on the very old beech at the foot of the garden is 1701 just above the large knot north of the

trunk of the tree". Fanny Sophia Constance Wood was the third daughter of Edward Thomas Wedgewood of Watlands, Staffordshire (Pottery) and married Mr. J. C. J. Brodie of Lethen (and Lord Lieutenant of Nairnshire) in 1869.

JIM PATERSON



ANDREW MORTON

COMPUTERISATION REPORT

Thanks to generous donations received during 1995 we have been working hard to computerise the Tree Register and now have 18,580 tree records on the T.R.O.B.I. database. These are made up of 2,630 champion trees, 1,400 historic trees (trees measured, often dating back to the early 1800's, but which no longer survive) and 14,550 other trees found across the British Isles. Some trees have been measured many times over the last one hundred years and there are a total of 25,179 sets of measurements relating to them. Our special thanks go to Dennis Watson of Lancing, Sussex who has input the majority of these records.

These figures equate to nearly one fifth of the total number of trees held on the Tree Register's record cards. 1,964 taxa, representing 192 genera, are on the database along with more than 1,800 different estates, properties and locations.

Even with only 18.5% of the total number of trees now on computer, it is exciting to see how easy it is to sort and report on particular tree species and of

trees in particular counties, countries or on individual estates. The potential for learning more about the growth rates of many of our common and exotic species is becoming more of a reality. We already have details of every *Ginkgo biloba* recorded by Alan Mitchell entered onto the computer providing us with valuable data on this particular species. Many *Acer* and *Betula* species are also complete as we work alphabetically through the register.

With future specific fund raising projects it is proposed to purchase equipment necessary to copy maps, location plans and photographs on to the database, in order to provide a more complete historical record of some of our most famous trees. However, the need for continued fund raising is essential to achieve the completion of entering the 100,000+ records on to computer by the year 2000 and so enable this information to be more readily available.

DAVID ALDERMAN



A. D. SCHILLING

The *Quercus cerris* (Turkey Oak) growing in the grounds of Knightshayes Court National Trust Garden in Devon. This tree, which grows to an awe-inspiring height of 40m x 250cm diameter, is the National Champion of its type in the British Isles.

We would like to thank both Paul and Linda McCartney and their company MPL for their continued generosity in sponsoring this newsletter