

# LEAVES FROM A TREE MEASURER'S DIARY

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE TREE REGISTER OF THE BRITISH ISLES

## The Tree Register Database

We are almost halfway towards achieving complete computerisation of all 100,000 plus trees held on the Tree Register. With trees continually being re-measured, more time is now being spent updating records already on the database. In this seemingly never ending task, Champion trees are given priority to ensure the most up-to-date list is always available.

As additional records are entered the more valuable the data becomes. With measurers recording trees in more parts of these Isles than ever before, the information on location and growth rates is becoming of greater interest to more and more people. This is all further evidence that the Tree Register is totally unique and with complete computerisation will be a vital source of information for tree professionals and enthusiasts alike.

The Alan Mitchell Memorial Appeal successfully secured enough donations to ensure the transfer of all his original handwritten record cards on to

computer-scanned images before they deteriorate, thereby maintaining and safeguarding his historic work.

Specific donations have enabled us to purchase computer equipment capable of copying photographs and plans on to the database, thus providing a more complete record of individual specimen trees. In an effort to keep pace with new communications technology, the Tree Register is looking for a sponsor to help provide information on the Internet. Champion trees, new discoveries, up-to-date news and appeals could soon be accessed world wide on personal computers.

If you wish to help toward the continuing work of data entry, or more specifically towards a project such as "T.R.O.B.I. on the Internet", please send a donation to, or contact, the Secretary: Mrs P. A. Stevenson, 77a Hall End, Wootton, Bedford MK43 9HP England.

DAVID ALDERMAN



*The Patron and Trustees of TROBI planting a Pinus strobus at Chatsworth House, Derbyshire in memory of Alan Mitchell.  
Left to right: Tony Schilling, The Duchess of Devonshire, Colin Hall, John Workman, Maurice Foster,  
Sir Ilay Campbell, Lord Rosse, David Alderman*

Ian Fraser-Martin



# The Old Park Oaks at Chatsworth

The 1000 acre park at Chatsworth has always been open for people to walk, run, play games, bring their children and dogs and picnic wherever they like, all the year round. It is not known how many people use it because there is no charge.

As the number of walkers increased, my husband decided to keep 179 acres private as a sanctuary for the herds of red and fallow deer to have their calves and fawns without being disturbed. The area is called the Old Park, after the ancient oaks, both sessile and pedunculate, which are scattered either side of the green carriage road which twists and turns up the hill.

This part of the East Midlands was traditionally an afforested area and was marked as such in the Domesday Book. Charcoal burning was practised for smelting iron and many other uses. The oaks in the Old Park are the northern outliers of Sherwood Forest and are constant reminders of that "greenwood", renowned in fact and fiction.

The trees are the very opposite of those in neat plantations of conifers. No two are alike. They are rugged individuals of character, all shapes and sizes, some in pairs so intertwined you can't tell which is which, some have roots which embrace big rocks and are folded over them like larva, rock and bark, almost indistinguishable. The girth of the largest is 24 feet 3 inches at 5 feet. There are a number of around 20 feet at 5 feet.

When an oak falls it is left undisturbed. Some of the giants look like dead elephants lying in the bracken. They are hosts to insects and are shelter for stock in bad weather.

There is a keen debate as to their age. My father-in-law used to say they must be around 1000 years old – perhaps 500 years growing to their best and 500 years going back to the hollow shells many of

them are in 1996. Experts don't agree, saying they are between 500 and 600 years.

I am no expert but I subscribe to my father-in-law's theory. Most of the biggest are hollow and therefore it is impossible to count rings, but the chief reason is the evidence provided by one particular tree. It is of immense girth and split in two. Heaven knows how many years ago it was pollarded and one small branch sticks out under the sawn top; the only branch which is alive and has leaves and is therefore very noticeable. I have known it like that for fifty years. If it has changed so little in half a century imagine how old it must be to have reached its present state.

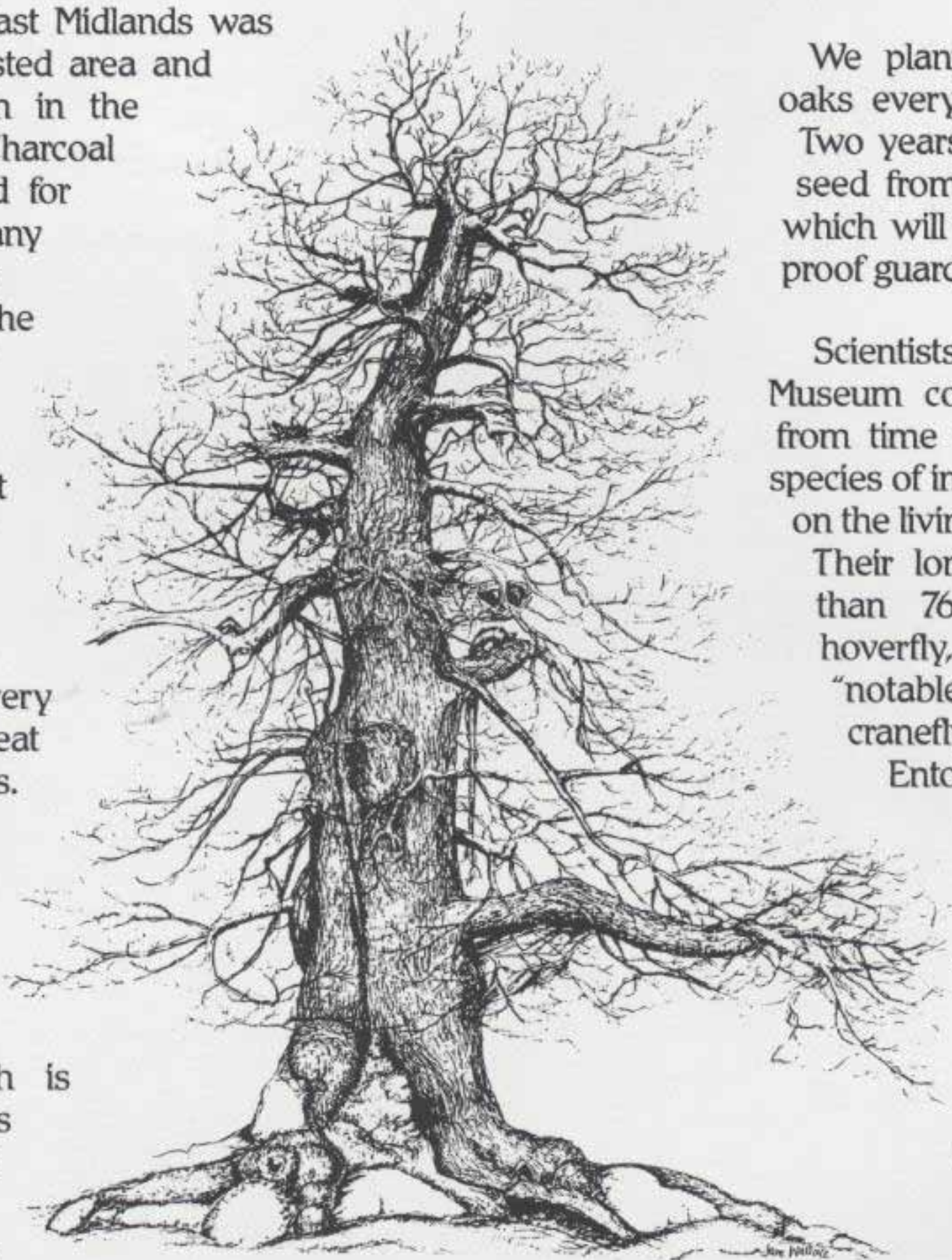
We plant between 10 and 20 oaks every year in the Old Park. Two years ago we started saving seed from the venerable natives, which will be planted out in deer-proof guards in due course.

Scientists from Sheffield City Museum come into the Old Park from time to time to monitor the species of invertebrates which thrive on the living, dying and dead oaks. Their long list includes no less than 76 different species of hoverfly, some described as "notable", and 16 species of cranefly. The Derbyshire Entomological Society have identified over 227 species of "larger moth". Nest boxes for pied flycatchers are occupied every year and birds which depend on holes in trees, plus some privacy include Redstart, Nuthatch, Tree Creeper, Greater Spotted and Green

Woodpecker. They tell us there are few such places now where the giant trees live out their long lives with no threat of being harvested and play a useful role long after they have crashed to the ground in a storm.

Every time I walk in the Old Park I am reminded of Dr Johnson's observation – "he that calculates the growth of trees has the unwelcome remembrance of the shortness of life driven hard upon him".

THE DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE





# TREES IN THE GREAT PARK AT WINDSOR OR WHAT, NO CHAMPION TREES ?

I find myself standing in an area of woodland, woodland that is maintained as amenity woodland, within Windsor Great Park and quite close to the A30 trunk road. Nearby are a number of *Sequoia sempervirens* and *Sequoiadendron giganteum* which were planted some 100 or so years ago and which have now attained 100' or perhaps a little more, also nearby are two specimens of *Sequoiadendron* planted 30 years ago and already soaring towards the skies. In the same area are the three *Sequoiadendron* planted to commemorate TROBI's 100,000th tree measured and recorded on the Tree Register; these three are 3/4' and already well established. Redwoods grow extremely well in the Great Park, but none will ever be champion trees. Why? The trees are growing on poor Bagshot sand with a rainfall of 22 inches which, as all readers will know, will not produce trees of great height.

The estate, however, is very well wooded with some 10,000 acres of commercial forestry and the landscaped Great Park. The western end of the Great Park is liberally endowed with magnificent, but not tall, *Quercus robur* aged approximately 400 years. These trees over the years have been lightly pollarded, the branches providing browsing for the deer and the remaining wood turned into faggots by the local people. The forest also holds remnants of very old *Quercus robur* which were once part of the ancient Windsor Forest. Many of these are now just hulks of no height but of great interest.

Returning to the eastern end of the park, which until 1750 was part of the vast area of heathland which covered much of Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire and, before someone exclaims, still does, although much reduced in acreage, it was the Duke of Cumberland, on his return from Culloden, who developed this area in its present form. He drained wet areas, created drainage streams and lakes, made vistas and rides and planted thousands of trees which now provide us with the amenity woodland referred to above. These plantings are mainly of Common Beech, Common Oak and Sweet Chestnut. As would be expected the weedy and lovely Common Birch, *Betula pendula*, also appears everywhere and the whole area today presents a reasonably natural and mature landscape. Records are available of exotic trees which were used but with the exception of a number of red maple, *Acer rubrum*, there is nothing else left today. What is interesting when studying the records available is the indication of the areas of the world where we had collected plants in 1750, ie Eastern North America, Europe and the Middle East.

These plantings are now approaching maturity – in fact, the beeches are fast approaching their last years. The storms of 1987 and 1990 took their toll although thankfully there is much left. Great plantings have also been made since these storms, much of which is already playing its part in the landscape.

Having painted a picture depicting no champion trees, throughout much of the estate there are areas, the Savill and Valley Gardens, where such trees may be lurking, if champion trees can lurk, for the gardens contain a

tremendous wealth of exotic trees, all of which have been planted over the past sixty five years.

A resumé of some of the genera of great importance may be of interest. The gardens are the home of one of the National Collections of Magnolias and amongst this collection many of those that are large trees in the wild are already making their mark in the 60' range. Maples also play a very important role in the gardens and all but the very hungry members (sycamore for example) are welcome. Birch are also extremely hungry and are not good bed-fellows for our choice woodlanders. This vice is forgiven, however, for they are such lovely trees and play such a superb part in the autumn and winter landscape. We are extremely careful as to their placing in view of their demanding root systems. We have changed our policy somewhat concerning the canopy of the woodland garden since the storms of 1987 and 1990 and are using exotic trees instead of native species. The oaks, particularly the North American red oaks, are near perfect for this purpose with their deep root systems and reasonably thin canopy. The oak collection is now very large, although many are still small and, of course, includes species from world wide sources. My two great favourites are *Quercus coccinea* 'Splendens', the Knaphill Scarlet oak, a local tree, and *Quercus frainetto*, the Hungarian Oak. Why I frequently ask myself is this tree not more widely planted? Our native beech, which is such a fine and attractive tree, is also unsuitable as a canopy tree in the woodland garden with its dense foliage and shallow root system. It does, however, play such an important role in our surrounding landscape and we have over the past thirty years gathered together a great range of the cultivars, most of which are extremely interesting and variable. The autumn show in the gardens is in most years superb and *Liquidambar styraciflua* invariably heads the cast. It is important to select good colouring seedlings, for the species is very variable, or better still, named clones, *Liquidambar styraciflua* 'Lane Roberts' and 'Worplesdon' being by far the most reliable.

There are obviously so many more exotic deciduous trees of note which deserve a mention but I have just realised when nearing the end of this paper that I have not mentioned the conifers, a near terrible omission, for they play such an important part in the overall garden and park landscape. As large evergreens they add strength to the garden in winter. I am particularly keen on using the spires of the much despised cultivars of *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* (not the type plant I hasten to add), *Thuja plicata* and *Thuja occidentalis* and some of the *Cupressus*. The overall effect of rhododendrons is rounded and heavy and the spires mentioned above add a very different dimension to the woodland garden. Obviously the conifers that enjoy a low rainfall, the pines for example, are most satisfactory and the silver firs, *Abies* sp, are the least. In fact, with a few exceptions, we have been forced to admit defeat with *Abies*.

To sum up, no champion trees, but a number of potential trees and, who knows, Alan Mitchell may even be eyeing up one of our Purple Plums!

J. D. Bond



# Tomorrow's Champion Trees at Wakehurst Place

'Sussex, Wakehurst Place Ardingly (out-station of Kew RBG). Immense collection of conifers and broadleaved trees; many fine specimens of extremely rare trees.' So writes Alan Mitchell in 'A Field Guide to the Trees of Britain and Northern Europe' (1974). Such an accolade was well founded as the collection of temperate trees and shrubs, developed by Gerald Loder between 1903 and 1936, was rightly famed. By the time the first edition of 'Champion Trees of the British Isles' (Mitchell and Hallett 1986) was published in 1986 Wakehurst Place had 35 entries, a significant number for a collection built up in private hands.

Unfortunately the 1987 storm put paid to many of these champions and Gerald Loder's garden was effectively destroyed during that awful night. By happy chance the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew have superintended developments at Wakehurst Place since 1965. A sustained and vigorous tree planting programme pursued during the 1970's and 1980's and accelerated into the 1990's, due to the availability of large amounts of natural source material, has resulted in an almost unrivalled collection of young saplings from around the temperate world.

Given such a favourable situation what will be the champion trees of tomorrow at Wakehurst Place? Is it possible to look forward in time and predict which individuals will be the tallest or fattest of their kind? Wakehurst Place is fortunate in enjoying the benefits of the warm summers of the south-east of England without the regular summer droughts that afflict other collections, especially in the Thames Valley. The soils are also varied and in certain parts of the estate deep loams provide wonderful conditions for the growth of trees. Under such conditions a great many species thrive, both broadleaved trees and conifers. The past champions were almost equally divided between these two groups.

However, it seems unlikely that tomorrow's champions will be the tall conifers of the Pacific coast or Far East. The great gardens and estates of Scotland, particularly the cool sheltered glens of Perthshire and the north-east, already have a head start of over a century and a half and the long days of the summer months add the incremental growth that is hard to beat. Despite its many advantages Wakehurst Place lies high up on the Sussex Weald and is prone to the sweeping depressions which swing up the English Channel from the south-west. The strong

winds that accompany these weather systems are unforgiving of the tall spires of Douglas firs, sitka spruces and silver firs that scrape the sky north of the border. In contradiction, the tallest tree currently growing at Wakehurst Place is a 45m Douglas fir, but it sits in a sheltered and moist position in Westwood Valley and lies well below the level of the howling winter gales.

It seems to me that if Wakehurst Place is to have any champion conifers in the next century they will be drawn from the cadre of rare species that are seldom found outside of botanic gardens. Such a tree is *Picea farreri*, introduced by Reginald Farrer from the deep monsoonal valleys of northern Myanmar. Long overlooked it was only named as a new species in 1980 (Page and Rushforth). However, it had been in cultivation for the preceding 60 years as Farrer had collected seed and these had been raised at Exbury. Today the single tree which is derived from this collection is an ailing specimen of 18m. Fortunately Keith Rushforth has propagated and distributed grafted plants of this taxon and one is growing, albeit slowly, in the Pinetum at Wakehurst Place. Perhaps in years to come this may be a champion.

Nearby, recent introductions by Kew collectors have brought back an impressive haul from China's unrivalled range of native, and frequently endemic, conifers. Many forms of *Picea likiangensis* are established, each varying in the hairiness of its shoots and the degree of blueness of needles; those with steely blue coloration hail from the type locality of this species on the flanks of the dagger-like Jade Dragon mountains of north-western Yunnan. Wakehurst Place had many impressive examples of this attractive conifer, all now lost. Hopefully others will follow from amongst the groups in the Pinetum. Likewise young specimens of *Picea brachytyla*, *P. asperata*, *P. wilsonii* and *P. schrenkiana*.

To round off the promising conifers I have high hopes for a clutch of Taiwanese species. *Taiwania cryptomerioides* itself, purportedly a tender species, is represented by several specimens of varying quality. Some have reached 7m, a far cry from the 60m giants to be found in Taiwan's central mountains but perhaps future champions in the UK. Though incredibly tall the taiwanias are exceeded in volume by the red fir (*Chamaecyparis formosensis*) old specimens of which are immense. Several of these are now planted in the collections at Wakehurst Place.



Also keep an eye on the trees of *Cunninghamia konishii*, perhaps not greatly different from the Chinese fir (*C. lanceolata*) but interesting and worthy nonetheless.

It is amongst the rare broadleaved trees, however, that I feel the champion trees of the future will be found at Wakehurst Place. Returning to Taiwan again briefly, a tree, in an established position in the nursery, of *Paulownia kawakamii*, is already 6m having been planted only in 1994. This species is all the more interesting and the specimen itself all the more valuable when it is known that only 13 mature trees exist in the wild (Pan pers. comm).

Efforts have been made to secure seed of the *Juglandaceae*, a most worthy and impressive family – trees one and all, no identity crisis here unlike the more diverse *Rosaceae* and *Leguminosae* – do we want herbs, shrubs or trees?!! The genus *Pterocarya* has received particular attention and the young trees of *P. forrestii*, *P. insignis* and the more familiar *P. rhoifolia* might be the subject of the tree measurer's hypsometer at some future point. Likewise the several provenances of *Juglans mandshurica* and *J. cathayensis* that our collections hold. Finally the strange, primitive family member *Platycarya strobilacea* might one day aspire to champion status.

Poplars are well known as vigorous trees and many are of the largest size. The balsam poplars have the added attraction of being refined and ornamental, none more so than *Populus yunnanensis*. A specimen derived from a collection by Keith Rushforth, planted as a sapling in 1988/89, is now 10m tall and growing like a rocket. Another Asian balsam, *P. maximowiczii*, 'grows to a larger size than any other species of eastern Asia and ranks with the largest trees that grow there' (EH Wilson). A tree collected by Brian Halliwell in Japan is launching itself skyward and hardwood cuttings were collected by Tony Kirkham and myself in the Russian Far East in 1994. The closely related genus *Salix* contains a multitude of complex species. The commonly cultivated weeping willow is regarded as a clone – *Salix 'Chrysocoma'* – the true weeping willow (*Salix babylonica*) is a much rarer entity. A specimen at Wakehurst Place, again introduced by the good offices of Keith Rushforth, is of Chinese origin and more convincingly the real thing. On a bank above the Iris Dell it is already a sweeping, domed specimen of 8-9m.

Undoubtedly Wakehurst Place will boast many of tomorrow's birch tree champions amongst its comprehensive collection of the genus *Betula*. Watch especially taxa such as *Betula alleghaniensis*, the wonderful yellow

birch from eastern North America, *B. maximowicziana*, the majestic Japanese monarch birch and the numerous examples of the Himalayan birch, *B. utilis*. We've also got some super young specimens of *B. albosinensis* tucked away in strategic positions. The forms from central China brought back by the Sino-American Botanical Expedition to Hubei in 1980 look especially fine.

Lastly, a more general roundup from across the botanical collections. Within the Asian arboretum in Westwood Valley, a specimen of *Diospyros lotus* looks promising as do several examples of *Malus baccata* from South Korea. In Horsebridge Wood, where the North American collections are held, many of the pines are taking off, not just the big 'uns like *Pinus radiata* and *P. muricata* but *P. ponderosa*, and its many local forms, *P. sabiniana* and *P. engelmannii*. Young trees of *Sorbus americana* are showing vigour and ornamental merit and the big leaf maples (*Acer macrophyllum*), from Canadian seed, give the impression of wishing to be noticed. From the same area the Oregon ash, *Fraxinus latifolia*, is also enjoying life and has made 5m in as many years.

The innate vigour of the trees of the Caucasus and nearby mountain systems has drawn the attention of tree buffs. A few specimens in Bloomers Valley are demonstrating their readiness to push for honours. *Alnus subcordata*, *Acer cappadocicum* and *Pterocarya fraxinifolia* are all "motoring". Finally, in Coates Wood, the National Collection of southern beeches surely holds some future champions, possibly again amongst the rarer species – *Nothofagus glauca*, *N. nitida* and *N. solandri* var. *solandri*.

Whichever trees become tomorrow's champions at Wakehurst Place from the many thousand that have been planted in recent years, one thing is clear, the great tradition of cultivating temperate trees on the estate is secure and the broad amenity, educational and scientific value of these important collections assured.

## References

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- Page, C.N. and Rushforth, K. D. 1980. *Picea farreri*, a new temperate conifer from Upper Burma. *Notes from the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh*. 38 (1) 129-136.



# OH, TO BE A TAPER

Some years ago, Alan Mitchell ran field study courses on tree identification. Emma, my wife, and I attended two of them and became, like many others, his devotees. Consequently, it took little persuasion from Mrs. Victoria Schilling (Vicky) to persuade me to be a "taper" for Cumbria.

It began with a Small-leaf Lime. A friend told me of an enormous specimen growing in Dallam Park, an area of rising ground south of Milnthorpe on the border of Cumbria with Lancashire. "It took 20 paces to walk round it", he said. I was astonished, and, frankly, sceptical. Cumbria is the most northerly limit of the native distribution of this tree and the remaining specimens usually grow from ancient coppiced stools on the steep banks of streams descending from the hills, survivors of a warmer age when seed would set and grow in this part of England, a thing it has not done for centuries. Yet the one I had been told about was growing in open parkland. It was with no great expectations that Emma and I went to investigate a few days later.

Oh, ye of little faith! There it was, an enormous pollarded specimen.. I made it nineteen paces round. It was over 26 feet in circumference (256cm diameter). Even in my pre-taping days I kept a copy of "Champion Trees in the British Isles" handy, and found that the largest recorded Small-leaf Lime was one 184cm diameter at Haveningham Hall in Norfolk, a mere tiddler compared with the one I had discovered. I sent TROBI my figures. Little did I realise when I wrote to Mrs. Schilling that I had met her during those fantastic weeks with Alan when she was his assistant. She was delighted with the new Champion, and.. "Derrick, we are a bit short of tapers in Cumbria, would you be interested...!" I was hooked.

What a wonderful time I have had. I love the anticipation of going to new places wondering what I will find. Only a day or two ago I found my first Lawson Cypress "Wissellii" in Cumbria. They are rare trees here, despite what Alan says in his books. "You ought to see it in the spring", said the owner, "it's just a mass of scarlet". That gave it away, of course. In the last three weeks alone I have found my first (in Cumbria) Erman's Birch, Spinning Gum, Chinese Cow-tail Pine and Jeffrey Pine. One day I went to a house on the shores of Windermere. The garden was on the other side of the house and I could not see it when I knocked on the front door. "Come through the house", I was instructed, and there, almost filling the lawn, was the largest Fern-leaf Beech I had ever seen. That tree was a Champion.

Emma loves going to different sites as much as I do, and we try to go on tree measuring forays together. A month ago we went to see the most northerly Small leafed Limes in Cumbria (and in the British Isles) in a wood on the banks of the River Eden at Wetheral, near Carlisle. Being at their northerly limit we expected stunted specimens. Instead we found some magnificent trunks. We measured 4 of them. The problem was that the wood in which they stood was so dense that it was impossible to measure their heights from inside the wood. However, a short distance from the trees was an unclimbable barbed-wire fence separating the wood from a field. Clearly, the only way to measure the heights of these Limes was to first of all measure the distance from the trees to the fence, then go into the field and pace out the remaining distance from the base of the trunks on that side of the fence. It was a hot, sultry day and it was half a mile back towards the car before we could find an entrance to the field. Then it would be another half mile back to where the trees stood on the opposite side of the fence and yet another half mile back to the car. Emma wilted. "Do you have to be so obsessional about these heights?", she said, "I would prefer a cup of tea!". I sympathised with her, I felt like one myself, but tried to persuade her that I just had to measure the heights of the 4 most northerly Small-leafed Limes in the whole of the British Isles; what would the Tree Register say if I did not send them the figures? I doubt if she was convinced, but she came along with me in the end. To such devotion does the Tree Register drive us.

I will never forget going to Eden Hall, a large estate near Penrith. Over a cup of tea the owner said he had been told that he had the second largest Cedar of Lebanon in the whole of England

in his garden. Many people say things like that to you, don't they? But it was a large one (331cm diameter), and I left saying I would check in the Champion book when I returned home and let him know where the biggest one was. Emma and I laughed when, as we left, he said, "I hope that the largest one has blown down so that mine can be the largest"! He need not have worried; his Cedar turned out to be the Champion in its own right. That garden was a veritable treasure chest. It contained the only Cyprus Cedar I have seen in Cumbria, the first Pendulous Norway Spruce, looking for all the world like a wax tree that had melted in the sun and spread all over the ground, and for good measure the Champion tallest Common Lime (46m).

Recently I received a letter from a man living in a small village near Penrith. He had lived in America and remembered the Sugar Maples turning red in the "fall". There was one in the Old Rectory garden in his village, he said, and he wanted a Tree Preservation Order putting on it because of its rarity and beauty. Would I mind going to see it? There are only 2 other Sugar Maples I know of in Cumbria, both of them miserable specimens, so Emma and I were only too pleased to go. We met him at his house and he told us how he wanted to ensure that it was preserved.

He said that the man living next to the Old Rectory, who sold trailers and horse boxes, wanted the tree cutting down because the "syrup" from it got onto his trailers and marked them. It was obvious that we were getting involved in village politics and would have to be careful what we said. After a drink (non-alcoholic!) we went to see the Sugar Maple. When we arrived at the Old Rectory, there it was, a beautiful, large Norway Maple! However, as our friend had been so sure about it being a Sugar Maple we checked it carefully; bark.. Norway Maple, whiskers on all the leaf points..yes, and masses of fruit all over the garden, and..Norway Maple shape. This was quite apart from the fact that Sugar Maples rarely fruit in this country. So it was not a Sugar Maple after all. The occupants of the Rectory said they would not object if the tree had to be removed, but would be sorry to see such a lovely tree go, especially as it screened them from the footpath by the roadside. Their next door neighbour, the man who sold the trailers, saw us looking at the tree and came over to talk to us. He took me to see the mess the "syrup" made on his aluminium trailers, and he was quite right, I sympathised with him. This was quite apart from the fact that his trailers were filled with 2 feet of dead leaves every autumn! He thought the tree should be chopped down, never mind the beautiful colours; didn't I agree? I handed out TROBI leaflets and pointed out that my only interest in the tree was to decide what it was, firmly refusing to take sides.

It was a big tree and we measured it. I wrote to our friend explaining in detail why the tree was a Norway Maple and not a Sugar Maple, realising that I was destroying his argument for its preservation. And that was that, or so I thought, until Vicky rang me a few days later to say that it was a Champion in diameter. I had not realised this because the one recorded in the Champion book was larger than mine. Vicky told me that the one in the book had blown down since it was published leaving mine as the largest. I rang the owners of the Rectory to tell them. They passed the message onto our friend who rang me the next day. "Was it true?", he said. "We must preserve it if it is the largest". I said nothing. Perhaps I will return next year, and, incognito, creep along the pavement outside the Rectory to see whether it is still there!

On our expeditions we meet many fascinating people. We often get coffee or tea, and the occasional glass of wine. Oh, and we did get a dish of strawberries at one place.

What of the trials and tribulations of taping? It is difficult to think of any, unless it is the frequency with which a holly bush seems to grow round a tree just where you want to measure its girth, or the often present thickets of brambles through which you have to plough to get at the tree. But, surely, these are mere pin-pricks in an otherwise marvellous occupation. I can recommend it to anyone with an interest in trees. Their fascination never ends.

Derrick Holdsworth



# TREE MEASURING IN SCOTLAND

I am fortunate, in my capacity as the Garden History Society's Conservation Officer in Scotland, to find myself visiting gardens and estates throughout the country, many of which are notable for their trees. I have long been aware of the work done by Alan Mitchell and latterly by TROBI on the measuring and recording of outstanding trees, and it seems only sensible for me to do what I can to assist with the measuring and recording of outstanding trees as I go about my day-to-day business. A well-thumbed copy of Alan, John and Vicky's *Champion Trees of the British Isles* is never far from my side! I shall always regret the fact that I never managed to attend one of Alan's courses on trees at Kindrogan Field Centre.

My own interest in trees goes back a long way – to a time when I was secretary of the Youth Hostels Association's Forestry Group in the 1960s. This may explain why one of my course papers at University was devoted to an examination of public attitudes to coniferous trees. My interest in trees, which continued through fifteen years of teaching in outdoor and museums education, has been revitalised by my work with the Garden History Society, and I look forward to contributing in whatever way I can to TROBI's excellent work. I have oiled the tape measure and blown the dust off my trusty old clinometer. At the very least, measuring trees should help take my mind off my own increasing girth!

As the Garden History Society's Conservation Officer, I have accumulated a good deal of information on gardens and designed landscapes in Scotland, and am always pleased to do what I can to answer questions about the history of specific sites. I can normally be contacted at Washington House, Ardler, Blairgowrie, Perthshire, PH12 8SR.

CHRISTOPHER DINGWALL



E. Carew Hunt

*Sequoiadendron giganteum* – Clarie house Gardens, Perthshire. July 1996



## Castanea sativa



V. E. Schilling

*The tree with the earliest positively known planting date. Castanea sativa (Sweet Chestnut) growing at Castle Leod in Strathpeffer, Scotland. Records in the muniment room show this tree to have been planted in 1550.*

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