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Report from the Chairman
Colin Hall

Trees at the Millennium

Today's champions

The Millennium has been a recurrent theme in 1999 as we look back over the last 1000 years and forward to the next. Whose imagination can fail to be stirred by the fact that our ancient trees, that have stood the test of time, are perhaps our only living link with the earlier Millennium? And it is of course many of these trees that are on the Tree Register as today's champions.

Few question the important role that trees will play in the new Millennium: combating global warming, providing renewable raw materials and fuel for our use, playing host to a spectacular variety of wildlife and, of course, enriching our landscape, our gardens and our quality of life.

Champions of tomorrow

In Britain and Ireland, there is huge enthusiasm for tree planting for the new Millennium. The Woodland Trust is creating 200 new woods, planting over 2 million trees in its "Woods on Your Doorstep" project, funded in part by the Millennium Commission. "Trees of Time and Place" is encouraging everyone to grow a tree from seed and plant it for the future.

The Conservation Foundation has also seized the moment with small yews being distributed to parishes throughout Britain. These are cuttings from majestic yews which were probably alive at the birth of Christ. I have temporary custody of two such yews, to be planted in Frensham churchyard. As I write, I gaze at them with awe. With good fortune, one or both of these may be alive beyond the year 3000. Although we will never see them at maturity, some of the trees we have raised, planted and nurtured may be recorded by the Tree Register as tomorrow's champions.

Photograph: Tree Register Founder Member Colin Haywood and the veteran Sweet chestnut in Powys he helped record for the Register. (©Tree Register)

New Membership Scheme

A significant initiative for The Tree Register this year was the introduction of a simple membership scheme. You can now join the Tree Register for an annual membership fee of £12 or IR£15, thereby ensuring the continued receipt of our annual newsletter, as well as receiving other benefits. The membership scheme is designed to help us raise money for the annual operating costs incurred in maintaining the Tree Register and taking forward its work. We are very pleased with the response to our initial mailing and if you have become one of our founder members, thank you. If you have not yet responded, a membership leaflet is enclosed with this newsletter. I do hope you will complete it and join us.



New Web Site

The work of the Tree Register continues to increase with much new data, including details of several exciting new champion trees being recorded this year and an ever increasing number of requests for information. The Alan Mitchell Memorial Lecture, given at Leonardslee by Thomas Pakenham in April, was sold out and a great success.

During November 1999 we launched this Web Site. This can be a very efficient and low cost way of communicating with our supporters and spreading the word about the Tree Register and we are already attracting interest from tree enthusiasts overseas as well as at home. We are indebted to David Alderman for all his hard work helping create it. Our continuing work would not be possible without the support of all the friends of The Tree Register, our volunteer measurers and each of you who has

helped over the years by sending in data or supporting our appeals. We are most grateful for your continuing enthusiasm and practical support.

The Woodland Heritage

Lewis J Scott Msc - Chief Executive & Co-Founder

So how are we different?

Woodland Heritage, a registered charity, was started by a group of cabinet makers concerned with the way our diminishing woodlands were being managed.

Putting something back

The starting point was a belief that wood is both the most beautiful and environmentally friendly material available to man. Despite the importance of trees the UK has only 10% tree cover, comparing poorly even with our EU neighbours who average 26%. The UK imports 90% of its timber and this over-dependence can impact detrimentally on the tree cover and environment of other countries, particularly in the tropics. The answer is not to stop using wood, but to plant more trees and manage them more carefully. We decided the starting point was to "put our own house in order". We asked all wood users to join Woodland Heritage and in doing so to put something back into this important and renewable resource.

Best practice

We recognised that some earlier tree planting campaigns had had little lasting impact, due to lack of preparation and aftercare. One couldn't just plant a tree and walk away. We would need to get involved in an education process, to emphasise that woodlands need to be managed and to be productive. Only by maximising their economic value would they be able to flourish in the long term. It takes more work to grow a quality tree with a clean straight stem than a low crowned "bush" but, the value of one quality veneer butt will pay for a hundred other trees to be planted and maintained through to maturity. We believe that continuous cover forestry is practised successfully on the continent and we believe there is much to learn by studying best practice elsewhere, hence the bursaries we provide for students and experienced woodland managers to travel and study abroad.

Active concern for the future

We provide practical help to woodland owners, who often through no fault of their own have a failing wood. We assist by funding, planting, thinning, formative and high pruning, pest control and the development of woodland craft skills, indeed anything to help prevent project failure. How are we funded? To date we have received no support from the public purse and depend entirely on subscriptions from members and donations/legacies. The majority of our members are individuals concerned for the future of our woodland heritage. Amongst our corporate members are wood users, cabinet makers, architectural joiners, saw-millers, timber merchants, retailers, tree growers, nurserymen and colleges. Our supporters are practical people who realise if things are to improve, we have to do something. Sometimes change is best effected by supporting research by other woodland organisations to avoid duplicating effort. What separates us from some other woodland organisations is that we believe in a productive woodland environment, managed to provide timber, employment through woodland crafts and a habitat for wildlife.

A free copy of the Woodland Heritage Journal containing 32 pages of practical and highly informative articles on Tree & Woodland management is available free of charge to our readers.

Requests to: Woodland Heritage, PO Box 2950 Epping, Essex CM16 7DG

An A4 s.a.e. for 50p would be appreciated Woodland Heritage is a Registered Charity No.1041611

Registrars Report David Alderman

The tree in your garden may join the Register

By their very existence, champion trees are quite exceptional plants, the Manchester Uniteds of a Premier Plant League. However, we must not lose sight of many other trees of equal importance being themselves exceptional within their own geographical context. The conifers of East Anglia may be poor, short and thin specimens compared to the luxuriant growth and vigour as seen on the west coast of

Scotland. Indeed some are unrecognisable as being of the same species. However, they represent an important record of hardiness and growth of so many important introduced species and will often be significant landmark trees.

Raise awareness

Counties where trees over 30m in height are uncommon and some species noticeable by their absence, highlight the importance of local champions. The work currently being undertaken by Dr Owen Johnson and Philip Clarkson Webb to survey the trees of southern England, county by county, is producing remarkable results. Read their report from Kent, on the Tree News from the Regions page, proving that specimen trees are being discovered in relatively small gardens and in public places. Local champions help raise awareness of special trees and have encouraged protection and tree surgery that may not previously have been considered. The pride felt by an owner on being informed he has a champion tree, even at local county level, is usually immense.

Tremendous support

Protecting a tree primarily due to its size and status as recorded on the Tree Register is very exciting. It makes everyone involved with this charity realise how vital it is to maintain and update the records. Recent promotion of one such specimen, by Tree Officers at Aylesbury Vale District Council, resulted in tremendous support from property developers Banner Homes. Read their press release in the report below

Photograph: Not all champion trees are huge! This *Acer rubrum* in a suburban garden is a county champion and enjoyed by many. (©Tree Register)

The Bishop's Pagoda

Not everyone can be lucky enough to have a tree that is the largest in the British Isles growing in their garden. When Tree Register measurer Peter Bourne visited the garden of the Abbey Gate House, home to the Bishop of St. Albans, he was not prepared for the wonderful oak-like tree dominating the main lawn. A huge Japanese Pagoda Tree (*Sophora japonica*) with a height of 26.5m and 159cm diameter (4.99m girth) bole and with an equally impressive crown spread to match, making this tree a true champion. [See the photo in the gallery!](#)



Spectacular landmark

The Conservation Foundation's elm survey has seen many large Elm Disease survivors coming to the attention of the Tree Register. One of the finest is an unconfirmed clone of the hybrid *Ulmus x hollandica* growing in a private drive in Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire. It is also a spectacular landmark tree, visible from the main A45 trunk road. [See the photos currently on the Champion Trees page.](#)

TREE REGISTER ARCHIVES

Photographs wanted

New Project

Over the years the Tree Register has acquired a large number of photographs, now proving to be an invaluable record on the growth and condition of many of our historic trees. Our latest project is to transfer all photographs, plus over 5,000 transparencies, into digital format and copied onto CD Rom. These images will be linked to the Tree Register database and made available for research purposes.

Photograph: The Badmondesfield Oak, Suffolk. Taken by the Hon. Maynard Greville 1954. (©Tree Register)

Historic trees

If you have any old photographs, good quality black and white, colour, or postcards showing historic or notable trees and wish to donate such pictures to the Tree Register archives, we would be very pleased to hear from you. We would equally be pleased to borrow photographs or transparencies and return them after they have been digitally copied.

Largest oak ever recorded

Currently showing on our web site are photos of the Newland Oak, in Gloucestershire, the largest oak ever recorded.



A painting from 1772 and photos from c.1900 show the tree in its prime, to its demise from storm damage, ending with Forest of Dean Senior Verderer Dr. Cyril Hart, standing by a new Newland Oak he helped propagate from the original.

Details can be found in the [Non Members Section on the Historical Data page](#)

Threatened Conifers

Aljos Farjon, FLS Chairman, IUCN-SSC Conifer Specialist Group,
Curator of Gymnosperms, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 3AB

How planted trees can help conservation

Threat assessment and conservation plan

The threat of extinction of species due to the proliferation of just a single one: man, extends to almost all taxonomic groups of organisms. The World Conservation Union (IUCN) is the world's principal organisation addressing this issue through its Species Survival Commission, within which Specialist Groups assess levels of threat and give advice on what actions to take to curb the downward trend towards extinction of species. One of these is the Conifer Specialist Group, and it has recently completed the first major phase in global conifer species conservation by publishing IUCN's Conifers - Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan. In this document a Global Red List of Conifers summarises the status of all conifer taxa (species and lower ranks) in the wild on a global scale. The major factors threatening species survival are outlined, conservation strategies are discussed and priorities indicated; all this first on a global scale and further on in the Action Plan also more specifically for several conifer-rich regions and important species. IUCN's Action Plans (there are now five on plants but many more on animals) aim to give guidelines, written by the world's scientific authorities on the various groups of organisms, for policy makers and managers at government and other levels to implement conservation legislation and action.

Ex situ conservation

Conservation of species is a multi-faceted undertaking, but it can be conveniently divided into two strategies, commonly called in situ and ex situ strategies. All in situ conservation takes place in the localities where the species naturally occur; all ex situ planting outside these places, in practical terms for conifers this would be in botanic gardens, arboreta, forest plantations, nurseries and seed storage facilities.

Scale of the problem

What can ex situ conservation contribute to species survival of conifers? We must first recognise the scale of the problem, so here are a few statistics: Conifers occur on all continents except Antarctica. There are about 630 species and 170 infraspecific taxa currently recognised (Farjon, 1998), giving a total of 800 different 'kinds' in nature. Of these, 200 or 25% are threatened with extinction, that is, they fall in any of the three categories of threat - critical, endangered, vulnerable - currently recognised by IUCN as those that will lead to extinction if current trends continue. A list of that length (and geographical breadth) poses a major challenge to species conservation. Where to begin? Scientific criteria have been developed in the Conifer Action Plan to prioritise, resulting in a short list of 43 species. Concentrating global efforts on these would constitute a major step forward to safeguard conifer diversity and it is here that ex situ strategies can and should play an important role. In the Conservation Action Plan (CAP) we discuss these strategies and we refer to that publication (Farjon & Page, 1999) for the details.

The role of planted trees

Here I wish to concentrate on just one important aspect, perhaps clearing away some misunderstanding. This is the role planted trees could play in the overall conservation of species in the wild. It is a supportive role: the real aim is the survival of viable and healthy populations in functional ecosystems within the natural range and habitat of the species. You may call ex situ conservation a safe haven for refugees, who desire to, and ultimately should, return home. This means that conifers planted outside their natural range that could serve species conservation should be managed for that purpose. It must be stated right from the start that almost all conifers at present growing anywhere in Britain are virtually useless for ex situ conservation. In our major botanic gardens, for instance, they are specimen trees, often of unknown provenance, which if producing viable seed would yield progeny likely to be introgressed genetically by neighbouring individuals of related species. In the case of one shortlisted species, *Alerce* (*Fitzroya cupressoides*), all but one of more than 50 trees present in collections in the British Isles appeared on verification to be genetically identical and no viable seed is known to have come from them. They were propagated by cuttings from a single introduction, again of unknown provenance.

True, more recent introductions, especially in the major botanic gardens, emphasise wild collected material and document the provenance. But unless a species is taxonomically sufficiently isolated (e.g. Japanese Umbrella Pine, *Sciadopitys verticillata*) it must be grown well away from others in the same

genus to prevent cross pollination; this can hardly be realized within the confines of a single large garden or park.

Long term commitment

The genetic diversity of a species must be sampled and maintained in ex situ schemes. Long time seed storage is one approach, now being set up on a large scale in the Millennium Seed Bank at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Another, out-planting 'populations' of threatened species on estates in Britain specifically for conservation, is pursued under the Conifer Conservation Programme of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. If the latter strategy is to be followed, assurance of production of viable, genetically uncontaminated seed by the planted trees is needed before the plantation is established, as the investment exceeds the planting of one or a few specimens in ordinary collections by several orders of magnitude (collecting, research, nursery, site selection, monitoring, management etc.) Long-term commitment from all those involved has to be guaranteed. Many of the short listed species in the CAP are (sub-)tropical and if at all, only suitable for growing in the mildest (frost-free) localities of these islands. Others, though important, are in no need of ex situ efforts, though some would even be useful as grown at present, for instance Giant Sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*).

Umbrella Pine Project

A few species are probably suitable (and there are more in the main Red List). My favourite one of these is indeed the Japanese Umbrella Pine, unique member of its own family *Sciadopityaceae* (no relationship with *Pinus* pines at all!), classified as Vulnerable (VU) in its native Japan. Would there be anyone in the British Isles interested in setting up a secluded grove of this remarkable conifer? (If any reader is interested in such a project. please contact Mr Farjon direct. Ed.)

References and publications

Farjon, A. (1998). World Checklist and Bibliography of Conifers. Available from: Mail Order Dept. RBG Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 3AB Price £34.50 inc. P&P

Farjon, A. & C. N. Page (1999). Conifers, Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan. Available from IUCN Publications Services Unit, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL Price £15

Maple Park

Banner Homes - Property Developers

Saved from development

Banner Homes have found a great piece of history rooted in their new development site "Maple Park" in Winslow, Buckinghamshire. A grand *Acer cappadocicum*, the seventh largest of its kind in the British Isles, creates an impressive landmark and will be a notable part of the entrance statement to the development. The tree is carefully protected on site with robust fencing whilst Banner work on their new development of 33 detached, semi-detached and terraced homes.

Photograph: Robust fencing from Banner Homes protects the *Acer cappadocicum* at the entrance to Maple Park. (©Tree Register)

Ian Hopcraft, the Tree Officer from Aylesbury Vale District Council commented: "The *Acer cappadocicum* has been placed under a protection order because of its rarity, size and age. The tree was discovered to be of national importance by The Tree Register. It is important that trees like this be carefully looked after and Banner Homes have provided a very robust fence around the tree which meets the recommendations of the British Standard for tree protection on building sites. The fencing is sturdy and will afford the tree ample protection during work on site. I am delighted with the measures they have taken. It is very important that local authorities and developers co-operate to safeguard retained trees on building sites. Since discovering the tree, we have taken 50 cuttings, 29 of which have been successfully nurtured."

Local interest

Elaine Stratford, Regional Sales Director of Banner Homes commented: "The maple tree will be carefully incorporated into the scheme at Winslow. We consider it to be an important part of the natural environment and history of the area. As a result of the local interest in the tree, we are inviting children from one of the local schools onto the site to talk to them about the early stages of construction work on a housing development including the protection of trees such as this historic maple. We will also be holding a competition for the children to provide illustrations of the maple tree, the winning entries will then be displayed within our sales centre."

