

The Tree Register

Newsletter No.21
2012/2013



- **Acton Beauchamp Yew - Saved!**
- **European Champion Tree Forum**
- **Elms of Brighton & Hove**

Cover photo: The Great Bundle Beech of Clumber Park, Nottinghamshire by Edward Parker

Report from the Chairman

Colin Hall

2012 - an Olympic Year for The Tree Register

Ginkgo Lecture

I was delighted to see so many of you at our 2012 Alan Mitchell Lecture at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. After guided tours of Kew's champion trees, and a drinks reception in the School of Horticulture, we moved to the Jodrell Theatre where Peter Del Tredici, a world authority on the Ginkgo, a seasoned plant hunter and prolific author from the Arnold Arboretum, Harvard University, gave a fascinating and extremely interesting lecture on the Ginkgo. Our silent auction of unusual trees was once again very popular, with some £1200 being raised from the sale of 44 high quality young trees. We are very grateful to Tony Kirkham and his colleagues at Kew for all their help with the event and also to all who donated plants for the auction.

Ancient Tree database

David Alderman, our director, has been particularly active throughout 2012 managing the Ancient Tree database in conjunction with The Woodland Trust. The database now extends to over 103,000 trees, with over 14,000 new records having been validated during the year by our volunteer verifiers. Meanwhile, our registrar, Owen Johnson, has been busy, with 357 new Champion Trees added to The Tree Register during the year, including some 117 from a very productive visit to Scotland.

Valuable Trustee

We are very pleased that Lady Arabella Lennox Boyd, an internationally renowned landscape and garden designer, joined the board of trustees in the summer. Her knowledge of trees and gardens will be most valuable to The Tree Register.

Ash Dieback

2012 ended on a worrying note for tree lovers with the realisation that *Chalara fraxinea*, the cause of Ash Dieback, was here to stay and that little could be done about it. Tony Kirkham had warned us of the number of tree diseases and pathogens waiting in the wings for a chance to get into the British Isles but no one foresaw how quickly an iconic species could become so seriously threatened. Our databases could be valuable in identifying and monitoring disease resistant trees.

Once again thanks are due to all our supporters and helpers during 2012, and to David, Owen, the Ancient Tree Hunt verifiers, all our other tree recorders, Tim Hills and the Ancient Yew Group, Alison Evershed, our newsletter editor, Clair McFarlan, our volunteer support officer, and Pamela Stevenson, our hard working secretary.

Colin Hall
Chairman of Trustees

Many thanks to Sir Paul McCartney
for his continued generosity in sponsoring this
newsletter



C18th *Ginkgo biloba* 27m tall x 3.2m girth. Flitwick Manor, Beds.

The Tree Register

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Volunteer Support: Clair McFarlan



+44 (0)1234 768884



77a Hall End, Wootton,
Bedfordshire MK43 9HL



info@treeregister.org



www.treeregister.org



Records of special interest

Over the last twelve months as the database manager I have added 7500 records to the Tree Register, 5300 of them for new specimens and the rest updates for trees which had been measured many years ago by Alan Mitchell and others. With so much continuing activity from projects such as the Ancient Tree Hunt, it would have been easy for me to add many more, assuming I had nothing better to do with my time. (I'm not sure I have.) But I try to restrict the database to the most important trees, and the acid test I normally use is: will this record be of special interest to whoever happens to be studying Britain's trees in fifty or a hundred years time? If the tree is still there, have I included enough information for it to be relocated and the changes to its shape and stature to be assessed? And if the species is no longer found, because of disease or climate change, will the records provide a full picture of where it thrived and how big it could grow?



Champion Daimyo Oak, *Quercus dentata*, in Gunnersbury Park, West London (Owen Johnson)

Meticulously recorded

The new data include trees which I had not found were growing in Britain, such as *Schefflera fengii* and *Griselinia jodinifolia* in Jamie Taggart's Linn Botanic Gardens in Argyllshire. There are details for ancient trees of many kinds including new churchyard yews. There are many new records of rare surviving elms, researched by Peter Bourne in Brighton (see pages 6 and



Champion Pere David's Maple (*Acer davidii*) at Lesnes Abbey, East London. (Owen Johnson)

7). There are accurate heights for some very tall trees, meticulously recorded with his laser by Rob Lynley in Yorkshire and Durham.

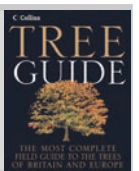
Updating historical records

There are statistics for trees which have not been measured for many years, such as Steve Waters' record of the plane tree at St Peter in Chepe in the City of London which had previously been featured by Angus Webster in *London Trees* in 1920, and which had contained a rookery until 1845.

Fascinating new trees

When I measured my first few hundred trees near my home as a teenager, I guessed that I might have to record a quarter of million to get round the whole of Britain. With over 190,000 'good' specimens now on the Tree Register, that assessment seems to have been only a slight underestimate, though of course many new rarities continue to be planted, and introduced. One thing is clear – none of us is going to run out of fascinating new trees to discover.

Collins TREE GUIDE
The most complete Field Guide to the
Trees of Britain and Europe
by Owen Johnson & David More



The Acton Beauchamp Yew - Saved by History

The oldest yew in Acton Beauchamp churchyard was described in *The Sacred Yew* in 1994 as 'broken and ivy covered'. I visited in 1998 and found what looked like an old stump hidden among nettles, brambles, holly, ivy and elder, with its branches carrying only small amounts of foliage.



Dr Prattinton illustration of the Acton Beauchamp Yew in 1810 - courtesy of the Society of Antiquaries of London

Danger zone

By 2003 the ground around the tree had been cleared, making it possible to identify this as a 20ft girthed fragment of what must have once been a formidable tree. But not everyone saw it that way and a year later views were expressed about its state, claiming that it was 'dead' and 'dangerous' and should be cut down. I was invited to a site meeting to present a case for the tree's defence. It was fortunate that evidence existed from the 19th century, for in 1856 botanist Edwin Lees wrote in his *Pictures of Nature around the Malvern Hills*: 'Near the west end of the church is a most magnificent old yew-tree, riven into two parts, but still green and vigorous and which, from the examination of various old yews, I should put down at 900 years old. The Acton (Beauchamp) Yew measures 22ft. in girth at a yard from the ground and can hardly be matched in Worcestershire'.



2012 and little altered in 200 years (Photo Tim Hills)

But this was not all, for in 1810, Dr Prattinton had painted a watercolour of the church and included the ancient yew (above left). His painting shows clearly the two parts of the tree described by Lees, and we can see that the shape of the surviving fragment to be little altered in 200 years.

Proof positive

Here was evidence that we were standing next to a tree with a likely age of above 1000 years. The Parochial Church Council members in attendance no longer saw a dead or dangerous trunk, instead they noted the vigour of new growth on its large central branch. It was decided to keep the area around the tree clear so that it was no longer competing for nutrients, and to create a viewing point in the churchyard from which the yew could be seen at its best. A return visit in 2012, when these photographs were taken, shows a steady recovery with much new wood being laid down on the old shell. There is no reason why this yew should not make a full recovery and live for many more centuries.



The Acton Beauchamp Yew (Photo: Tim Hills)

Safeguards needed

About a quarter of the remaining ancient yews in English churchyards exist as a fragment or fragments of the original tree. For some people this is not what a healthy tree should look like, leading to it being destroyed. The most recent instance of this was the felling and burning of an ancient yew in Ashford Carbonell churchyard on 23rd/24th November 2011. Its loss is a reminder of an unsatisfactory state of affairs in which the fate of individual ancient churchyard yews still remains in the hands of a few individuals, and highlights the inadequacy of the safeguards that are supposed to protect these trees.



The Acton Beauchamp Yew (Photo: Tim Hills)

Promising Progress

Christopher Carnaghan

European Champion Tree Forum

Meeting in Poland

The next ECTF meeting will be held at Bialowieza in eastern Poland from 14th-16th June 2013. The Bialowieza Forest is perhaps the largest surviving area of European primeval lowland mixed forest: pine, beech, oak, alder and spruce, and contains many very large and old trees, including Polish and European champions; it is also famous for its herds of European bison. This promises to be a stimulating meeting, in which participants will see some of these great trees as well as exchanging views and news. More details from the organiser, Peter Krasinski (piotr.krasinski@gmail.com) who is fluent in English. Peter has block-booked accommodation, and booked a coach from and to Warsaw, but both are space-limited so early reservation is advisable.

Seeking Funds

One other promising initiative of note comes from Spain, where Susana Dominguez Lerena of Bosques Sin Fronteras has drafted a very interesting proposal to apply for EU funds to "promote the preservation, dissemination and sustainable management of the most singular trees across Europe" (that's Eurospeak for recording and caring for ancient and remarkable trees), a project that she has named TREENET. In order to win funds from LIFE 2012 ("the EU's financial instrument supporting environmental and nature conservation projects throughout the EU") it is best for several groups from different countries to apply together. While the ECTF is not yet equipped to organise research or direct projects on its own, it can well lend its weight to such a worthy cause, with the prospect of helping to co-ordinate the work of others across Europe.

there is no central executive authority, or indeed funds to support one.



47m tall *Picea abies*, Bialowieza Forest (Photo: Peter Krasinski)



Pinus cembra in Switzerland (Photo: Michel Brunner)

Cyber Links

The ECTF is almost a virtual organisation, without staff or budget or formal membership, indeed hardly a structure at all. In this respect we are rather like a group of university researchers with common interests who share their ideas and experience and research (increasingly via the Internet), and meet informally every year or so. Typically such groups have a volunteer co-ordinator who organises the meetings and circulates information; but

New Co-ordinator

The Tree Register, founder of the ECTF, intended that it should be pan-European in scope, not associated too closely with any one country. Happily my successor as ECTF co-ordinator is Dr Gordon Mackenthun (gordon_mac@yahoo.com) who is German. He has much appropriate experience - not least in the creation of the Champion Tree Initiative in Germany, and as the main organiser of the ECTF meeting held in Bonn in October 2011 - and so is already known to many other enthusiasts across Europe. Gordon has created an informal steering group to help him organise ECTF activities and initiatives and has begun to develop new contacts for the ECTF in central and eastern Europe. As the ECTF develops it may well need a more formal structure, especially if it is to seek funds from public or private sources to promote the recording and appreciation of champion trees. Meanwhile the Tree Register will continue to oversee its activities, and encourages like-minded groups to support them.

**The 3rd ECTF meeting
Bialowieza, Poland
14th-16th June 2013**

The Elms of Brighton & Hove

Peter Bourne

One of the Last Havens for Old Ulmus



The Preston Twins, the largest *Ulmus procera* in the world (Photo: John Glover)

Local resident

By the time our Prince Regent turned up to try the iodine in the local sea air and spa mineral at outlets like one near Queen's Park, the elm became an important feature in the local landscape. It was then that other species like *Ulmus x hollandica* 'Hollandica' and *Ulmus glabra* appeared. The first of which became much more popular than *Ulmus procera* in many central areas of Brighton. Today the national champion girth of *Ulmus x hollandica* 'Hollandica' stands on the main London Road into the city and recently this achieved a measurement of 26m x 414cm; bigger than anything left anywhere in these isles.

Champions side by side

In TROBI newsletter Number 20, Owen Johnson spoke of places where there are three champions in the same location. In Brighton & Hove there are places where champions can be found almost side by side. Two such places are Stanmer and Preston Parks. Stanmer Park has 7 champions within a short distance of each other. These are *Ulmus davidiana*, *U. x hollandica* 'Superba', *U. x hollandica* 'Groenveld', *U. villosa*, *U. pumila* 'Aurescens'; and two clones one being *Ulmus* '202'; another, which is still a mystery, has the parentage *Ulmus minor x pumila*. Likewise Preston Park has quite an array: *Ulmus procera* (World Champions); *U. minor* 'Sarniensis' (girth and second tallest tree, plus the best line in the world); *U. 'Den Haag'*, and clones *Ulmus* '28', *U. '148'* and *U. '297'*.

We are not talking losses to Dutch elm disease; for years elm has been burdened by such grey clouds. Brighton & Hove is one very special sanctuary for a tree that inspired many hearts. The elm's fate has not been completely signed and sealed. Millions had been lost, thousands planted despite the absence in text, even if some of the avenues are now replaced by other enthralling arboreal giants. Elm's imperial crown has been passed around. Old glory is now a rare sentry, a lone elder of bygone days. In the south coast city there is a reminiscing population of how things use to be. A landscape dominated by the alluring magnificence of green nobility.

Great Contender

Brighton & Hove's elm population started as early as the Middle Ages, when *Ulmus procera* lined the narrow hundred fields stretching across the fertile Coombe Deposit valleys now occupied by the London and Lewes Roads; as well as the lower chalk areas of Hove, Portslade, Rottingdean & Ovingdean (all areas of ancient parishes). Remnants of these populations can still be found in old estates - now homes to many. Most noted examples include a hollow bole not more than 4m high but over 5m round that stood behind a converted barn in Ovingdean. It was finally felled due to decay. In these early years, the larger *Ulmus procera*, still growing in Preston Park, were planted. Of these, the Preston Twins are the core. They are now also likely to be the largest in the world. Their only competitors were trees in Sacramento, California (now gone). Another contender, the Goshen elm of Maryland, USA is not of the species, its foliage matches *Ulmus coritana*. Both Preston Twins now exceed 6m in girth and are completely hollow.



Ulmus villosa at Stanmer Park (Photo: John Glover)

Complex clones

Through the correspondence of Prof Hans Heybroek and the late Ray Evison many Asiatic and unusual clones had been planted in Brighton. Mr Evison was fascinated by elms and Prof Hans Heybroek dealt with D.E.D. experiments in Holland. Nevertheless, Hans was quite unprepared to see many of his early clones growing in the area. Hans' trees included some of the most complex clones. Today one such tree, *Ulmus* 'Lobel', is planted in great quantities in the city, the replacement for many elms lost through disease. Originally starting out as a numbered clone - 'Lobel' consists of three species of elm, of which all are present in Brighton & Hove. Some very early plantings of *Ulmus* 'Lobel' can be found in East Street, Brighton; dating from 1983.

Experiment

Not all the elms stand in city parks. Some are on streets like those in Portland Avenue, Hove and Crespian Way, Hollingdean. Diversity on these two sites is quite unprecedented. In Portland Avenue *Ulmus x hollandica* 'Wentworthii' and *Ulmus minor* 'Lombartsii' are mature rarities; whereas Crespian Way (which overlooks a main line railway) has many of Prof Heybroek's clones, alongside groups of *Ulmus wallichiana* (Bhutan elm). Elm types on Crespian Way are all represented in DED experiments around the globe. Council housing estates can also boast of having rare elms; Whitehawk has many, including *Ulmus* '202', *U. pumila*; and *U. glabra* 'Exoniensis' (with its weird twisted foliage). Other areas include Moulsecoomb, with champion *U.* '297'; and new villages like Woodingdean with champion *U.* '148' and *U.* '260'; the area also has woodlands with many examples of the native *Ulmus glabra* (Wych elm).



Ulmus davidiana, in Stanmer Park (Photo: John Glover)

Survival

The storm of 1987 claimed many elms in the city (a minimum of 2000); nevertheless, fine elms can still be found around the Level. Locally famous as an open space, with connections including fishermen and the Prince Regent; before the storm there were as many as 550 elms arching over the bordering pathways of this open space. A substantial number got blown down; they were replaced by *Acer pseudoplatanus*, *Platanus x hispanica* and *Tilia x europaea*; despite this, 170 of the original elms can still be seen today. It's one of the best places to find botanical differences between *Ulmus x hollandica* 'Hollandica' and *Ulmus procera*; both stand side by side. Generally speaking *Ulmus procera* comes into leaf two weeks earlier than its neighbour, has smaller, rounded and more scabrid leaves.

In all, with new elms being imported from the USA; this threatened genus is all set for the long haul in this, one of the last havens for old *Ulmus*.

The Great British Elm Experiment

The Conservation Foundation are attempting to unlock the mystery of why some trees have survived Dutch Elm Disease. Saplings grown from cuttings taken from mature trees have been distributed to schools, organisations and private landowners. The Tree Register has been supporting the project and in the Summer of 2012 Ancient Tree Hunt



Lead Verifier Steve Waters helped acquire cuttings from a roadside tree near Chipping Ongar in Essex. We have just heard (Feb 2013) that these cuttings have successfully been micro-propagated!



Photos: Above - the parent Elm (Photo: Steve Waters) (Right) l-r; Alison Nicholson and Libby Symon (Conservation Foundation); Barbara Wright (Micro-propagation Services) and Martin Day (Nurseryman) with some of the successful young Elm trees taken from other parent trees (Photo: Conservation Foundation)

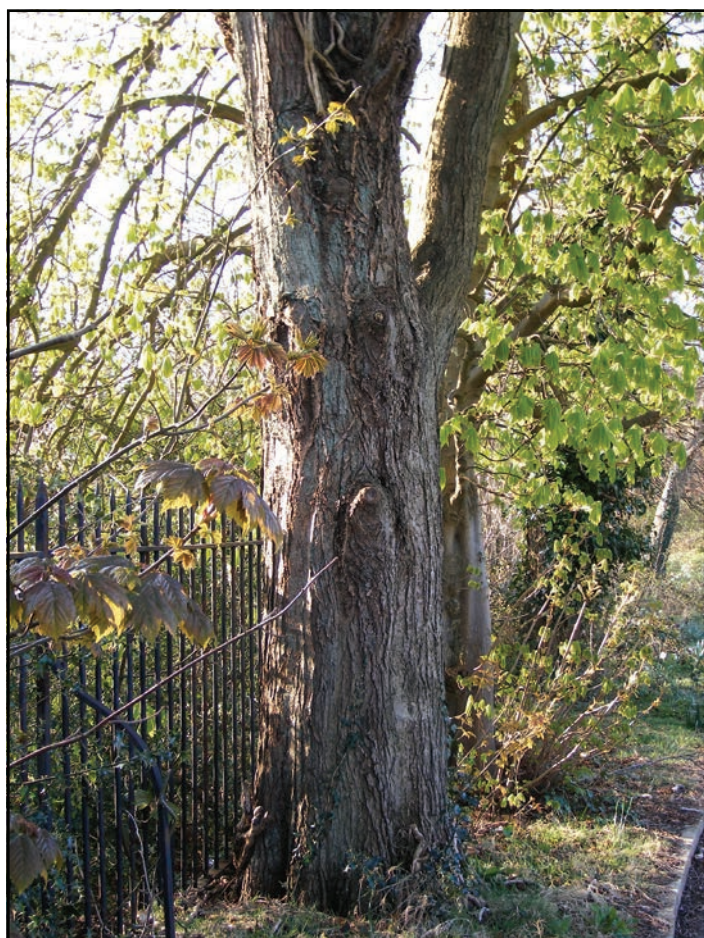
Some Service Trees

Much attention is nowadays focused on the 34 or so service trees (*Sorbus* microspecies or hybrids) endemic to Britain and Ireland, often with tiny populations in inaccessible places such as the limestone crags of the Cheddar and Bristol Gorges; a few have been assessed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as Critically Endangered.

In my years studying ornamental trees, I have come to recognise similar patterns of recurring forms, intermediate between Common Whitebeam (*S. aria*) and Wild Service (*S. torminalis*). The Tree Register is a long way from having the funds to commission genetic analyses of these planted populations; the entities I outline here may in reality involve more than one microspecies.

Spontaneous wild hybrid

Sorbus latifolia, the Service Tree of Fontainebleau, was distributed through the 19th century from the wild population in western continental Europe; a huge one recorded in Cirencester Park in 1905 by Henry Elwes in *The Trees of Great Britain and Ireland* was assumed to date from the early 18th century. Elwes describes this tree as a variant with some narrower leaves but as no seedlings from it had been found nearby, he did not consider it might be a spontaneous wild hybrid.



Joint champion *Sorbus decipiens* at Hastings Cemetery, East Sussex. The bark is much rougher than *Sorbus aria* (Photo: Owen Johnson)

True Service

A distinct variant, almost as frequently seen in British gardens as a whole and a particular feature of public parks in Yorkshire – there is a fine long avenue across Bradford's Bowling Park – has slenderer, double-toothed leaves with narrow bases, brighter orange fruit, and does not branch as broadly; most conspicuous are probably a trio in St James' Park opposite Horse Guards Parade. This service escaped the attention of W J Bean and the successive editors of *The Hillier Manual of Trees and Shrubs*, but was equated by Elwes with *S. decipiens*, a microspecies first described by J M Bechstein in 1815 from the Burgberg in Germany (where it too is now Critically Endangered). The name was adopted again to cover the UK population by Peter Sell in 1989 ('The *Sorbus latifolia* aggregate in the British Isles'; *Watsonia*, 17, 385-399); one labelled tree is by the South Walk in the Cambridge University Botanic Garden. However, the old tree in the Edinburgh Royal Botanic Garden (14x77 in 2004), which looks the same to me, is catalogued as the more variable wild hybrid *S. x vagensis*; another fine old specimen in the Hammond Arboretum at Market Harborough (20x56 in 2009) was sold to Francis Hammond in 1917 as the True Service, *S. domestica*. *S. decipiens* has retained its anonymous presence in the nursery trade until recent years: in the Cruikshank Botanic Garden in Aberdeen, mostly planted from 1970, a likely example in 2004 was labelled *S. latifolia*.



Sorbus decipiens in flower at Powis Castle, Powys (Photo: Owen Johnson)

Red flush

A few other planted trees with glossier leaves, slightly nearer *S. torminalis* in shape, are perhaps best placed under *S. x vagensis*. A fine one in the Woodland Walks area of Howick Hall in Northumberland was 19x60 in 2009, while one at Cluny House Gardens near Aberfeldy, in the harsher climate of the eastern Highlands (9x42 in 2007), had exquisite red shoots and a red flush to the young foliage.

Seed Collection

Another service which crops up occasionally in public parks - more often west of the Pennines, for whatever reason - has the smoother bark of a Whitebeam and slightly broader leaves which are deeply toothed but unlobed. Bean's *Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles* calls it 'Theophrasta', but Sell's *Watsonia* article describes it as a new microspecies, *S. croceocarpa*. Occasional wild seedlings are supposed to have originated from planted examples but, curiously, the original source of the cultivated population has never been determined. Specimens tend to be very floriferous but less vigorous than *S. latifolia*, though one, a remnant of Vicary Gibbs' vast early 20th century collection at Aldenham in Hertfordshire, has been drawn up to 23 metres. A diminutive one in the Cambridge University Botanic Garden was transplanted from the garden of E F Warburg after his death in 1966; he had apparently collected the seed at Symonds Yat. But two planted in Norfolk in the mid 20th century by Maurice Mason were labelled, oddly, "aff. *granulata*", an uncharacteristically open-crowned tree in the Queenswood Country Park north of Hereford was planted in 1969 as *S. latifolia*, and the younger of a couple in the Lynford Arboretum near Thetford was planted in 1990 as *S. 'Wilfrid Fox'*. Again, there are a few youngsters, and some obvious interlopers: one in Ropner Park, Stockton, ends a line of Swedish Whitebeam (*S. intermedia*). Today *S. croceocarpa* is offered by a few nurseries specialising in rare natives.

Hybrid clone

The truism that we sometimes devote our attention to distant places, at the expense of our own back gardens, was proved to me last spring when I 'discovered' a 3-metre tall *S. croceocarpa* in mine. In mitigation I should explain that my back garden slightly resembles a scaled-down version of the Cheddar Gorge (even before *Sorbus* microspecies started colonising it). My *S. croceocarpa*, clearly bird-sown, has grown up on a precipitous shady bank; there are two similar planted trees in my

local public park, Alexandra Park in Hastings, but they are also too shaded to flower or fruit much. As there are plenty of freely-flowering *S. aria* and *S. torminalis* around, I'm tempted to consider my tree a spontaneous new hybrid clone.

Talking point

Some of the native microspecies make diminutive trees with small foliage, lending them a special delicacy and recommending them as garden ornaments, not just as garden talking-points. *S. anglica*, *arranensis*, *leptophylla*, *leyana* and *wilmottiana* are now commercially available; the triploid *S. bristoliensis* is especially pretty, with a conspicuous group of three planted in 1945 off Broad Drive in Westonbirt Arboretum. Two rather younger trees which I noted in 2004 in the wooded valley of the Hollies, a public park in Leeds with a history of excellent horticulture, may also be genuine.



Sorbus hedlundii is one of many Asiatic whitebeams in big gardens. The hairs under the veins are gold and contrast with the silver of the rest of the underleaf - a beautiful feature which also makes this tree an easy one to identify. (Photo: Owen Johnson)

National Trust Focus on Ash

The National Trust are currently recording all of their notable and veteran ash trees.

Simon Baker, National Trust Nature Conservation Advisor for the National Trust can be seen here with one of the largest ash in Worcestershire at Hanbury Hall.

(Photo: Brian Muelaner)



Five Year Plan

It is over ten years since Trustees produced an action plan for the Tree Register, a time that has seen the computerising of over 190,000 records, built a new web site, developed an online champion tree database, published two books and created the European Champion Tree Forum. Considering the charity is run solely on the enthusiasm of a small dedicated group of volunteers, it is quite a remarkable achievement. As Director (an honorary position and, like my fellow Officers, a volunteer) I have been involved in one way or another for over twenty years, but it still surprises me that the charity is run from "offices" that include spare bedrooms and dining tables! There is a lot to be said for working from home, although our size has other drawbacks when it comes to fundraising opportunities. What is a constant inspiration to us all is that, as described by Owen Johnson in his Registrar's Report, we are still finding new and amazing champion trees! This is what inspires us and despite our over-crowded islands, tree hunting is as fulfilling now as it must have been in Victorian times.

Deeply indebted

In October 2012 Trustees met at the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens and discussed how to sustain and promote the profile of the Tree Register to ensure it may continue to thrive. With no pro-active fund raising we are deeply indebted to our members and donations from supporters. I am often asked why we charge membership to view the champion tree database. The answer is that we contribute towards something that is truly unique and subscriptions help ensure we can continue maintaining this and support our volunteers, particularly with increasing travel expenses. We strive to ensure our published data on champion trees remains as accurate and robust as possible. Our endeavours to achieve this often reduce our ability to regularly update our web site. We are therefore developing a new content management system so that appointed volunteers can edit pages and provide a more vibrant and changing web presence. Look out for these changes during 2013!



Tree Register Trustees Colin Hall (left) and Maurice Foster (middle) are shown the collection of rare *Taxodium* at the Beal Arboretum, Hertfordshire, by owner Andrew Beal.

Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Aiming to become more sustainable, Trustees have agreed a five year plan and are currently developing an action plan which will include PR and fund raising. For current members we hope you will wish to continue supporting the Tree Register and in particular be part of our 25th Anniversary Campaign in 2014. We also have the opportunity for the Tree Register to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, or CIO, which is a new legal form of charity. The CIO was created in response to requests from charities for a new structure which could provide some of the benefits of being a company, but without some of the burdens. This will enable the Tree Register to enter into contracts in its own right and its trustees will normally have limited or no liability for the debts of the CIO. A decision on this will be made at a Trustees meeting in April 2013.



A recorder training day at Staverton Park in Suffolk uncovers the hulk of an ancient rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) regenerating as a phoenix.

Ancient Tree Hunt

Working with the Woodland Trust on its Ancient Tree Hunt project has evidently been valuable for both charities. In 2012 the Tree Register supported five events promoting the Ancient Tree Hunt data for use by other organisations to inspire people and help protect ancient trees. We also delivered additional training and recording events for volunteers. Helping manage the Woodland Trust Volunteer Verifiers has given them additional opportunities to record a wider range of trees and increase their own knowledge and enjoyment. In return they have helped verify historical records and update champion trees. Last year 151 new county champions were discovered as part of the Ancient Tree Hunt.

Challenge

Maintaining an up to date record is a priority. 23% of our champion trees haven't been confirmed as surviving or re-measured within the past 10 years. Such trees will be a key focus for volunteers to re-find and with 5,000 champion trees around Britain and Ireland, this will be quite a challenge!

Much valued

Key partners we work with include The National Trust who are promoting champion trees throughout their gardens and helped organise the climbing of two champion trees at Prior Park, Bristol and Stourhead, Wiltshire. Such partnerships are much valued by us and Trustees are keen to maintain and develop our relationship with these and other organisations.



Working with the National Trust and tree climbing company Canopy Access at Stourhead, Wiltshire. (Photo: Edward Parker)

Ash data

The Tree Register database includes 3,600 ash trees, representing 82 different taxa from *F. americana* to *F. xanthoxyloides*. 958 local and national champion *Fraxinus* species can be searched for on our website. The top ten species recorded are shown in Fig 1, and represent 87% of all ash species recorded. Our data is geographically widespread - from Norfolk to Cornwall, Jersey, the Highlands of Scotland and as far west as Co. Cork in Ireland. Notable specimens greater than 3.5m girth appear in greatest numbers in Cumbria, Yorkshire, Kent, Derbyshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire. Ancient ash populations, such as those that make up wood pasture

sites in the north Lake District valleys of Borrowdale and Langdale in Cumbria, are of concern to the National Trust, who are a major landowner. And Ireland's landscape, dominated by ash in several counties, is clearly at risk if disease should reach there.

Historic record

Inevitably there are comparisons with Elm Disease, but we will not see the dramatic quick death of big trees as with Elm Disease, although the results may be sadly similar.

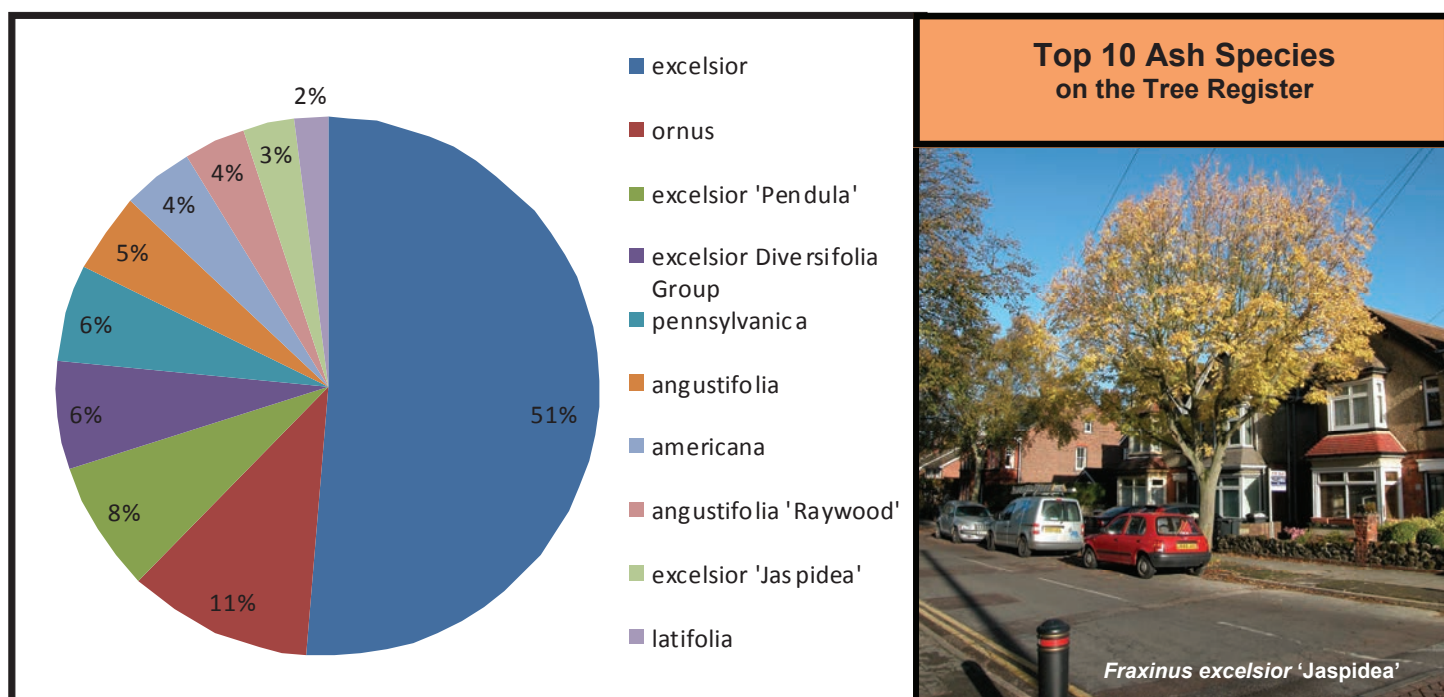
Valuable for research

The susceptibility to Ash Dieback (*Chalara fraxinea*) of many species is unknown, but the effect the disease will have on the treescape of our streets, gardens, parks and botanical collections is of grave concern. Collections of *Fraxinus* will inevitably help identify resistant species, currently believed to be restricted to those from America. The Tree Register database is a valuable source of information on the location and distribution of these species. For anyone undertaking research we are keen to make this as widely available as possible.

From what we have seen in other European countries, we can expect Ash Dieback Disease to affect our largest and oldest trees gradually over a number of years. Recovery from attack may only be temporary and repeated infection will weaken trees. Considering how widespread the elm was, we have relatively few historic records of champion elm trees. At least we have the opportunity today to ensure we have a more complete historic record of our ash trees for future generations.

Media

We aim to continue supporting our larger partners and professionals but ensure the Tree Register increases its public profile, getting wider recognition for its work and that of our volunteers. Being part of the Tree Register feels really special and exciting and I hope you will enjoy being part of this next phase of our journey too!



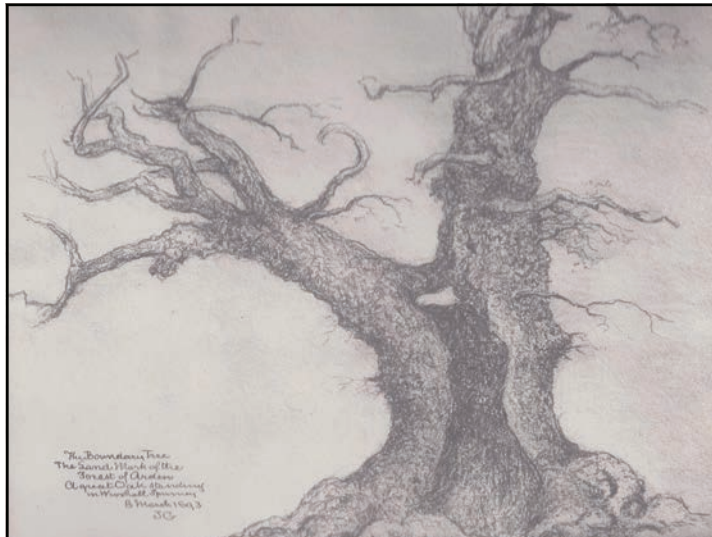
Old Oaks of Warwickshire

One of the books recently discovered belonging to the late tree recorder Hatton Gardner was *Some Old Oaks of Warwickshire*. A collection of sketches made by John Gulson mostly drawn in 1893. A book was made and published in 1902, but this compilation included all of the original sketches, pasted into an album.

The pencil sketches capture twenty five individual trees a landscape view of Stoneleigh Park and two detailed drawings of a street in Coventry from 1850.



Remains of the Old Bull Oak by J Gulson 1893



The Boundary Tree by J Gulson 1893

The Boundary Tree

"This great tree divided Balsall and Wroxhall. And stood close to Wroxhall Spinney. It must have been a familiar object to the Knights Templars during their settlement at Balsall. When the old custom of beating the bounds of Parishes took place, boys were taken with their elders and dropped through a hollow in the tree to impress the position on their memories. For a long time it must have stood alone. The Spinney adjacent is said to have been planted at the time the Common was enclosed, the site having been a roadway leading to the Common. The tree was blown down August 18th, 1902. A careful observer accustomed to trees estimates its age at 1,500 years, having been from the first a curly growing tree, and therefore a slow growing one."

The Bull Oak

"The Bull Oak is said to have been the largest tree in Warwickshire. It owes its name to the fact that a cow calved in its hollow, the calf being a bull. About 1870 some boys lighted a fire in it. The tree caught fire, and the greater part of it has crumbled away. It has never put out leaves since."

Fire is the cause of death for several old oaks but one, The Table Oak, was rescued just in time. "Men at work near, about a century ago, saw smoke coming from it, and found boys had lighted a fire in it, to destroy a hornets nest. After some difficulty and danger from the insects, the tree was preserved."

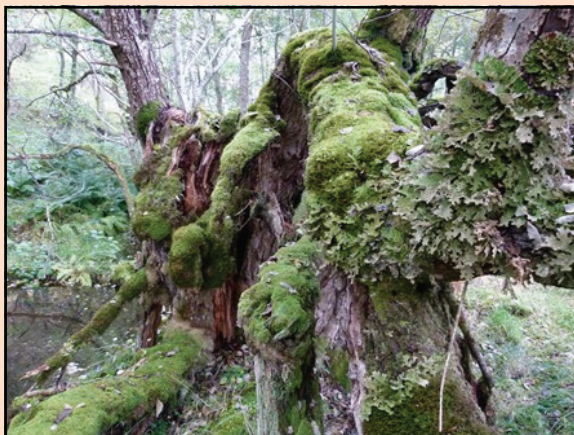
The Great Oak

Gulson records the girth of some trees. The Great Oak in Packington Park was 38ft around. The Great Oak in Stoneleigh Abbey was 28ft around at 5ft above ground. His drawing of this tree looks similar to the tree now referred to as "Shakespeare's Oak" that is 30ft in girth and stands near to the Abbey.

The collection provides a valuable historic record of some of Warwickshire's greatest trees. We plan to scan them all and put them on our web site.

Highland Fling

Its not often in the Highlands you can find two remarkable trees next to each other and right next to a main road. Landowner Michael Spencer Nairn invited us to record these two beauties on land he owns at Struy, west of Inverness



Above left - ancient Goat willow (*Salix caprea*) dripping in the lichen *Lobaria pulmonaria* 4.21m girth



Above right - Judy Dowling and David Alderman measure a 4.27m girthed cherry (*Prunus avium*) (Photos: Michael Spencer Nairn)