

# The Tree Register

Newsletter No. 22  
2013/2014



- The tallest conifer in Europe
- Argyll champions re-visited
- European Tree Forum meet in Poland
- Scarborough's Weeping Elm
- 25th celebration at Savill Garden

*Champion Hungarian Oak (Quercus frainetto) at Buxted Park, East Sussex (Photo: Owen Johnson)*



## Report from the Chairman

Colin Hall

# 25th Anniversary Appeal

To mark our Silver Jubilee, we launched our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Appeal in the summer and we are very grateful to all who have contributed so far. The Appeal is still open and if you have not contributed and would like to, you can still do so. We are a small charity and keep our administration costs to a minimum. Having no endowments and limited reserves, we rely exclusively on the generosity of members, charitable trusts and individual donors.

Since Alan Mitchell and Vicky Schilling set up the charity 25 years ago, we have developed what has become a unique national asset for environmental and educational purposes. This is increasingly accessed for research and reference by scientists, students, the media and those with a professional or amateur interest in trees. Through the dedication of our team of unpaid volunteers this reservoir of information has grown to a point where we now have over 200,000 individual tree records; and we now maintain separate databases for champion trees, ancient and veteran trees and ancient yews.

### Europe

The European Champion Tree Forum established by The Tree Register goes from strength to strength. Much credit is due to Chris Carnaghan who worked hard in its inaugural phase bringing together those with a particular enthusiasm for trees around Europe. Chris decided last year that he would like to stand down as our European Representative, having handed the secretariat role of the Forum to Gordon Mackenthun. We are most grateful to Chris for all his enthusiasm and hard work for The Tree Register. We are now looking to fill his role as our European Representative; if you are interested let us know.

### Alan Mitchell Lecture 2014

We are holding our 2014 Alan Mitchell Lecture on 17<sup>th</sup> May this year at the Savill Garden, Windsor, by courtesy of the Crown Estate. Mark Flanagan, the curator of the garden, will give the lecture (see back page). The event includes a guided tour of the garden, a drinks reception, and our popular Silent Auction of unusual trees. Numbers are limited so do buy your tickets now.

### Volunteers

Once again thanks are due to all our supporters and helpers during 2013, 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 the Trustees

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



Colin Hall (left) on a wet autumn day, in the Kent arboretum created by fellow Trustee Maurice Foster (right), admiring a Giant Sequoia planted in 1994 to commemorate the 100,000th tree recorded on the Register.

(David Alderman)

### The Tree Register

Registered Charity No.801565

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# Spectacular and subtropical!

**562** champion trees for the UK and Ireland have been updated or newly found in 2013. Since this represents over 12% of the total, I and my fellow volunteer recorders are more than fulfilling the Tree Register's premise that we should revisit existing champions every decade or so, and look out for new ones as we go.

### Hereford Heroes

Ninety of these champions are at Hergest Croft near Kington – a garden less visited than Wisley or Wakehurst Place but equalling them in beauty and exceeding them all for its range of rare and spectacular trees, which flourish magnificently in Herefordshire's rich soils. Four generations of the Banks family have planted here: the kind of continuity which matches the life-spans of the trees themselves but from which very few of our arboreta benefit. A third of the champions are rarities which have been added by the current owners, Lawrence and Elizabeth.



Wild-collected Forrest's Maple (*Acer pectinatum* subsp. *forrestii*) covered in magenta fruit, planted at Hergest Croft Gardens by Lawrence Banks (Owen Johnson)

### Pole Position

The title of Britain's tallest tree has changed hands three times this year, as hand-held lasers begin to be used more and more to provide reliable heights for the various contenders - all of which are still growing quite fast. Currently a Douglas Fir in Reelig Glen Wood west of Inverness holds the crown, and is the tallest tree found in northern Europe. Measured in November by David Alderman and Chic Henderson, it is agreed to be 66.4m tall.

### Vital Statistics

Those of you with a statistical bent can now check on how Britain and Ireland's trees measure up against the international competition at [www.monumentaltrees.com](http://www.monumentaltrees.com), which is the platform for the European record heights list (all laser-measured). International input is even helping us to discover more of our own tree heritage: Abe van der Veen, a contributor to [monumentaltrees.com](http://monumentaltrees.com) on holiday in Powys, spotted and with the farmer's permission was able to record a completely unknown Sweet Chestnut near Cwmdru with a single, clean bole just 11m in girth – one of the largest and most magnificent trees ever found in Britain.

### Warm Welcome

Just as I write this it seems difficult to imagine, but Britain is becoming a better and better home for heat-loving plants, and I am constantly surprised by what survives and what thrives. Several examples of a giant flowering tree from subtropical Queensland and northern New South Wales, the Silky-oak (*Grevillea robusta*), were raised by a local tree officer in the 1990s and planted in front of Rotherhithe police station, within the 'urban heat island' of central London. The single survivor is now 12m tall – a beautifully spire-shaped tree, now vigorous enough to withstand moderate frost and looks set to become really big; we are still waiting for it to flower.



Silky-oak (*Grevillea robusta*) in Lower Road, Rotherhithe (Owen Johnson)

### Welsh Wonders

To find rarities like this in everyday, public places is still unusual, although it is more common than you might imagine. At Cardiff in October I represented The Tree Register at a conference organised by the City Council whose subject was municipal arboreta and how their trees can be interpreted for the general public. This also gave me the opportunity to update our records for Cardiff's astonishing population of rare trees, which were planted through the twentieth century in the city's several magnificent parks by a succession of inspired superintendents and which now include 67 champions for Britain and Ireland. (This collection was partly built up in friendly rivalry with the city of Swansea, whose public gardens boast another 16.) A landscape planted with a huge variety of trees will be continually beautiful – and surely we all deserve beauty like this in our everyday lives, not just on the occasional visit to a famous garden. Its diversity will also provide safeguards against unpredictable future climate change, or the arrival of new tree diseases.



## 3rd European Champion Tree Forum

Gordon Mackenthun (ECTF Secretary)

# Bialowieza, Poland

Following the successful meetings of European big tree enthusiasts in Wespelaar, Belgium in 2010 and Bonn, Germany in 2011, Polish friends hosted a third meeting in Bialowieza on 14-16 June in 2013. The village is just on the edge of the National Park, one of the last natural forests in Central Europe. It is in the easternmost part of Poland close to the border with Belarus.

We welcomed a number of new participants including some from the Czech Republic and a reinforced delegation from Spain. The group gathered in Warsaw before setting off to Bialowieza. Presentations started with Marc Meyer reporting on his work in France with big sequoias. He now has some 10,000 trees in his database, including a giant 58.1 m tall. He reports that the response and the support from local people is enormous. Marc is also attached to the Arboretum Tervuren.



Members of the ECTF in the Bialowieza National Park 2013  
(Krzysztof Borkowski)

### Champion Tree of the Year

Roel Jacobs spoke on behalf of the Belgian Dendrological Society about the continuing work of collecting data and keeping the tree inventory and its database BELTREES up-to-date. After changes within the German Champion Tree Initiative last year, Andreas Gomolka, who has been measuring trees for years, joined the group. The official website will be renovated soon. It currently has 1239 trees, all of them being national champions or champion in one of the German states. Ralf Tegeler added that the future database will include other remarkable trees too, not necessarily being champions. The "Champion Tree of the Year" is a means to honour a single tree and thus raising in the local communities awareness for the value of old trees.

### Living legends

György Posfai runs his well-known website Dendromania with great success and is especially proud of the number of big black poplars he finds in the Danube floodplains. In Poland Krzysztof Borkowski described recording "strange" trees. An example being pines bending low above the ground before growing straight up, perhaps trained this way to make them useful for certain products.

He finally gave us a history of the Bialowieza forest. Susana Dominguez Lerena reported on her work for "Bosques sin fronteras" ("trees without borders"). The first and most famous project was "Arboles – Leyendas vivas" ("Trees – Living Legends"). More than 1000 contributors from all over Spain sent information about trees.

### National Park

Under the expert guidance of Artur "Arek" Szymura we had a good six hours hike through the National Park seeing nature getting its way as it should: There is a large variety of tree species (dominated by oak, ash, hornbeam and pine), they come in all shapes and sizes, dying trees are left alone to be colonised by fungi and lichens, toppled trunks are just moved from the trails only. The Bialowieza forest is not a virgin forest, it was managed for centuries for timber production and as a hunting ground. But when it became a National Park in 1923 all management was stopped and 90 years of nature's regime turned the forest into woodland as natural as you can get in Central Europe. Trees within the National Park tend to be rather tall than big (by girth) with spruces easily reaching 50 m.

### Monumental trees

A second round of presentations included Piotr Gach giving an overview on the state of the website of the Polish Dendrological Society which he is currently constructing. Tree Register member Rob McBride informed us about his work in Shropshire, England, where he records notable trees. Being also an ardent photographer, his talk was accompanied by splendid pictures. Luboš Uradnıcek gave us a presentation on the Czech memorial trees website. It was established in 2006 and now contains some 26,000 trees. Most of them are lime trees, some 1,000 years old. Many monumental trees in the Czech Republic are protected by a law since 1992. Finally, a computer tool to produce 3-dimensional pictures of trees was demonstrated. The results were stunning!

### Huge applause

The forum ended with huge applause for Piotr Krasinski for his exceptional organisational skills and his contagious good humour. On the way back to Warsaw we were introduced to a giant pine by Krzysztof. But then it was time to go. Warsaw was reached by mid-afternoon, giving everybody good time to travel on or to enjoy the pleasant summer evening. However, some of us stayed on and went to the Rogów Arboretum the next day. The next ECTF meeting will be held in Spain in the autumn of 2014. It will be again a three day venture and Susana volunteered to organise the meeting, with the help of her Spanish colleagues, the ECTF Secretary and other members.

IN MEMORY OF DR RALF TEGELER  
1958-2013  
A FOUNDER MEMBER OF ECTF



# Latest Yew Discoveries

**A**ncient Yews (likely age 800+) and Veterans (likely age 500+) continue to be discovered and added to our database and website. Most of the yews first recorded in the writings of 19<sup>th</sup> century travellers have been located, as have those that appear in Botanical Society records, such as those kept by the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Society. More recently the *King's England* series by Arthur Mee and the detailed records of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) have helped us locate previously unrecorded yews. Although such sources of information are now largely exhausted, significant old yews continue to be discovered. Below are some of the most recent:

In September, we heard that two old yews had been found growing on a motte in Shropshire, visible both from the road and the nearby 12<sup>th</sup> century Middleton Chapel. The privately owned Scheduled Monument is described in *Discovering Shropshire's History* as 'an unusually small example of a medieval motte (earthwork castle), with steep, stepped sides, this may have been a watchtower rather than a castle'. Since the circular motte is 20 metres across it was puzzling that yews in such a prominent position were neither mentioned in 19<sup>th</sup> century publications nor in Andrew Morton's 1986 *The Trees of Shropshire*. The explanation is that the mound and adjacent land had become so overgrown that once the yews could no longer be seen, they were forgotten. It was the persistence and hard work of Henry Chance, who spent many weeks clearing away the undergrowth, shrubs and many trees, that these aged yews were discovered. They might otherwise have remained hidden for centuries more. Since old yews at archaeological sites have not always received favourable treatment, it is possible that they owe their continued existence to having been hidden for so long.



One of the two veteran yews at Middleton Motte, Shropshire  
(Tim Hills)



One of the six veterans found on the slopes at Railford Bottom, Wiltshire  
(Peter Norton)

## Research Reaps Reward

In Priors Dean churchyard in Hampshire is a 25ft girthed ancient yew. Less well known is the group of yews by the side of a sunken lane, one of several minor roads leading towards this remote church. In October, Peter Norton recorded 7 yews, and in doing so discovered two to be veteran. Yews at Whatley in Wiltshire were first noted in Chetan and Brueton's *The Sacred Yew* (1996), which describes a grove of 'about 100 trees; pollarded to 3ft from the ground about 600 years ago, threatened by nearby quarrying'. During several visits Peter Norton explored most paths in the area, searching in vain for the elusive grove. His journeys were not entirely wasted, for he discovered a significant cluster of yews at Railford Bottom. In spite of the steep and sometimes precipitous limestone slopes we were able to record 16 individuals, of which no fewer than 6 are classified as veteran.

## Tree Hunt Treasures

In 2010 The National Trust owned 630,000 acres of land, so it is not surprising that old yews are to be found on some of their estates. Ancient Tree Hunt member Nick Brown discovered two in Holesack Wood on the Sizergh/Brigsteer estate in Cumbria. One is a magnificent ancient specimen, in excellent condition and with a girth of almost 24ft, while nearby is a veteran, blown down about 100 years ago but 'still very much alive'. On the Croft Castle Estate in Herefordshire, Andy Gordon recorded several old yews for the Ancient Tree Hunt. Among them I was able to confirm two fine ancient and one veteran yew.

## Success in Somerset

Finally to churchyards, where it is still proving possible to find previously unrecorded old yews. In August a 19ft veteran was discovered by Sue Smith at Tickenham in Somerset. At the time of her find I had just embarked upon one of my many retirement projects - to document the churchyard yew population of Somerset - and this news provided welcome encouragement.



## Scottish Updates

Charles Henderson

# Champion Trees of Argyll and more

Tree Register volunteers have set themselves a challenging target to ensure all champion trees are found, re-measured and photographed at least every ten years to ensure our champion tree database is as up to date as possible. In 2013 Scottish tree hunters John Miller and Charles (Chic) Henderson headed for Argyll on a mission...

### Ardanaisaig

At 6:30am on a bright Sunday morning in May, we set out from Auchtermuchty in Fife, heading west to Taynuilt where we turned on to a single track road taking us to our first destination at Ardanaisaig Hotel, twelve miles into the countryside, with spectacular views overlooking Loch Awe. Armed with tapes, GPS, notebook and Nikon Forestry Laser we soon tracked down the two *Nothofagus x apiculata* *nv. Blairii* and the *Rhododendron vernicosum* also a good *Picea sitchensis* and a fine *Araucaria araucana*. Here in this beautiful place, with warm sunshine, among this fine collection of trees, a day would not be wasted.



Ardanaisaig Hotel and (right) its champion *Rhododendron vernicosum* (Charles Henderson)



### Arduaine and Achamore

Continuing our journey to our next destination, we opted to stay on this unclassified route to Kilmelfort, cutting out Oban and the bustle of bank holiday traffic. We arrived in good time at Arduaine Gardens to be met by Maurice Watkins head gardener for the NTS property, who kindly gave us a quick tour of the specimens we were seeking. If you are a fan of Rhododendrons, this is your Heaven! I will not list all the trees but the *Trochodendron aralioides* and *Hoheria* are worthy of seeking out on a visit to this sheltered spot overlooking Asknish Bay.

A sandwich snatched, we were on our way to Tayinloan and the 3 o'clock ferry to the Island of Gigha. Twenty minutes later we were heading to Achamore House where we found the *Larix gmelinii* looking very healthy just off the main drive.

One hour and twenty minutes to measure, photograph and be back in time to catch the last ferry. Quickest island hop ever!



*Trochodendron aralioides* at Arduaine Gardens (Charles Henderson)

### Stonefield Castle

Retracing our steps next stop was Stonefield Castle Hotel, where we found the champion *Abies borisii-regis* on the hill facing the main entrance. Some fine trees here but the energy reserves were dwindling fast, so we headed for Lochgilphead and a place to eat and put our heads down.



## Kilmory Castle

The Argyll Hotel provided us with an excellent chicken curry in the evening and replete with the full Scottish Breakfast, we set out to go the short distance to Kilmory Castle and the magnificent gardens there. It was a rather drier damp morning but the rain did not dampen our enthusiasm and in a relaxed mood, we searched for the *Cryptomeria japonica* var. *sinensis* and the *Prunus pendula*, on our ever diminishing list of champions to measure! This is another great collection of trees including, Paper Birch, Holm Oak and London Plane (knobbly burred) to mention a few.



John Miller assesses the *Cryptomeria japonica* var. *sinensis* at Kilmory Castle (Charles Henderson)

## Crarae

Onward to Crarae, the gardens and plant collection of Tree Register Vice President Sir Ilay Campbell Bt, now owned by National Trust Scotland. Driving into heavy rain sweeping down Loch Fyne but with four trees to remeasure, John and I resigned ourselves to a wet climb to the top of the gorge. With its precipitous slopes and wild waterfalls, the Crarae burn was in full spate. *Gevuina avellana* was the first victim of the tape and I was checking out the waterproof qualities of my Pentax K20D, as we duly noted the measurements in my slightly damp notebook. A beautiful *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* 'Lanei Aurea', stood over the rushing water, which we measured on the way down. But where were the champion *Pinus koraiensis* and *Abies kawakamii*?



(Left) *Abies kawakamii* and (mid) *Pinus koraiensis* whilst (right) John Miller has a eureka moment in the rain at Crarae (Charles Henderson)

Ah well, another trip round in the rain with still no sign! "Nigel help!" The head gardener explained patiently, "At the top of the gorge, limbo dance under the *Malus* before the bridge and you will see them." After another sap draining climb, this time in bright sunshine, there they were in full view!

## Balloch Castle

Bidding a fond farewell to the friendly staff, we set out on our final leg to Balloch Castle Gardens in West Dunbartonshire, via a visit to Ardkinglas and the *Abies grandis* and *Abies alba*. Sunshine all the way and after a long search, we found the *Acer palmatum* 'Shishigashira' but the *Sorbus alnifolia* eluded us. Ah well, you cannot win them all!

It was an adventurous two days, with John Miller doing his usual superb job, identifying the huge variety of specimens to be found in the places we visited. A big thanks to the friendly staff that assisted us and the Argyll Hotel Lochgilphead for fine accommodation.



Balloch Castle (Charles Henderson)



# Cragside claims 200,000th tree on Register

### 200,000 tree records

Reaching our 200,000<sup>th</sup> record on the Tree Register comes twenty years after our co-founders Alan Mitchell and Victoria Schilling announced the 100,000<sup>th</sup> record in 1993. At that time the records were still held on a hand written card index system in Alan's conservatory. It is fitting that we are celebrating two hundred thousand computerised records within our 25<sup>th</sup> Jubilee year. This milestone is also recognised by recording a "new" champion tree - a 40m tall Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) on the National Trust's Cragside property at Rothbury, Northumberland. We believe this is our tallest native conifer and the first native conifer recorded to have reached 40m anywhere in Britain or Ireland. It is also most fitting that the tree was spotted and recorded by our Registrar, Owen Johnson, who alone has measured more than 70,000 trees.



The 200,000th tree recorded on the Register. 40m tall Scots Pine at Cragside, Northumberland (Owen Johnson)

Some members will recall celebrating our 100,000<sup>th</sup> tree record with the planting of 100 Giant Sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) on sites around Britain and Ireland during the winter of 1994/95. Although not all have survived, we believe more than 70 are still going strong. The best we are aware of is a tree planted by Trustee Maurice Foster in his arboretum in Kent which is 13m tall x 2.05m girth (see photo on p.2).

Maintaining a robust living dataset is always a challenge and the Trustees' five year plan includes a target that aims to ensure at least 80% of our champion tree records are no more than ten years old and no less than 50% have been recorded within the last five years. With one of the stormiest winters for many years, we are more grateful than ever for reports received from owners, gardeners, staff, volunteers and supporters who help update this information. Hearing of the loss of a champion is never good news and invariably leads to a longer list of past and potential champions to inspect before confirming the new champion. 2013 has seen fantastic volunteer effort in Scotland - finding, re-measuring and photographing champion trees.

### Definitive champions

A planned development to improve our website will allow members more database search options, to filter and display trees. Current extended lists for champions for some species includes trees of different growth forms which are not easily comparable. Growth form categories have been around since 1999, following consultation with tree measurers and the Tree Register of Ireland. Listing these will become much clearer in the future, so look out for news on this in our next "Latest News" sheet and on the website. For those who are unsure how trees are categorised by the Tree Register, see the Champion Tree Classification table on the opposite page.

### Laser hypsometer

Anyone following the news on our tallest tree will be aware that the title has changed quite a few times in the past few years. Mostly being shared by trees in Scotland, the title went briefly for the first time to a 65.4m Welsh Douglas Fir in Snowdonia, as reported in September 2013. The use of reasonably priced accurate laser hypsometers has provided volunteers the opportunity for the first time to eliminate errors experienced when using standard forestry clinometers and hypsometers. In the case of these older instruments, it is too easy to record exaggerated heights, although with experience and care this can be much reduced. The laser measurer is more likely to record a lower than true height as it is reliant on being able to see and hit the very tip of the highest branch.

### Tallest Conifer in Europe is 66.4m in Scotland

At Reelig Glen, north of Inverness, a flash flood took down a number of trees (as well as a footbridge) and the Forestry Commission cleared further trees, opening up views for the public. This also created better sight-lines of the tallest trees, including in 2003, the tallest tree in Britain, a Douglas Fir named Dughall Mor. When Owen Johnson and John Miller visited last summer, Owen identified the tallest tree to now be some 50m below Dughall Mor and easily measured from the luxury of the path. Despite the strength of the wind blowing the tip some 2m off centre, a respectable 64.8m was recorded. Several months later I found myself with Charles Henderson staring up at the very same tree on the calmest of November days. To aid accuracy we placed a white paper marker on the tree to identify true ground level when viewed from a distance. We were both using Nikon 550 Forestry Pro laser rangefinders and recorded identical top heights of 66.4m. Two bemused dog-walkers were able to share in our excitement at recording the first tree over 66m and the tallest conifer in Europe.





# The Definition and Categorisation of a Champion Tree

**A champion tree is the largest in girth or tallest of its species.**

**Girth is measured following approved guidelines and is affected by tree form.**

**Tree form is described as being one of the three following categories:**

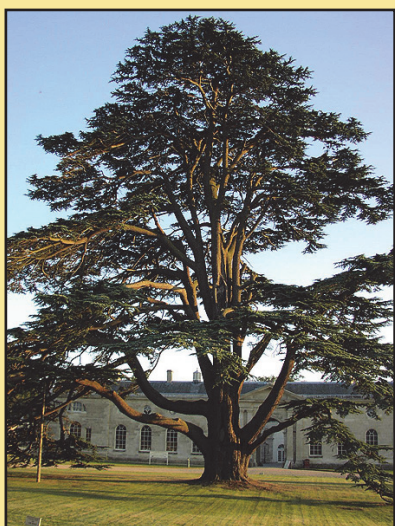


## Category A

A tree with a good clean single trunk as typically seen in woodland and for most conifers. The girth can be recorded at the standard 1.5m above ground level. Low branches do not appear to exaggerate the girth at this point.

May be described as a maiden tree but can be a pollard or a single stem arising from a coppice or part of a multi-stem. Where low branches or bumps and burrs obstruct measurement the girth may be recorded from 1.2m – 1.7m and described as a Category A tree if the tree has a well defined single trunk at 1.5m

The largest Category A tree will usually be considered the definitive champion.\*



## Category B

This is a tree whose smallest girth is recorded between ground level and 1.2m due to low branches, bumps and burrs. It includes heavily burred trees which may still be recorded at 1.5m but where the girth is clearly exaggerated by the burrs and so not readily comparable to a similar sized Category A tree.

Many ancient oak pollards fall into this category, often measured at 1m-1.2m. May also describe a tree arising naturally as two or more stems where it appears to have a natural low fork on a single short trunk.

Where a Category B tree is larger than the largest Category A tree, this will also be shown as a champion, alongside the largest Category A tree.\*

Where no Category A tree is displayed, the largest Category B tree will be considered the definitive champion.

## Category C

This is a tree whose girth appears to be made up of two or more stems arising close to the ground or from a short stump. May arise from the same root or independently but fused together. It includes trees described as being multi-stemmed, coppice and bundles – arising naturally, from management or deliberate plantings.

The girth will be the smallest measurement recorded between ground level and 1.5m and whilst some fused bundles can be measured at 1.5m, it will frequently be 0.1m-0.5m.

Where a Category C tree is larger than the Category A and B trees, this will also be shown as a champion. Category C trees often have an impressive volume and although this is not measured, these trees are often visually more impressive than Category A or B trees.

Some tree species grow naturally as this form and where no Category A or B trees are displayed, the largest Category C tree will be considered the definitive champion.



\*For a species that naturally grows as a Category B or C tree it will be at the Registrar's discretion to include the largest Category A tree.



## Biggest Bean!

David Alderman

# Britain's Oldest Catalpa?

When botanical artist and writer Mark Catesby returned to England from travelling in South Carolina in 1726 he brought with him the seed of the Southern Catalpa (*Catalpa bignonioides*). Its exotic seed pods gave it the common name of the Bean Tree or Indian Bean. Catesby wrote that when he discovered the tree it was unknown in the habited parts of Carolina but this exotic looking tree began to be planted once he introduced it to them from more remote areas. He predicted it would also become a commonly seen tree in England and following his introduction he later wrote *"it being as hardy as most of our American Plants, many of them now at Mr Christopher Grays, at Fulham, having stood out several Winters and produced plentifully their beautiful Flowers, without any Protection, except the first Year."*

By 1837 J C Loudon had listed nine notable Catalpa with planting years from 1770 but most of these and presumably original plantings have all but gone. A tree at Gray's Inn had a tablet suggesting it was planted by Francis Bacon in 1598 but this has always been doubted. Some layered branches at Syon Park may well have its origins as an early tree and several trees allegedly from the C18th have no evidence to support this. The oldest and most intact Bean Tree we know of is a relatively recent discovery.



Helen Tyler admires the contorted shapes of the bark on her ancient Catalpa (David Alderman)

The family home of Christopher and Helen Tyler in Hanwell, Greater London was built in 1809. A wonderful weary old Catalpa in their garden was already propped and in a semi-recumbent state when they moved in as children in 1952. It was volunteer Steve Waters, when helping with some conservation work nearby, who first brought it to the attention of the Tree Register. Branches already cut off when the family moved in, still visibly have more than 130 annual rings, suggesting the tree is contemporary with the building in 1809. This great tree has therefore probably already celebrated its 200<sup>th</sup> birthday and is our oldest Bean Tree!

Its split and fragmented trunk measures 4.9m girth just above ground level, which also makes it the largest ever recorded. Its hollow decayed insides were once filled with concrete and various props and posts now support the trunk and branches from lying completely on the ground. Despite its age and no doubt thanks to its loving custodians, this Catalpa is still flowering as spectacularly as when the first tree must have taken Mark Catesby's breath away when he saw it in the out-backs of Carolina almost three hundred years ago.

## Queen Elizabeth's Oak in Greenwich Park?

The Friends of Greenwich Park Annual Lecture 2014 presented the results of dendrochronology on the remains of the Queen Elizabeth's Oak. It was an interesting lecture with an entertaining speaker in Dr Jane Sidell who is no stranger to ancient trees, having researched the submerged 6,000 year old forest trees on the Thames at Erith. Dr Sidell was able to confirm that the trunk is definitely an oak (either pedunculate or sessile). The only doubt in its identification coming from an error on the First Edition OS map recording it as an "Old Chestnut Tree".

### Dendrochronology provides the answer

A sequence of 233 rings provided a cross-match to the years 1569-1801 – excluding lost sapwood and decayed heartwood. The tree was still partially alive in 1878 but dead by 1904. A 100 year old oak nearby provided growth ring evidence for its possible early years on this site and although we may never identify a precise germination date, the best estimate is that it began life in c.1300. Pre-dating the emparkment in 1433 it was therefore a wild tree of the mediaeval landscape. When Queen Elizabeth was born at Greenwich in 1533 the tree would have been significant in the landscape and so justifies its name - Queen Elizabeth's Oak.



Remains of the Queen Elizabeth's Oak (Steve Waters)



## Scarborough's Weeping Elm

Lucy Lambley - Action Group

# A Jewel in Yorkshire's Crown

**This** beautiful Weeping Elm in a circular raised bed grows on the exact spot marked by a circle and tree on maps of Scarborough dating back into the 1800's. It is planted on the site of Scarborough's Union Workhouse which was opened in 1859. With the raised bed restricting its growth it is difficult to date and with extensive alterations completed in 1897 this gives alternative dates to the age of the tree, possibly being either 120 or 150 years old.



Weeping Beauty (Alison Evershed)

### Within these Walls

In 1948 the workhouse buildings became part of the NHS and re-opened as St Marys Hospital with generations of Scarborough born within its walls and remained

Scarborough's main hospital until closure and demolition in 2001, the only surviving elements being the original entrance building now known as the Ellis Centre and the Weeping Elm.

### Waxing Lyrical

With branches likened to the fingers of a Japanese dancer this weeping form of Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra* "Pendula") is unusual in the north of England, and with the loss of so many Elms to Dutch Elm Disease, it marks it out as a tree of special interest. In mid winter its branches become a stopping off point for Waxwings, chattering together like tiny parrots while clearing local bushes of their berries.

### TPO

What made this unusual tree and raised bed so significant that it is consistently marked on maps for well over a century? Although many attempts have been made there is still no Tree Preservation Order to protect it, even though, when taking into account its age, it is in good condition? By not only admiring its beauty but also realising the historical value of this unique Weeping Elm to the area and its significance to many generations of Scarboroughians it should be protected.

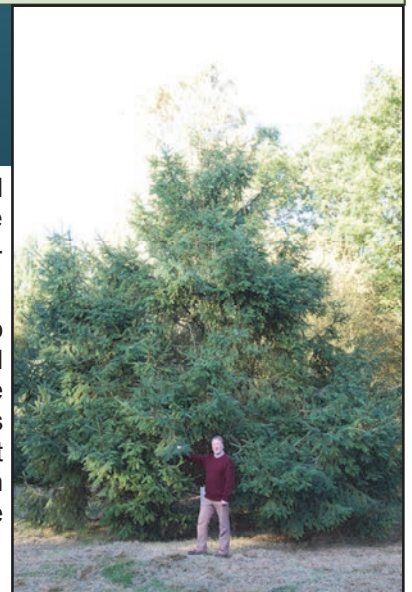
### Call to Arms

With an existing public right of way beneath its branches, and the close proximity of the Ellis Centre, the small plot covering the tree and land up to the Ellis Centre could so easily be re-landscaped as a small public garden, both protecting this beautiful Weeping Elm and acting as a memory to St Mary's Hospital. Now recognised as a Champion Tree of Yorkshire, yet still under major threat from redevelopment, it is only the public that can save it by making their views known to Scarborough Borough Council.



The Yorkshire Arboretum is a glorious 120 acre garden of trees from around the world set in a stunning landscape of parkland, lakes and ponds on the Castle Howard Estate near York. There are 42 champion trees to be discovered as well as a further 24 champions in the Ray Wood garden.

A number of important Jim Russell introductions, including this *Abies hickelii* (photo right) have grown to become the champions of Britain and Ireland but found themselves growing beneath power lines. With the threat of statutory pruning by the power company to give clearance of the cables, the Yorkshire Arboretum and its volunteers produced a defensive report highlighting the importance of this collection. It was wonderful to hear that this was one case where the trees won and at much expense the power line was successfully moved and diverted around the edge of the arboretum. For more information go to [www.yorkshirearboretum.org](http://www.yorkshirearboretum.org)



Above: The rare Hickel's Fir from southern Mexico. A Jim Russell collection (JR426) planted in 1983 and now a champion! (Roy Lancaster)



Left: The John Simmons Visitor Centre and café (Alison Evershed)



# *A Century of Plants from China*



## The Alan Mitchell Lecture 2014 Saturday 17th May The Savill Garden, Windsor

Many members will be aware that every other year we organise a meeting and lecture to honour the memory of our founder Alan Mitchell. The Alan Mitchell lecture is the centrepiece of the day, given by a distinguished speaker on a subject of likely appeal to members and of particular interest to Alan. This year we will meet at the Savill Garden on Saturday 17th May and our speaker will be Mark Flanagan, Keeper of the Gardens in Windsor Great Park. Mark will illustrate the incomparable variety of Chinese trees to be seen everywhere in our gardens, parks and botanical institutions - woody representatives of the richest, most varied flora in the world.

The word 'incomparable' is used advisedly - few are aware of the extraordinary comparative wealth of the Chinese flora. There are an estimated 30,000 higher plant species in China, no less than one eighth of the entire world flora. It compares to around 17000 species in the whole of North America and a mere 2500 in Europe, a figure comfortably exceeded on Emeishan, a single mountain in Sichuan province. To take one example of comparative tree populations - there are more than 130 oak species in the single western province of Yunnan in the four genera of *Quercus*, *Castanopsis*, *Lithocarpus* and *Cyclobalanopsis*, compared to two in the UK, both *Quercus*. This wealth of plants was not fully revealed until towards the end of the nineteenth century and the influx of plants from China something over a hundred years ago began to revolutionise gardens in this country.

Mark Flanagan is an acknowledged authority on the trees of China. He will draw on personal experience from his many plant expeditions to China under the auspices of RBG Kew where he worked for more than 10 years, primarily at Wakehurst Place. He has also travelled extensively in East Asia and North America. Mark has managed the world renowned Savill and Valley Gardens at Windsor since 1997 and apart from giving regular lectures, writing articles and co-authoring two books on plant collecting, he is Chairman of the RHS Woody Plant Committee, a Trustee of the Chelsea Physic Garden and a member of the Gardens Panel of the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens and Arboretum.

Chinese trees are our theme for the day and prior to the lecture, the programme includes a guided tour, where rare Chinese trees such as *Acer sterculiaceum* ssp *franchetii* and *Alangium chinense* feature among the 37 Champion trees in the Savill Garden. After the tour you can enjoy a cup of tea and a glass of wine with fellow enthusiasts while making a bid for a tree in our increasingly popular Silent Auction. Chinese trees already donated for sale include rarities such as *Carpinus pubescens* and the strikingly beautiful monospecific *Meliodendron xylocarpum*.

### **Book Now! Includes free entry to Savill Garden**

It promises to be a very interesting and informative day and tickets for the event, which cost £20, are on a first come, first served basis. Tickets include free entry to the garden, a garden tour, refreshments, nibbles and participation in the Silent Auction. If you would like to join us, simply phone 01234 768884 or email [info@treeregister.org](mailto:info@treeregister.org)