

# The Tree Register

Newsletter No. 23  
2014/2015



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Champion Horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) at Hughenden Manor, Bucks. (Photo: Roeland Jacobs)



## Report from the Chairman

Colin Hall

# Celebration Year

We were delighted to see so many of you at our 2014 Alan Mitchell Lecture at the Savill Garden in Windsor Great Park, celebrating the end of our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year. After guided tours of the garden and its Champion Trees led by Mark Flanagan, the Keeper of the Gardens, guests enjoyed a drinks reception in the splendid Savill Building and then bidding at the Silent Auction for over 40 fine specimens of rare or unusual trees.

As the hammer went down on the auction, we moved to the Lecture Theatre where Mark gave a fascinating and extremely interesting lecture on "A Century of Trees from China". We are very grateful to Mark and his colleagues at the Savill Garden for hosting this event, to friends for helping with the organisation and especially to fellow trustee and plant hunter, Maurice Foster, who coordinated and donated many of the plants for the auction, which raised over £1200 for the charity. We are also grateful for Bryan Roebuck's report in our Summer Latest News giving a supporters perspective on this event which was clearly enjoyed by those attending.

### Databases

As well as the champion tree database, maintained by Owen Johnson, our Registrar, we manage the Ancient Tree Inventory database, as part of our partnership with The Woodland Trust. This database now extends to over 140,000 trees, with over 15,000 new records having been validated during the year by the volunteer verifiers. The Tree Register database has also increased and been updated, thanks to the great efforts of Owen and our volunteer tree hunters, with over 6,800 new sets of data being added during the year.

### Europe

The 4th European Champion Tree Forum was held in Madrid last October and, once again, was well supported with David Alderman, our Director, representing The Tree Register (report on p.10&11)



#### Cover Photo

Thanks to a veteran tree survey carried out at Hughendon Manor by National Trust Ranger Steve Kirkpatrick, this Horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) measuring 7.33m at 1.1m is currently recognised as the biggest in Europe!

Photo by Roel Jacobs

**We are very grateful to Sir Paul McCartney for his continued generosity in sponsoring this newsletter**

We are delighted that Philippa Lewis has agreed to become our European Representative, taking over from Chris Carnaghan, who inspired the formation of this group in 2010.

### The Dowager Duchess of Devonshire

We were saddened by the death, during the year, of the Dowager Duchess of Devonshire, who was a great supporter of The Tree Register and our patron from 1988–2007. She took a keen interest in our work and generously hosted many trustees meetings at Chatsworth, including one memorable time when she led us from our meeting through an open window into the garden to avoid the visitors in the main house.

### Volunteers

Once again, thanks are due to all our supporters and helpers during 2014: to David, Owen, the Ancient Tree 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**

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# Continual expansion of quality data

**9,500** records have been added to the Tree Register in 2014, 40% of them updates for known specimens and the rest of them all new. Over the last five years, the totals have shown a healthy consistency, as remarkable trees continue to be discovered, in particular by the Ancient Tree Hunt, our partnership project with the Woodland Trust. I suppose one day we shall run out, but for now the Register's continual expansion in no way reflects any dilution in the quality of the data entered. All the trees have been hand-picked by myself, as Registrar, and most are nationally or internationally important for stature or rarity.

### Extending the range

980 of the year's records represent new figures for British and Irish champions, a total boosted, in part, by routine updating of our data for some of the biggest collections, such as the Westonbirt Arboretum. However, 380 of the champions are completely new – many of them in collections such as Tregrehan in Cornwall where Tom Hudson is constantly extending the range of species which turn out to be able to reach tree-size in our changing climate.



At Tregrehan near St Austell, Cornwall, Tom Hudson's recently planted *Hagenia abyssinica* already looks destined to be a champion  
(Photo: Owen Johnson)



Great Oak at North Nibley (Photo: Brian Jones)

### Busy Brian

Brian Jones, this year's most prolific Ancient Tree Hunter, measured for the very first time the Great Oak, a private tree under the Cotswold scarp at North Nibley. It is a Sessile Oak and girths 10.5m, making it the fifth biggest currently known in Britain. (And, lest we take our trees for granted, much larger and older than any known to survive elsewhere in the world.)

### Downton

By contrast, wild limes, fantastically gnarled and hollow, are the biggest and oldest trees in many European countries. None in Britain quite like this were known until Brian, with Tim Epps, recorded two Broad-leaved Limes together in a field under Hunston Hill on the Downton Castle estate in Herefordshire. Their hollow boles are reduced to fragments and both remnants are 9m round.



Bryan Roebuck, regular contributor of photographs for our website champion tree database, captured the Oriental plane (*Platanus orientalis*) at Kew Gardens heavy with seed this winter. (Photo: Bryan Roebuck)

Over 140,000 trees throughout the UK can be interrogated on the Ancient Tree Inventory

[www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk](http://www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk)



## Ancient Yew Group

Tim Hills

### The Tandridge Yew...

In Tandridge churchyard in Surrey is an extraordinary ancient yew. It was described by Mee in *The King's England* 1936 as a tree whose branches made a circle of 250' and which had such life that the great trunk had "given itself new strength since it was reported dying more than 100 years ago". At about that time (in 1850) it was, according to Brayley's *Topographical history of Surrey*, 'a large decayed yew-tree, split into four or five parts, and in a state of rapid decay'.

#### United

In *The Yew-Trees of Great Britain and Ireland* 1890 Lowe considered that two of its lateral trunks springing from the base were "slightly united to the central one" and that these had "probably grown after the main stem had fractured at some early period".



St. Peter's church, Tandridge and its great yew (Photo: Christian Wolf)

This information was to become pivotal in Allen Meredith's efforts to establish his theories of yew ages and provided evidence that would convince scholars and scientists. Eventually he was to approach, among others, David Bellamy and Alan Mitchell. We are told that "Alan Mitchell was initially highly sceptical of Allen's findings" until one specific piece of evidence was presented to him: the Saxon stone vaulting over the root of the Tandridge yew.

This is described in *The Sacred Yew – Rediscovering the ancient Tree of Life* through the work of Allen Meredith (Chetan and Brueton 1996) in the following paragraph:

*"At Tandridge in Surrey is an immense tree. Very tall for a yew, it has a girth of 35 feet and a presence that can be felt throughout the churchyard. Allen estimates its age as in excess of 2,500 years. Tandridge provided a very particular piece of dating evidence. The tree is around 25 feet from the church, which has Saxon foundations. In the crypt it is clearly visible that the Saxon builders constructed stone vaulting over the tree's roots. While this shows that the Saxons were respectful of the tree's needs, it convincingly proves that even at that time the tree was fully grown." It was this piece of evidence that finally swayed Alan Mitchell; as he says: 'Roots increase extra-ordinarily slowly in diameter, and recent studies at Kew show that they taper sharply near the trunk and then extend far, at a nearly uniform size, much smaller than had been thought. Yet 1,000 years ago the Tandridge root was so big it had to be bridged'."*

#### Tantalising evidence

Two years later Thomas Pakenham, in his *Meetings with Remarkable Trees* (1996), relates the same story, but with a note of caution: "At Tandridge there is some tantalising extra evidence. Archaeologists have found that a Saxon vault under the west wall, a relic of the first church, was deliberately skewed. Was this to avoid the roots of the yew? If so this would make the tree pre-Saxon – perhaps imported from a Celtic tree cult. However, who is to say that the Saxon vault was skewed to avoid a tree, and that the tree was this particular yew?"



Many tall fluted stems make up the great yew at Tandridge (Photo: Christian Wolf)

#### Misinformation

The yew's ability to recover and regenerate, even from meagre amounts of living material, is well known and the Tandridge Yew testifies to this fact. But this yew, so vast, open and approachable above ground, hides a secret of misinformation beneath the surface.



## ...and the mysterious Saxon stone vaulting

When I was asked, in 2014, how somebody might go about seeing the Saxon vault over the tree's root, I realised that I did not know the answer. I knew that the church had been approached in the past but had been unable to provide any information. I put this down to the church trying to protect its priceless Saxon asset from too many prying eyes. I felt it was time to consult Surrey Archaeological Society, who would surely be in a position to grant permission to visit.

Their reply was quite unexpected: *"I have checked our Surrey Archaeological Society Journals and Bulletins and have come up with no information but we do hold a copy of a pamphlet which discusses the yew tree; The origins of the Parish and Hundred of Tandridge by A J Hale, October 1996."*

### Saxon foundations

This makes interesting reading since it would appear that in 1960 some strange and unexplained mischief making was going on. For in that year a statement had appeared, written by an unknown person, called Notes on the Architecture and History of Tandridge Church. It is in this statement that a crypt and Saxon foundations at Tandridge are mentioned for the first time. But Hale says that "It is not possible to view either a crypt at the church or Saxon foundations. The source of the statement...is not known...Guide books to Surrey which have been published since 1960 repeat the statements about the crypt and Saxon foundations, but previous to this date no such statements were made in guide books".



The Tandridge Yew with layering branches (Photo: Christian Wolf)

### Historical evidence

While it is accepted that there may have been a late Saxon church at Tandridge, there is, apparently, neither ecclesiastical record, archaeological finding or any other historical evidence to prove it. Even when extensive rebuilding and excavation were undertaken in the 19th century, at a time when archaeological interest was increasing, there was no mention of any Saxon origins being discovered. I leave the last word to the Surrey Archaeological Society: "A Saxon Church was not mentioned before the 1960 pamphlet....and the origin of this statement cannot be traced and is not true." [my emphasis]

### Rule of thumb

As for the age of the Tandridge Yew, there is no better place to look than a conversation in Meetings with Remarkable Trees in which Pakenham asked Mitchell "how old is an old yew like this one at Tandridge?" Mitchell's reply was that "a good rule of thumb is that most trees look older than they are except for yews that are older than they look." Using Mitchell's rule of thumb, Pakenham concluded that "*it looks 1,000 years old. Probably it is older. The Celts may have decorated its branches with the heads of their victims. It may live to see our descendants flying to Mars. If awe-inspiring is too solemn a word, you might prefer 'wow'.*"

### 5 minute silence

We should not lose sight of the fact that, whatever its age, this is a formidable and wow-inspiring tree. In 2006, when thirty six members of Eibenfreunde (Friends of the yew) visited, the Tandridge Yew created such an overwhelming impression that a 5 minute silence was called to appreciate the grandeur of this magnificent tree – before we went in search of the non-existent Saxon vault!



Tandridge is visited by enthusiasts from across the world (Photo: Tim Bekaert [www.monumentaltrees.com](http://www.monumentaltrees.com))



# The tallest tree in London

David Alderman

The Trees for Cities plaque, by a London Plane near the river Thames, states it to be the tallest tree in London. Arising from the patio of a restaurant bar above the towpath at Richmond, it is easy to see why the tree has the status of being a Great Tree of London. But is it the tallest tree in London today?

The area of the 33 boroughs that make up Greater London, confined almost entirely within the boundary created by the M25, is packed with historic parks and gardens. Viewed from the north at Alexandra Palace, the city looks like a forest and yet the iconic buildings of the Shard, Gherkin and Canary Wharf tower above the green beauty of the city. One hundred years ago the landscape would have been dominated, as was much of south-east England, by the towering billowing crowns of elm trees. Now the best known records are from paintings by John Constable, as the elm have all but gone, although some have survived, like the Huntingdon elm in Marylebone, which is now also recognised as a Great Tree of London. When *The Trees of Great Britain and Ireland* (Elwes & Henry) was published in 1913, the tallest tree in London was recorded as being an English elm at Chiswick House, with the metric equivalent height of 41m (134ft 6ins).

## From elm to poplar

40m has remained the benchmark for exceptionally tall broadleaved trees which invariably out-compete the tallest conifers battling with exposure. Looking on the Tree



Sutton Ecology Centre, Festival Walk, Carshalton. At 37.5m this London plane is a little over the 120ft already being claimed in 1964 when it was believed to be the tallest London plane tree in Britain. (Photo: David Alderman)



Register for data from the 1950's, we are grateful to that most eccentric tree measurer, the Hon. Maynard Greville. He recorded an even taller elm at Syon Park in front of the house, noting a height of 43m and a big tree too, at 5.25m girth (1951). He also followed up the elm of Elwes and Henry at Chiswick House and found a slimmer tree than the one recorded previously, to be 42m. Between then and today, we have seen a flourish of hybrid poplar planted towards the end of the 1800's, apparently also reaching 40m. A pair of *Populus x canadensis* 'Eugenei' planted at Kew in 1888, had, according to Greville, reached 39m in 1950 and Alan Mitchell measured them to be 40m in 1985. One sole survivor was 41m in 1991, before it lost its top in 2001. By the late 1980's there were Lombardy and hybrid poplar being recorded as being 40m in a number of locations.

A group of *Populus x canadensis* 'Eugenei' at Bushy Park, Teddington, first recorded by Owen Johnson, appear to be growing fast and the tallest is currently 38.4m (2014) in height and is the tallest poplar in Greater London. A single specimen of *Populus* 'Rochester' in the Terrace Gardens at Richmond-upon-Thames, first measured by Peter Bourne in 1995, is currently 37m (2013) (Photo: David Alderman)



## The rise of the London plane

The measuring of a narrow crowned Lombardy poplar is, like that of many conifers, generally straight forward with an acceptable degree of accuracy, particularly if any lean of the tree is taken into account. But, today, every one of the historically tall Lombardy poplar we visited have been windblown, felled or topped for safety. The broad, spreading crown of a typical open grown London plane is more of a challenge, unless one can get far enough back to identify the true top of the tree. Retrospectively, we can accept that the earliest records of London plane reaching 40m were exaggerated, although by the 1980's they were certainly dominating the tall treescape of London. A review of these in 2002 suggested none had quite reached 40m, the tallest being a pair of trees growing at the bottom of Old Palace Lane by Cholmondeley Walk, Richmond, within a stone throw of the river.

## The tallest tree

Including the tree with its "tallest tree" plaque, these London plane along the river Thames at Richmond are surely amongst the finest in Britain. During December 2014 and February 2015 we re-measured them all using a laser. Despite the challenges of trying to find an uninterrupted view of the highest most branches, we are confident that the tallest tree in London is the nearest tree to the river of the pair of London plane at the bottom of Old Palace Lane. From two separate baselines, the laser recorded a height of 40.4m. Its twin is harder to get a long sightline to and appears, at best, to be somewhere between 39-40m. There is clearly not a lot between them!

## Creating a landmark

Following the towpath south and just before Ham House, is a small woodland owned and managed by the Sea Scouts. Greville, in the 1950's, noted this woodland as having a 40m *Populus x canadensis* 'Serotina'. The poplar is long gone but the woodland now boasts a remarkable group of London plane plus London's tallest Oriental plane (29.5m 2013). Despite creating quite a landmark, the trees are, perhaps, not obviously tall to the passer-by. And only one can be measured with any accuracy by laser, the nearest to the river just inside the perimeter fence. The trees here are growing so low to the water level that the woodland is often flooded and erosion has exposed more of the tree, creating an artificial "ground level". This is critical to note because, if we accept the eroded lower ground level, then this tree would be the tallest tree in London! If recording height from the surrounding ground level, ignoring exposed root buttressing, the tallest height obtained from a single baseline was 40.25m.

## A Great Tree of London

So, what about the *Great Tree of London's* tallest tree? Well, from two long baselines on the north and south side, along the towpath in front of the restaurant, we measured a best height of 38.2m. It may not quite be the tallest but it is perhaps the most impressive of all those along this part of the Thames and is certainly a Great Tree of London!

## The Tallest trees in Greater London 2014/15

Species	Ht/m	Location
<i>Platanus x hispanica</i>	40.40	Old Palace Lane, Richmond-upon-Thames
<i>Platanus x hispanica</i>	40.25	Petersham Lodge woodlands, Richmond-upon-Thames
<i>Platanus x hispanica</i>	39.00	Old Palace Lane, Richmond-upon-Thames (Est. 39-40m)
<i>Populus x canadensis</i> 'Eugenei'	38.40	Bushy Park, Teddington
<i>Platanus x hispanica</i>	38.25	Petersham Lodge woodlands, Richmond-upon-Thames
<i>Platanus x hispanica</i>	38.20	Gaucha restaurant/bar, Richmond-upon-Thames

Special thanks to Steve Waters and Bryan Roebuck for their help and assistance in recording the tallest tree in London



The tallest tree in London. 40.40m high London plane (*Platanus x hispanica*) in Old Palace Lane, Richmond -upon-Thames. And (below) growing next to its twin of 39m. (Photos: David Alderman)





# The Marriage of Trees

Trees grow as individuals. On the Tree Register, we have one record per plant. Only sometimes it's not that simple...

The flowering cherries in the street outside your house are probably grafted – that is, two genetically distinct individuals have been 'married' by the nursery. Thousands of specimens on the Tree Register are grafts and, although they are conventionally recorded under the name of the top partner, the bit at the bottom (which provides the roots and very often the bole which is girthed), represents an equal partner. The champion Yoshino Cherry (*Prunus x yedoensis*) in Mote Park in Maidstone is the biggest ornamental cherry found in Britain and, fascinatingly, the Yoshino head has persuaded the Wild Cherry stock to grow faster than perhaps any Wild Cherry would on its own.



Champion Yoshino Cherry (*Prunus x yedoensis*) in Mote Park (Photo: Owen Johnson)



The Enys Beech (Photo: Owen Johnson)

### Conundrum

A pear tree in the graveyard of Hollington Church-in-the-Wood, near my home in East Sussex, long puzzled me. With its dainty, ovate leaves it looks more than anything like the rare Plymouth Pear (*Pyrus cordata*). The puzzle was partly solved when I spotted a single small branch of Weeping Willow-leaved Pear (*P. salicifolia* 'Pendula') straggling out from the lower crown: the weeper is always grafted, and here, for once, whatever stock the nursery habitually used has taken over and grabbed the limelight.

### Green Copper

There are some strange grafts out there. At Ashton under Lyne's Stamford Park, in 2004 at least, a big old weeping elm (*Ulmus glabra* 'Pendula') was grafted at head-height on another Wych Elm cultivar which, instead of weeping, holds its shoots vertically ('Exoniensis'). And in the park at Enys near Falmouth an old Copper Beech was grafted so high that the stock contributes a green skirt for the purple top.

### Hard Graft

A chimaera or graft-hybrid occurs when tissues fuse across a graft to make a stable new organism. Four chimaera between different species make genuine trees in Britain: the Bronvaux Medlar (+ *Crataegomespilus*, in the clones 'Dardarii' and 'Jules D'Asnieres') is Common Hawthorn plus Medlar; Adam's Laburnum (+ *Laburnocytisus adamii*) is Common Laburnum plus the purple-flowering shrub *Chamaecytisus purpureus*; and + *Pyrocydonia* 'Daniellii' (much the rarest of these, but a good fruit tree) is Quince plus Williams Pear. All these arose in France; the fourth, Dallimore's Chestnut (*Aesculus* + *dallimorei*), has some claim to be counted as an English native as it was first spotted by the 85-year-old William Dallimore (who had designed Bedgebury Pinetum) on a Yellow Buckeye (*Aesculus flava*) near his home in Bidborough,

Kent, which had been grafted high on Common Horse Chestnut. Only a few trees have been propagated from this plant (where the chimaera is so vigorous it has taken over the whole crown) but I've since found two independent occurrences – both in Kent and both, perhaps, from the same batch of grafts.



Occasionally, more than one tree gets bundled together in the same planting hole. (Trees that grow fluted trunks, such as Beech, are often mistaken for bundles, but in reality rather few landowners seem likely to have indulged in this expensive and purely ornamental practice.) The two 'married' London Planes on the lawn at Mottisfont Abbey in Hampshire seem a genuine case; another old Plane pair are by the town bridge in Bradford-on-Avon. A ring of twelve tall Common Limes in front of Cobham Hall in Kent are in the process of fusing, as was presumably planned, to create the impression of a single giant tree, 11m in girth. The old Ginkgo at Kew was assumed to be a single plant, but genetic analysis reveals that two male seedlings were transplanted from the Duke of Argyll's collection at Whitton Place (in 1762) and shared a planting pit. Then, at some later stage, a female branch was grafted onto these.



A Snowy Mespil (*Amelanchier lamarckii*) appears precariously stuck on top of a Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*)  
(Photo: Tree Register)

## Arm in Arm

It is natural for trees to fuse or 'inosculate' when they meet in mid-air – the alternative would be for them to rub each other raw or even set themselves on fire. 'Inosculate' means to kiss, and Ridley Wood in the New Forest has a particularly amorous Oak and Beech (at SU20290607) whose trunks entwine. The 'Marriage Oak' near Frant in East Sussex was a veteran Oak fused to a smaller but even older Yew, first described by Elwes and Henry in 1907; the couple blew down, still arm in arm, in last winter's storms. Roy Whitby, recording for the Ancient Tree Hunt at Fairmile Bottom near Arundel in 2012, came upon a kinky variation (at SU98710918): Whitebeam, Yew and Holly combined in a gnarled trunk 4m round at the base. Barmeath Castle in Co. Louth has two Beeches in the walled garden trained together to make a gothic arch, and Bunclody in Co. Wexford, more poetically, has an arch of Larch. Two apparently wild Ash at Ashburnham Place in East Sussex fuse at head-height to form a single rounded trunk - much thicker than the two contributors' girth combined - which separates again 8m up.



'til death us do part - the 'Marriage Oak' near Frant (Photos: Jeroen Heindijk)

## Bittersweet..

Trees often set seed in the branches of others, and these 'cuckoos' can grow big. Towards the end of its days, a 250-year-old Pencil Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) at Painshill in Surrey was encumbered with a 15m-tall Rowan growing from the main fork. *Wisteria floribunda* and *W. sinensis* can, just, grow as standard trees but prefer to twine round others (clockwise for the former, anticlockwise for the latter). The Papauma (*Griselinia littoralis*) makes a huge tree but still prefers in its native New Zealand to germinate within a host, then strangle it. One such at Carwinion in Cornwall has sent its network of aerial roots up and down an old oak, whose days would seem numbered. And as I realise I have now strayed far from the working model of a good marriage, this is probably time to stop...



# The 4th European Champion Tree Forum

Gordon Mackenthun

Valsaín, Spain, 10<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> October 2014

The 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the European Champion Tree Forum took place in the little village of Valsaín, north of Madrid and not very far from Segovia in the Region Castilla y León. We were guests of the Centro Nacional de Educación Ambiental, CENEAM, which is the environmental education centre of the Spanish Ministry of the Environment.

Besides 18 regulars, a number of Spanish colleagues joined us for some of the excursions. As always, we were a happy crowd, everybody talking to old friends and making new acquaintances. Being slightly different from the first three meetings, the focus in 2014 was on visiting – and measuring – monumental trees. Everybody's heartfelt thanks go to Susana Dominguez Lerena, who did all the organisational work, of which there was plenty.



Members of the ECTF at the Royal Palace of La Granja, San Ildefonso .  
Giant sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) 50m x 10.30m (Photo: Marc Meyer)

## Summary of presentations

Half a day was reserved for presentations including these from; **Andrea Krupová (Czech Republic) European Tree of the Year.** Andrea, a newcomer to the ECTF from Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation informed us about the concept of European Tree of the Year. Voting takes place online on [www.treeoftheyear.org](http://www.treeoftheyear.org) and the winner is announced at the EU Parliament in Brussels in April. **David Mingot (Spain) Main facts of the 'Comunidad de Madrid' singular trees.** David described the complete range of veteran and special trees that you can find in the main historical cities and also in the forest areas of Madrid County. **Roel Jacobs (Belgium) Activities of the Belgian Dendrology Society** In his talk Roel gave an update on the activities of the Belgian Dendrology society. 2569 new introductions were made in the database BELTREES in 2013-14 [www.dendrology.be](http://www.dendrology.be). **György Pósfai (Hungary) Update on the Hungarian Champion Tree Website ([www.dendromania.hu](http://www.dendromania.hu))** Currently 2000, mostly native trees are catalogued, growing by about 200 each year with 460 trees with a girth over 6m. Specific emphasis was given to the black poplars of Hungary which can reach a girth of 10m.

**Gordon Mackenthun (Germany) The biggest, tallest and oldest trees in the world** Gordon gave a short overview about what is "biggest?" Comparing volume and biomass, "General Sherman" (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) in California, USA is the biggest tree with a trunk volume of 1487 m<sup>3</sup> and a biomass of 1121 t. By girth the "Árbol del Tule" (*Taxodium mucronatum*) in Mexico, is the biggest at 36.2m. For a while the "Stratosphere Giant" (*Sequoia sempervirens*), California, USA, was considered the tallest tree in the world, standing 112.9m tall, replaced as champion by "Hyperion", 115.6m, discovered in 2007 (USA). The claim by Swedish scientists that "Old Tjikko" (*Picea abies*) in Sweden, is 9550 years old and the oldest living tree in the world has no factual basis. Instead, "Methuselah" (*Pinus longaeva*) in California USA, was for a long time considered to be the champion of old age at 4846 years. Just last year an even older living tree, as yet unnamed, was discovered in the same mountains, 5065 years old. If the discussion turns from individual trees to clonal organisms, "Pando" (*Populus tremuloides*) in Utah, USA, is a candidate for the longest living genome in trees, estimated to be at least 80000 years old.

**Lutz Krüger (Germany) Present status and changes of the German Champion Tree Initiative** As representative of the German Dendrology Society (DDG) Lutz presented the current status and changes of the German Champion Tree Initiative. The German Champion Tree Community launched a revised Champion Tree Register in 2014, providing a consistent and more user friendly website (<http://championtrees.ddg-web.de>). **Nieves Herrero (Spain) Bosques sin Fronteras** The NGO "Bosques sin Fronteras" developed a project for 5 years selecting the tallest, the biggest and the oldest trees of any natural species living in Spain. **Marc Meyer (Belgium) When men met the redwoods** It is commonly accepted that the coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) was imported into Europe around 1840 and the first botanical description accredited to Archibald Menzies in 1794. However, the Spaniards met the redwoods long before any other Europeans whilst sailing and exploring the North Coast of California. The first detailed description of a sequoia was written by Father Juan Crespi in 1769. Father Pedro Font took the first measurements (girth and height) of a coast redwood in 1776. This tree still stands and gave its name to the city of Palo Alto. In 1791, Thaddeus Haenke, a Czech botanist of the Malespina expedition, made the first botanical description of the tree. A large part of his collections was shipped to Spain between 1791 and 1799. Out of these collections there could have been coast redwoods planted in Spain in the early 1800's. I am still trying to find one of these but up until now all stories linked to these hypothetical survivors appeared to be false. But the quest goes on!



## The Spanish Excursion

Four days of exceptional tree visits, organised by Susana and safely driven around by Carlos!



### Matabuena

(Left) Pyrenean oak (*Quercus pyrenaica*) 5.16m girth. (Centre) Susana and a Sabina (*Juniperus thurifera*) 15m x 7.57m at 1.5m. (Right) Ancient Sabina (*Juniperus thurifera*) at Hornuez country park



**Palacio Real de La Granja de San Ildefonso** (Left) Giant sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) the "King" 41m x 11.48m at 1.5m and "Queen" (right-hand tree) 46m x 14.50m at 1.5m.

(Right) Spanish fir (*Abies pinsapo*) 31m x 5.80m at 1.3m European and World Champion!



### Jardin del Principe, Aranjuez

(Left) Oriental Sweet Gum (*Liquidambar orientalis*) 32m x 4.36m European Champion!

(Centre) Montezuma or Mexican cypress (*Taxodium mucronatum*) 38m x 6.83m European champion!

### Park Retiro, Madrid

(Right) Montezuma cypress (*Taxodium mucronatum*) 24.4m x 5.70m. During the War of Independence (1808-14) the French military placed some artillery in the tree - hence it's current "pollarded" appearance.

(Photos: Tree Register Archive)





Repton's View (Photo: Stoneleigh Abbey [www.stoneleighabbey.org](http://www.stoneleighabbey.org))

In 1908, Humphry Repton made his suggestions for alterations to the land surrounding Stoneleigh Abbey in Warwickshire. His hand-painted Red Book provided Reverend Thomas Leigh, owner of Stoneleigh Abbey at the time, with ample ideas for improvement. Now, works have begun at Stoneleigh to restore the grounds as Repton intended, featuring spectacular views of the house from across the River Avon, in the bluebell woods. It was the preference of Repton that the alterations to the estate should enhance natural beauty rather than tame it. You can now experience an idyllic woodland setting unlike the manicured lawns at some other country houses.

Over the coming years you will be able to watch the landscape transform, as bridges are restored and reinstated and a series of walks are reopened for you to enjoy. The ancient oak tree near the visitor car park will be given a more stately setting befitting its majesty.

Opening times and details on [www.stoneleighabbey.org](http://www.stoneleighabbey.org)



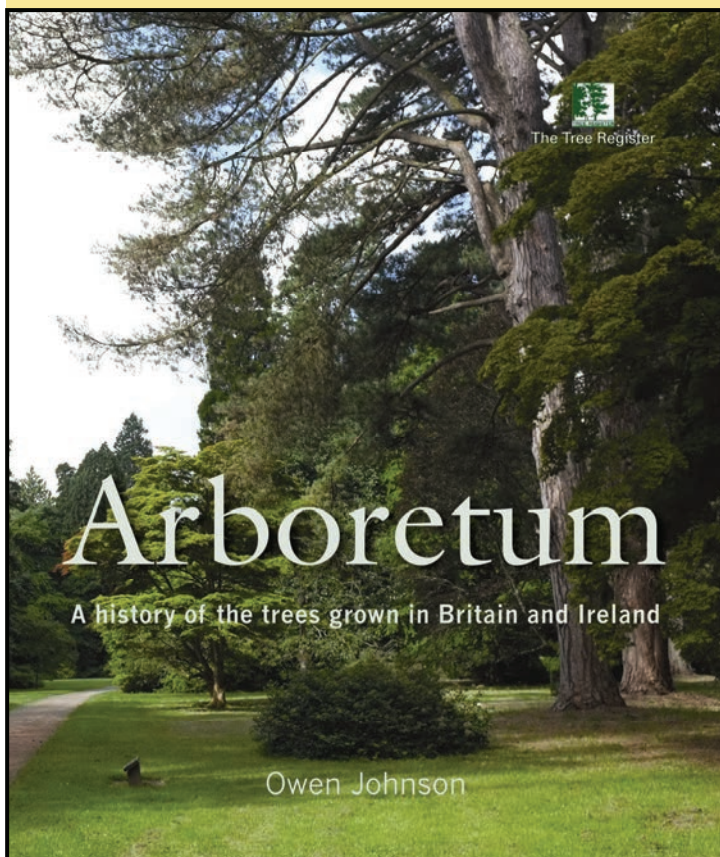
The great oak at Stoneleigh Abbey (9.24m girth at 1.5m) occasionally and incorrectly, referred to as "Shakespeare's Oak" it is the largest in all Warwickshire. (Photo: Tree Register Archive)

## New Book

### Arboretum

A history of the trees grown in Britain and Ireland

By Owen Johnson



### Richest in the world

My new book, *Arboretum (a history of the trees grown in Britain and Ireland)*, will be published later this year (2015) for The Tree Register by Whittet Books. As a writer, who measures trees (rather than a tree measurer, who writes), I have relished the opportunity to share the story of the rare, beautiful and gigantic trees with which we share our lives. How did our landscape become the richest in the world for its planted trees, and how can we save and enhance this extraordinary legacy for future generations?

### Never told before

It still feels a little early for me to be committing my life's work to paper but the story of how Britain and Ireland have become a single, huge arboretum is one that surely needed to be told. And since, without false modesty, I can claim to have discovered and researched many of its finest trees myself, it's one of which large parts have never been told before.

(Please note that the front cover image above is a draft copy and may not represent the final publication)