

Tree News from the Regions

April 2000

CUMBRIA

Derrick Holdsworth

Great Oaks of Cumbria

Old trees, though uncommon, are an English speciality: on the continent it is possible to travel from Boulogne to Athens without seeing a tree more than 200 years old. Here we cherish them, understanding that hollow trunks and dead branches are part of their natural life cycle. Ancient Oaks can have particularly bizarre appearances. They are usually remnants of medieval wood pasture and have pollarded crowns, "stag headed" and are commonly burred. Whilst many have large trunks, it is possible for a bole to be no more than 40cm diameter on a 400 year old tree.

Cumbria has its fair share of these oaks due to its being heavily forested in medieval times. The Forest of Inglewood was the largest of the Royal hunting forests in its time. It stretched 40 miles east to west from Cross Fell to the Solway and 20 miles north to south between Carlisle and Keswick. There were other forests too.

The Barras Oak

It was in some old records that I heard first of all about the Barras Oak, and had searched unsuccessfully for it until a lady, whose *Pinus nigra ssp. pallasiana* I had just measured, offered to put a notice in the Daiston (near Carlisle) parish magazine for me. This evoked an immediate response as to its whereabouts and the possible meaning of its name. It was, in fact, only a short distance from the pine, in a nearby garden. Not a tree for the Register unfortunately, but a dead trunk 4m long lying on the ground. It is marked on old maps and legend has it that Richard, Duke of Gloucester, hid in it to escape the Scots who often raided that part of the country.

Nearby are the remains of an ancient dyke called the "Bishop's Dyke" stretching between 2 rivers. It was built to protect the Bishop of Carlisle and his Palace from the same marauding Scots. There were openings in the dyke protected by "Bar Houses" or guard houses. If the Scots approached a sentry would blow a trumpet as a warning! The word "Barras" is thought to be derived from "Bar House".

Dominating the entrance to a house in Daiston is a magnificent Oak (14m x 215cm). In 1867 it was said to be the largest Oak in Cumberland. It is pollarded and heavily burred. The tree stands on a mound about 1.0m high illustrating how the surrounding ground has been eroded over the centuries. Such trees are living archives. In a field nearby stand a row of 3 stunted, wizened, wind-blown Oaks, clearly ancient but not large (10m x 106cm, 7.5m x 89cm and 8.5m x 91 cm). Ancient trees in a row like this are usually remnants of an old hedge or boundary and it is unusual to find them in the middle of a field. My suspicions were confirmed when I found an old map showing that the road was running alongside the trees in those days.

Towd Yak

On Lord Lonsdale's estate at Lowther near Penrith is an old Oak (15m x 201 cm) with a large branch sweeping downwards and nearly touching the ground. It is known locally as "Jack's Yak" or "Towd Yak". According to folklore, if ever this branch touches the ground the Lonsdale's will be dogged by bad fortune. At present all is well, the branch being propped up by a stout 20cm block of wood.

In the grounds of Sedbergh School stands one of the oldest Cumbrian Oaks (8m x 229cm). It is shown on maps dated around 1400 AD. It has had a hard life. At present it stands buried 1.0m deep in the middle of a landfill site and is little more than a pollarded stump with a few wispy branches. Yet still survives.

Largest Oak in Cumbria

The largest diameter Oak (13m x 240cm) I have yet found in Cumbria, and which I discovered only recently, is at Tottergill, 10 miles east of Carlisle. For a tree said by the owners to be recorded in the Domesday Book it is doing well. Pollarded and extensively burred it has a healthy crown with not a Stag Head in sight. It is growing in what is clearly ancient parkland or wood pasture. It is a lovely tree.

King Oak

The King Oak, Irton (D. Holdsworth)

Finally, an Oak (13m x 163cm) which I measured only this year is a remnant of the medieval Copeland Forest which was south of Inglewood Forest. It is in a small hamlet called Irton, near Wastwater. It is said that in 1464 Henry VI sheltered under it because the villagers would not give him room for the night. It has had a chequered history. In 1902, when it was nothing more than a hollow pollarded stump, the owner was advised to fill the middle with red clay! In 1976 further "expert" advice was sought and the red clay was removed and replaced with cement poured down the centre of the bole through a hole at the top! I am pleased to report that this tree is thriving superbly despite its heart of concrete.



SCOTLAND

David Paterson

Corstorphine sycamore falls

The famous Corstorphine sycamore in Edinburgh blew down in the storm of 26th December 1998. The main stem snapped in gusts of 80 knots at a height of 3m, shearing down the stem. The tree had been guyed by the Corstorphine Trust but to no avail. (Last recorded in 1990 when the tree was 19m tall and 145cm dia. (4.55m girth), the largest on record. A taller tree of 26m with a 140cm dia. (4.40m girth) has been recorded at Moncreiffe House, Perthshire and this tree may now be the champion.)

WORCESTERSHIRE

David Alderman

New arboretum

Two miles north of Wolverley, off the B4189 you will find the award winning Bodenham Arboretum. Planting began in 1973 and there are now more than 2,000 species of rare and ornamental trees and shrubs to be seen. The arboretum is open daily May - October. Dogs on leads are allowed in the grounds and there is a restaurant for lunches and light refreshments. For further details Tel 01 562 852444.

IRELAND

David Alderman

New champions

A brief encounter with the Japanese Gardens in the grounds of the Irish National Stud at Tully, Kildare, produced a somewhat unexpected champion. Passing the "Hill of Mourning" just before the "Gateway to Eternity" stands an *Acer campestre* 'Pulverulentum'. Its powder coated variegation reached into the top of the crown where some reversion was taking place. At 34cm dia. at 1.4m it is a clear Irish and British champion. It made me wonder, how many of these have reverted and are now dismissed as the type? Some of the huge bonsai (if that makes sense) in the gardens are probably champions in their own right as could be other plants I passed all too quickly. The gardens are well worth a visit if you are in the area.

Emo Court, Co. Laois

Emo Court is a wonderful place, suspended in time and eerily quiet when we visited in October. The grounds are now maintained by the Office of Public Works, but the house is still lived in by Mr. Cholmeley Harrison who is responsible for much of the interesting younger plantings we came across. The mile long avenue of Giant sequoia is missed by road and only seen by foot from the front of the house. Long past its best, it still brings a lump to the throat to imagine it in its heyday. The cedars on the sloping lawn, for me, took second place to a most perfectly shaped Nootka cypress (*Chamaecyparis nootkatensis*). This was a tree on my list of possible champions to find and update. On remeasuring, its great girth was clearly an exaggeration of three main stems, but still a notable specimen.

Unmeasurable Monterey

The *Cupressus macrocarpa*, Emo (Tree Register)

Another huge tree on paper was the immense Monterey cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*). Unmeasurable with any degree of accuracy, it is over 3m dia. (9.70m girth) around its base just above ground level. Another case for having more than one category for champion trees.

A tree we all kept our eyes open for was the Eagle-claw maple (*Acer platanoides* 'Cucullatum') which, when we found it, had grown to become champion status at 84cm dia. at 1.1 m.



Tallest Irish Grand fir at Woodville, Co. Offaly

It was a great pleasure to be taken by the Earl of Rosse to his woodland outside Birr Castle Demesne, and its Pump Plantation of Grand fir, Douglas fir, Sitka spruce, Lawson cypress and Japanese cedar, planted c.1914. Girths were impressive, but we had come to measure the height of one particular Grand fir (*Abies grandis*). Measured on three baselines we confirmed an Irish champion for this species of 48m, excluding dieback, which suggested it had once been 52m. We also threw down the gauntlet to the Irish Register for Wild crab (*Malus sylvestris*) with the biggest of a group, also in Woodville, in Harry's Drive. 55cm dia. at 1m due to a bulge at 1.5m but still 54cm at 1.6m.

Remarkable oak at Charieville

One of Thomas Pakenham's remarkable Irish trees, The King Oak at Charieville, Co. Offaly, was something I did not want to miss on a recent visit. Its remarkableness is in its huge crown spread rather than girth, which is difficult to record due to low branches. (See photo on front cover). 277cm dia. (8.70m girth) can be recorded at 0.3m. The large low branch which extends to the north (to the right of photo) is 79cm dia. (2.5m girth) 0.5m from the main bole. This great limb extends some 26m and the one to the south 22m, measured from the centre of the trunk, giving a wingspan of some 48m! There is an equally impressive spread of 22.5m to the west, but for more about this remarkable tree you should read Thomas's book.

SUSSEX

Owen Johnson

The Sussex Tree Book

1998 has been a quiet year for tree measuring in Sussex. I have, instead, been putting the finishing touches to the results of five years' recording in *The Sussex Tree Book*. This is the first time that a comprehensive guide to the county's champion trees and where to find them has been combined with a fully illustrated study of the history of the county's trees and their role in the landscape. Thanks to its kind climate and fertile soils, and a remarkable heritage of arboriculture, Sussex is by far the richest county in Britain at present for national champions. Nearly 500 of the 1400 county record holders are also the biggest known in the British Isles as a whole. These champions include the tallest known examples of such common trees as horse chestnut, common alder, monkey puzzle, crab apple, dawn redwood and 'Kanzan' cherry and the biggest known boles of Norway maple, hornbeam, sweet chestnut, blue Atlas cedar, beech, railway poplar, sessile oak, white willow, grey sallow, rowan, wild and true service and small-leaved lime. Sussex also practically monopolises the lists of the largest surviving elms, owing to the success of the South Downs DED control programme.

The Queen Elizabeth oak

The Queen Elizabeth Oak (*Pomegranate Press*)

Cowdray Park, near Midhurst in West Sussex, has for a long time been famous for its trees. Sheltered by the high wall of the Downs to the south, the Park is on Lower Greensand on a red, coarse-grained sand which when tilled looks like the Sahara, were it not for the giant nettle-clumps springing up spontaneously everywhere. The tallest trees in Britain known to Elwes and Henry at the turn of the century were two *Picea abies* (Norway Spruce) in Caters Wood at the top of the Park, where they also measured the 1730 *Abies alba* (Silver Fir). The first severe storm, Elwes and Henry predicted, would blow this down, but sixty five years later, it was still standing. The acid sands are ideal for conifers - the *Abies grandis* (Grand Fir) in the Gardens is now 43m tall and the 1870 *Sequoiadendron giganteum* (Wellingtonia) avenue contains trees to 310cm dia. They are also rich enough to grow huge Ash and two gnarled *Populus nigra subsp. betulifolia* (Black Poplar), possibly wild trees. Both oaks appear indigenous, with *Quercus petraea* (Sessile Oak) a small-leaved, narrowly-cuneate type forming conspicuously the bigger and better trees. Within the area of the medieval Deer Park (half of it now a golf course) about ten very ancient Sessile Oak pollards survive, some reduced to mere strips of bole. The biggest is known as the Queen Elizabeth Oak, as it is said Queen Elizabeth visited the tree in 1591 when even then it was considered to be ancient.



Vital statistics

The tree seems not to have been taped before 1940, when it was 38ft in girth. Alan Mitchell visited it in 1967, assuming it, in winter, to be a *Quercus robur* (English Oak) but then, once more, the tree was forgotten. It is not easy to measure as it grows on a slope and the tape has to span the 1m-2m. entrance on the south side guarded by a monstrous Butcher's Broom - to the tree's interior (which has a peep-hole on the north side too). Diameters at and below breast height are now 400-416cm, whilst the lowest value is 389cm at 1.8m-2m. Assuming this to be the height at which the 1940 and 1967 readings were made, the growth rate is currently a steady 1cm per 3 years. As the tree has been repeatedly pollarded, it's early increment was not necessarily much greater, and it is certainly of medieval vintage. As the best Sessile Oak bole, it is effectively identical to the Bowthorpe Oak in Lincolnshire, the largest known *Quercus robur*.

Our largest oak?

Some great trees - such as the 'Majesty' Oak, brooding in dense secondary woodland at Fredville in Kent immediately overwhelm you with their sheer presence but the Queen Elizabeth Oak does not! Sitting as it has for centuries, on its sunny hillside among other trees nearly as big, it is just what you somehow expect to see as you walk up the valley - a pollard archetype, almost a Disney oak. Whilst recording it, it took some minutes to dawn on me that this was not just the biggest oak in Sussex and not just the biggest Sessile Oak but arguably the largest bole in Britain! To visit the Queen Elizabeth Oak you must park in the Benbow Pond lay-by (north off the A272 in the dip 2km. east of Eastbourne and 2km. west of Halfway Bridge). The lay-by turns into a farm track - climb the gate at the end. The Queen Elizabeth Oak is the first of the big trees above the lily pond to your left - more or less on the public footpath - at SU91 3226.

Champion Sweet chestnut

After that, however, it seemed commonplace to find, in the same field, an unrecorded new champion *Castanea sativa* (Sweet Chestnut) 364cm.dia. on a slanted tape around the 'waist'. This tree has a huge crown 25m high and is growing very vigorously - it could 'overtake' the oak within 20 years.

Forgotten arboretums

Although some of the Sussex giants have long been well-known, the research for *The Sussex Tree Book* has involved the discovery of many, many more. Whole arboretums, planted early in the century and their significance since forgotten, have been stumbled upon and their current owners alerted and enthused. *The Sussex Tree Book* includes full colour portraits of many of the remarkable Sussex champions and I hope it will be an inspiration to other counties to set about producing their own Register of county tree floras.

The Sussex Tree Book is published by Pomegranate Press at £9.99 and is available from all good book shops.

KENT

Philip Clarkson-Webb

Planting for the Millennium

Where shall we plant our Millennium Trees? What species? Why? Towns and villages up and down the country will shortly be deciding these matters. Is there any guidance from the past? The passing of the Victorian Age in 1901 was commemorated by the Kentish village of Eynsford with one of the earliest examples of a Tree Acrostic. The idea was the brainchild of one Elliot Downs Till, a local resident who in 1897 founded Arbour Day, the annual tree-planting festival which is still observed in the USA but in Britain has been superseded by Tree Planting Week every December.

Tennyson

In a meadow near the village there was planted a line of thirty trees of no less than twenty-two species: the initial letter of each tree spelt out Tennyson's line from his 1850 poem to Queen Victoria "***She wrought her people lasting good***". Sadly, only the Sycamore remains, as most of the trees were felled to make way for playing fields for the new Anthony Roper Country Primary School. Around the school other trees formed "***My son be wise***" and four trees around what is now the war memorial formed L(ime), O(live), V(eronica) and E(lm). None of the trees has survived. However, Till's earlier attempt at arboreal-cum-literary commemoration has fared better.

Browning

To commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, he instigated the planting of a line of fifty-two trees along the busy main street from the railway station to the village centre. These spelt out lines from Robert Browning's Rabbi Ben Ezra

"The best is yet to be, the fast of life, for which the first was made.

Many of the these trees still survive. They are of particular interest because of the 1897 planting date.

The box below lists the known tree names. The survivors are starred.

Turkish Hazel Horse Chestnut* Elm (Wych)* Beech* Elm Sycamore Thorn (American)* Ilex (Holly)* Sloe Yew Elder Turkish Hazel T? Oak* Beech (Purple)* Eucalyptus Turkish Hazel Hickory Eucalyptus Lime (Common)* Acacia (False) Sycamore* Tilia x europaea* O? (Horse Chestnut*) Fagus (Beech)* Laburnum Ilex (Holly) Fagus (Beech)* E? Fagus (Beech) O? Robinia* W? Holly* Ilex (Holly)* Cypress Hickory* Tilia petiolaris* H? E? F? Ilex (Holly)* R? S? Tilia x europaea* Walnut* Acacia (False)* S? M? Acacia (False) D? Elm (Wych)*

ISLE OF MAN

Frank Harrison

Starting from scratch

The Isle of Man has a climate similar to that of the west coast of Scotland and S.W. England. Yet it has always been a mystery to me why we do not have a plant collection to compare with the historic gardens in these areas. When Pamela Stevenson said the Tree Register needed someone to measure trees on the Isle of Man I jumped at the wonderful opportunity this task would give me to research our trees. Having spent the past year measuring trees on most of the important private estates, I am reassured that not only do we have many beautiful gardens containing a wide range of old, large and unusual trees but we also have the potential to develop a collection to rival the best in Britain.

Planning the campaign

When Lord Rosse visited the Island last December we met with the IOM Government Department of Forestry and decided that, while trees on government owned property (i.e. plantations and Manx National Glens) would be measured by Forestry Department staff, I would concentrate on privately owned trees and collate all the results. After this visit I wrote two short articles for the local newspaper, who kindly printed my telephone

number, in the hope this would "kick-start" the measuring campaign and arouse interest. I received 12 calls from this, of which three were very useful. It later became clear the articles had been widely read and a number of tree owners had "thoughts about" or "were going to" contact me.

Suspicious landowners

When I began to contact landowners directly I made a formal approach and wrote an introductory letter asking them to reply. This inevitably remained on the recipients' desks, marked low priority. Next I thought that a telephone call would be quicker but this usually had to be followed by a letter of explanation and a Tree Register leaflet to authenticate my request. I quickly found the most efficient (100%) method of obtaining permission to measure trees was a personal knock on the door. After the initial suspicion and some incredulity that anyone would want to bother measuring trees, let alone record their sizes for posterity, most were very interested. Some landowners were keen to learn more about their trees, tell me of their history or of others in the vicinity and others were almost flattered that their trees were important enough to be measured and recorded. All were very friendly, many even gave me a tour of the garden or estate and one cooked me lunch. (This was not Somerset! - see Somerset report - Ed.)

Holiday by the sea

I have only recently rejoined the salaried employed as for over three years I looked after our two children as a "house-husband" (although I abhor the phrase I have yet to find a better one). However, my wife, a self-employed antique dealer, has generously allowed me one day a week off to recover and for the past year this day has been devoted to measuring. In many respects measuring on the Isle of Man is simple. The boundaries are so well defined - by the sea- and the furthest point only a one hour drive (most areas are less than 30 minutes) that planning a day's measuring is straightforward. At first I was very conscious that the Island was poorly represented on the Register and I set myself the target of visiting every major private garden within a year. Of the 92 trees measured by Alan Mitchell in 1978, 36 have now been re-measured and 6 are recorded as dead. Another 30 I have yet to find.



Highlights of the year

One of the highlights of my measuring year was an *Ilex aquifolium* "Aureomarginata" in a Douglas garden noted by Elwes & Henry (1913) at 14.2m tall x 65cm diameter, by Alan Mitchell (1978) at 11.7m x 41+35+35cm (three stems at 1.5m) and now, in January 1998, by myself at 10.85m x 76cm (at 30cm). What an honour to be following in such esteemed footsteps. This Holly forks into three at 0.8m and is now regularly pruned to shape (hence the drop in height). Near this area our largest *Araucaria araucana* (21 m x 91 cm in 1978, 23.5m x 94cm in 1998) and 2 fine old *Aesculus hippocastanum* (largest 24m x 130cm) beneath which it is possible to walk in Spring without crushing the snowdrops. The same estate also has a fine *Ulmus glabra* (33m x 140cm), some beautiful *Quercus robur* (tallest 34m x 124cm), our largest *Quercus cerris* (26m x 119cm) and an unusual Oak, possibly *Q. canariensis* (23m x 82cm). In the west of the Island our largest *Tilia platyphyllos* (20m x 101cm in 1978, 22.25m x 168cm in 1998) forks at 2.2m into three, on forming a large, flattened buttress type growth the like of which I can find no reference to, is it unusual or merely unworthy of note? Nearby is a venerable old *Castanea sativa* (20.5m x 203cm at 1.0m) that I have admired since childhood. Said to have been planted in the early 18th Century, it appears to have once been pollarded.

Rare plantings

One species of which I have found only 4 mature specimens (although many younger ones have now been planted) is *Liriodendron tulipifera* the largest being 16.25m x 138cm at 0.6m. This forks at 1m, flowers intermittently and has the corky bark that is often characteristic of older plants. It is also beginning to form the pedestal base that sometimes develops. Species that are even more poorly represented include *Ginkgo biloba* (one mature plant 12.5m x 35cm), *Koelreuteria paniculata* which has two mature representatives although only one of these is a worthwhile specimen at 6.25m x 28cm. A single *Paulownia tomentosa* (5.75m x 19cm) flowers beautifully in a Maughold garden where *Echium pininiana* and *Hoheria populnea* are naturalised.

Isle of Man champions

I must mention our present island champions. A *Tsuga heterophylla* (35.75m x 73cm) is the tallest and the largest, by a long way, is a massive *Cupressus macrocarpa* (27.4m x 246cm in 1978, 28.75m x 292cm at 0.6m in 1998, planted 1897?). Some species are represented by single plantings in one area with hardly any seen elsewhere on the Island. An example is the 24 *Sequoia sempervirens* scattered through Glen Helen. Planted in

the 1850s the tallest is now 35.15m x 113cm and the largest 29.7m x 122cm. Or the six *Cryptomeria japonica* at Braddan Church, planted c1894 the tallest is now 20m x 64cm.

WALES

Andrew Morton

Big Beech in a dramatic setting

On the 25th May 1998 my wife and I were walking through the Hafod estate in Mid-Wales. The estate originally planted by the forestry pioneer Colonel Thomas Johnes between 1783 and 1815 drapes dramatically over the rocky landscape above the river Ystwyth. It is located between Pont-thyd-y-goes and Cwmystwyth. The day was not untypical for mid-Wales in May, relatively warm but damp with light misty rain coming over hills every half an hour or so.

The "Venerable Beech"

Not too far from where the once elegant Hafod Mansion once stood (before being destroyed by fire) I had noted an old semi-derelict cedar of Lebanon off the footpath on higher ground. I climbed the grassy bank and looked around the cedar and wondered about its planting history. The rain came and I sheltered under the sparse canopy. There were some big wide spreading beeches dotted around the parkland, growing in groups and singly. In fact one near the footpath leading down from the small car parking area was identified as 'The Venerable Beech' on the Forestry Authority map.

"Not another tree!"

Looking above to the top of the knoll I noticed a beech - or beeches - which seemed to dominate the surrounding ground. Gazing through the curtain of branches I tried to distinguish whether it was one or two boles I was looking at. I hurried up the hill, waved to Maureen (who thought "not another tree!"). She followed picking up a piece of old flexible fencing wire, for we had no tape that day. It was difficult to measure as 1 metre above the ground on the top of the bank was 3 metres on the east side. The wire measured 6.88m when we eventually got home and checked.

Eight stems

I returned to the estate two weeks later. This time it was not only warm but a beautiful sunny day and as I walked down the valley toward Ystwyth river a red kite wheeled overhead and a green woodpecker laughed its way across the open field below. Again there was nobody about when I approached the tree. Measurements taken with a proper tape came out as follows:- 6.90 (220dia) @ 1.3m, narrowest point below 1.5 on top side of bank, 6.95 (221 dia) @ 1.5m. Crown spread over 20m and tree approximately 25metres tall. The bank of over 2 metres on the east side gives the tree a more dramatic appearance, with root buttresses clinging to the surrounding ground. There are eight main stems, (a bundle planting? See registrars report page 3 - Ed.) ample evidence of *Ganoderma* heart rot, the main bole though from which the stems arise is complete and of some age for a beech (200 years probably)

Although larger beeches can be found in southern Britain this Hafod Beech must be one of Wales' largest and most impressive. The location, on top of a knoll, within a wider valley, high above the Ystwyth river makes this a special tree in a special place. Of course the fresh spring foliage added to the overall attraction. There are other trees to be found on the estate and on a neighbouring hill 'Mariannes' Woodland Garden' is being slowly restored to its former glory. Marianne was the ailing daughter of Colonel Johnes.

(Anyone wishing to visit the estate should contact the Friends of Hafod c/o the Secretary, Bronwydd, 3 Trefor Road, Aberystwyth, SY23 2EH. - Ed.)

SOMERSET

Geoff Rouse

Reduced girth

I wished to record a series of trees on the estate of an educational establishment in Somerset and in reply to my request I received an enthusiastic invitation to have lunch with them. I arrived at the appointed time, knocked at the office door and a cheerful lady's voice called "This will be Mr. Rouse, do come in". She took me straight to a man and said Mr. 'P Smith' will be showing you around. She then promptly disappeared saying nothing either to me or Mr. P Smith about lunch. Mr. P. did start to show me around but soon in the after noon he said "You must excuse me, I have an appointment" and left me in the middle of the estate with no transport and no lunch. Moral always take some iron rations with you.

SUFFOLK

Daniel Sanford

Notable exotics

The climate in East Anglia has been said to favour the growing of a greater variety of plants than most other parts of Britain but as far as major gardens and arboreta go Suffolk does not really live up to that claim. For the larger tree species this may be the result of cold winter and spring winds from the east and the relative lack of deep sheltered valleys, which I feel has tended to produce specimens of better girth than height. I also suspect that a long period of comparatively less wealth (or greater desire for privacy) among the garden creators here has meant there are fewer collections of sufficient age to include notable specimens. The late 18th and early 19th century landscape gardener Humphry Repton was born in Suffolk and later lived here for 5 years, but most of his landscape work was done for patrons outside the county. Save for the particularly long-lived species like Oak and Cedar he will anyway have bequeathed few trees likely to still survive (in measurable form) today.

British champions

Despite these factors there are a good number of trees of interest to be found in Suffolk. The Tree Register's 1994 champions list includes 10 from Suffolk, including a 38m tall Black Poplar (*Populus nigra* ssp. *betulifolia*) at Cheisworth - 1 of about 700 Suffolk specimens of this nationally much reduced native subspecies surveyed by the late Edgar Milne-Redhead. Over the last ten years I have managed to add at least one champion to the Tree Register list. This is a Hedgehog Holly (*Ilex aquifolium* 'Ferox') in Christchurch Park in central Ipswich of c10m height and 25cm trunk diameter in 1996 - but as this variety has been known since at least the early 17th Century I am sure there must be better specimens elsewhere. However, it does show that even quite small trees can be worth measuring. Close by in the same park is a much bigger tree of the Cider Gum (*Eucalyptus gunnii*) which though only about 22m tall, when I re-measured it in 1996 had a trunk diameter of 124cm which is probably still the third best in the country. Another Eucalyptus, the increasingly popular *E.pauciflora* ssp. *niphophila* in a nearby back garden with 40cm trunk diameter likewise compares well with the best of 47cm in warmer Cork, south-west Ireland.

Town and gardens

Hedgehog holly (*Ilex aquifolium*'Ferox')

Those trees are quite easy to spot, but in another back garden a less conspicuous tree was brought to my attention by the town's Arboricultural Officer. This proved to be a Pagoda Tree (*Sophora japonica*), not a record breaker but at 15m tall with 63cm trunk diameter a good size and a nice surprise to find behind a house which it most likely pre-dates. Other locally measured trees worthy of mention (including some potential champion candidates) are a *Malus x purpurea* in a town garden of about 10m (but in need of accurate measurement), a *Calocedrus decurrens* in Chantry Park, damaged by the 1987 storm but still c23m x 114cm in 1998, *Fraxinus excelsior*'Penduaia' c16m x 115cm at 1.2m (below the graft and c76cm at 3m above the graft) in 1995, *Morus alba* c12m x 34cm in 1998, *Populus alba* 'Pyramidalis' c21 m x 89cm in 1998, *Prunus virginiana* 'Shubert' c8m x 18cm in 1998, *Prunus x yedoensis* 'Ivensii' 2.7m x 41 cm (below the graft), *Pyrus nivalis* c10m x 18cm & 7m x 19cm in 1998 (+ c7m x 23cm in 1995 but now removed due to children throwing the fruits!), *Ulmus glabra* 'Penduaia' c11m x 84cm at 1.25m in 1996, *Ulmus x hollandica* 'Wredei' (=U.minor'Dampieri Aurea') c11 m x 29cm in 1998 and *Ulmus*'Sapporo Autumn Gold' c11m x 36cm in 1998 - all in Ipswich, the last also c10m x 35cm at 0.95m in 1995 in Woodbridge.



Notcutts Claret ash

A 24m tall specimen of the Claret Ash (*Fraxinus angustifolia* 'Raywood') was planted in the 1930s near their base in Woodbridge by Notcutts Nursery, having introduced it from Australia in 1925. I was pleased to find that on quite an exposed position on the Deben estuary it has survived the storms of 1987 and 1990. In 1995 I estimated its height as 25.6m - so maybe it is another champion. At Notcutts Nursery itself *Gleditsia triacanthos* 'Sunburst' is also a champion candidate at c13m tall x 42cm diameter when I measured it in 1994.

A Chilean in Ipswich

Early this year my brother visited a friend's garden in Ipswich and brought me a flowering twig from a small tree I had previously completely overlooked, thinking it to be the common Box (*Buxus sempervirens*). The vanilla scented flowers and more pointed leaves with occasional serration showed it to actually be a Chilean *Azara microphylla* - it is about 7m tall with the thickest of two trunks 18cm diameter, so in a sheltered, walled back garden a quite respectable size compared to Tree Register's biggest (11m x 30cm), again in balmy Cork. This tree may also have a Notcutts connection as it is just a street away from the original Ipswich site of their nursery before it was moved to Woodbridge in the late 19th Century.

Osage Orange

My latest Suffolk tree find again came from my brother, at the Suffolk Biological Records Centre but this time I was a step ahead in the identification. He was given a cutting from the local newspaper with picture of a tree and its fruit from a village near Newmarket which had apparently defeated experts consulted locally and at Kew but having seen one in fruit before I immediately recognised it as an Osage Orange (*Maclura pomifera*). From the photo the tree appears to be a good height (although the trunk is not visible) and is reported to be well over 50 years old, perhaps originating from wood imported to its site on a defunct timber yard - but another possible origin could be Cambridge University Botanic Garden's champion specimen just 12 or so miles to the east.

Suffolk collections

A synopsis of notable Suffolk trees should not conclude without mention of some of our main collections, i.e. the Abbey Gardens, Bury St. Edmunds (with large *Ailanthus altissima* and *Corylus colurna*), Heimingham Hall (where I measured several venerable Common Oaks (*Quercus robur*), the largest: c10m x 253cm in 1996), Ickworth Park (Alan Mitchell measured in 1984, with a champion *Quercus pubescens*), Sotterley Park (with champions for 4 different tree varieties), East Bergholt Place, measured 1992 - one of our foremost collections, including a champion *Gleditsia japonica* and rarities, such as *Emmenopterys henryi* and *Quercus alnifolia* (the latter possibly a champion but perhaps now dead) and finally Cottage Farm, Little Blakenham. A relatively young garden with a good selection of trees, including *Gymnocladus dioica* 'Variegata', established after 1945 by Viscount Blakenham who was treasurer of the RHS 1970-81.

Historical planting

Ascertaining the date of planting of good specimen trees locally has proved difficult. A Blue Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca') in Christchurch Park, Ipswich at 104cm trunk diameter is almost certainly the one referred to as planted in 1864 to mark the tercentenary of Shakespeare's birth. However, a nearby Common Oak with plaque saying it was planted in 1863 is really just not big enough (88cm trunk diameter in 1996) to be that old and is probably a replacement for a tree that died or the recipient of the plaque from the original tree after it died. Another tree with an historical Suffolk link is the Indian Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus indica*) introduced in 1851 by Colonel Henry Bunbury of Barton. One flowered there in 1858 and another planted by Sir Charles Bunbury was c21 m tall in 1914 but from there the trail goes cold. I assume that 'Barton' actually refers to Great Barton near Bury St. Edmunds in central Suffolk. It is also suggested that two *Abies cephalonica* planted by H. Bunbury at Barton may have been raised from seed sent by C. Napier when he introduced the species in 1824 - Elwes listed one there as the largest in the country (31m x 126cm in c1913) and when measured by Maynard Greville in 1952 they were 36m and 33m. However, this location is not mentioned in Alan Mitchell's survey of British conifers (1972) and in his last book (1996) Alan said only one tree from the original 1824 seed survives today, in Surrey.

SHROPSHIRE

Andrew Morton

Cut-leafed hornbeam

A tree I have known for some years but only recently re-measured grows close to the river Severn on the edge of the Quarry Park in Shrewsbury. It is one of the surviving ornamental plantings in this 18th century early park. Measured by a friend in 1983 at 58cm dia. (1.83m girth), in June 1998 it measured 103cm dia. (3.22m girth) at 1.1m (narrowest point below 1.5m) - a considerable difference. I can only comment that the original measurement must have been incorrect. So it is now in the national class..... when you consider it is a *Carpinus betulus* 'Incisa' (cut-leafed Hornbeam) measured at 0.3m it greatly exceeds the champion at Jephson's Garden, Warks. of 108cm dia. recorded at that height above ground level. The total height of the Quarry tree is 15m with a big spreading crown of over 20m, forking low, much climbed and with self grafted coalesced branches in lower crown.

(Also beating the Jephson's Gdn. tree is one of 111 cm dia. @0.6m at Beauport Park, East Sussex measured in 1997 by Owen Johnson. Ed.)