

Report from the Chairman

Colin Hall

Historic records in safe keeping at Kew

I was delighted to be present in June last summer with Roy Lancaster, Philippa Mitchell and David Alderman for the formal handing over by Philippa of The Tree Register's historic records, including Alan Mitchell's diaries, to the Royal Botanical Society at Kew for safe keeping for posterity in the splendid Kew library. We had long been concerned that keeping them in a trustee's or the secretary's attic was not entirely appropriate!

60 years of detailed records

We were honoured with the presence of Hatton Gardner, a contemporary of Alan's, who has been keeping his own detailed tree records for over 60 years and who formally handed over his records for safe keeping to The Tree Register to be kept at Kew with our own records. We quickly found out that there is a wealth of fascinating information in Hatton's records to be uncovered by an industrious tree lover or student with time on his or her hands. The day was rounded off with Tony Kirkham, Head of the Arboretum, showing and telling us all about the fascinating Wollemi pine, a species recently discovered in a remote location in Australia and now growing well at Kew.

Sir Ilay Campbell retires

I am sorry to report that Sir Ilay Campbell has decided to retire as a trustee this year, having been one of the founding trustees of the charity back in 1988. We are greatly indebted for Ilay's enthusiastic support over the years and will miss his wise counsel.



(L-R) John Flanagan (Kew Archivist), David Alderman, Hatton Gardner, Philippa Mitchell, Colin Hall and Tony Kirkham inspect the historical records. (Photo: Roy Lancaster)

Voluntary dedication

As ever, we are very grateful for the support of you, our members, throughout the year, without which we could not keep up the good progress of The Tree Register. I must also thank David Alderman, our registrar, Owen Johnson, Jim Patterson, Aubrey Fennell and all our other tree recorders, and not forgetting our secretary Pamela Stevenson and membership secretary Philippa Lewis for all their voluntary work and dedication throughout the year.

Tender Trees Project 2006

Owen Johnson

My theme for this season's taping (part-funded by the Royal Horticultural Society) is 'tender trees'.

How eager have Britain's gardeners become, after an unprecedented run of 20 mild winters, to experiment with new and half-hardy species? What forgotten gems are hiding in the lesser-known gardens of Cornwall or the Channel Islands? What kinds of ornamental tree, scarcely considered until recently, now seem suitable candidates for widespread planting?

Plant growth an indicator of global warming?

The range of species that can be grown in an increasingly mild climate expands almost exponentially: there are literally hundreds of trees, on the current boundaries of hardiness, about whose performance in Britain much more needs to be discovered.

I shall be focusing on the south and west, but would like to encourage everyone to suggest any examples known to them of unrecorded and unexpected 'tender trees'.

A spreadsheet listing all species being recorded for the Tender Trees Project can be downloaded from our web site. Information can be added and emailed back to us. If you would like a paper copy, please contact our secretary.



Chusan Palm (*Trachycarpus fortunei*) once considered tender now graces many urban gardens throughout Britain and Ireland

Registrars Report

David Alderman

Champion Cumbrian pioneer retires

In 2005, Derrick Holdsworth, our principal recorder for Cumbria, retired from voluntary tree recording after a busy 10 years. Prior to Derrick retiring from his working life and seeking a hobby that would take him all round his beloved Lake District and give access to many wonderful estates, Alan Mitchell had recorded some 850 notable Cumbrian trees. With time and local knowledge Derrick has increased our records to over 2,300 trees. Inevitably the number of champions has also risen, from 13 to currently 33.



Derrick and one of his favourite champions – *Abies pindrow* at Monk Coniston (Tree Register 2005)

Pioneer of laser measuring

Forays into Scotland produced further champions at Dunira and Derrick is currently the only tree measurer to have accurately recorded the tallest trees in England, Scotland and Wales. He is considered to be the pioneer of measuring height by use of laser in Britain and Ireland and his initial work and enthusiasm for accuracy in this field has resulted in a new era of tree measuring. Frustrated at how inaccurate heighting trees on steep hillsides could be, Derrick strove to reduce error to an acceptable minimum. The recent confirmation of his lasered height when the tallest tree in Wales at Lake Vyrnwy was climbed, is a tribute to this.

Derrick has promised to keep in touch and still hopes to update some of his earlier champions as time and energy allows!



Muncaster Castle, Cumbria (Tree Register 2005)

Ancient Tree Hunt gathers momentum

Later in 2006 the Woodland Trust will launch the new Ancient Tree Hunt web site mapping notable and ancient trees throughout Britain and Ireland. Much has been learned from the current web site which has helped secure money from the Heritage Lottery Fund to make further advances. There has been much frustration getting records showing on the map but the new site will allow members of the public and organisations to register and add data, stories and photos on-line and see their records appear on the map! However, there will be a verification process in place to monitor and check data being entered. Much of the technology behind this has been developed by the Woodland Trust through their successful phenology web site in partnership with the BBC Springwatch.

New volunteering opportunity

For someone who is passionate about ancient trees to be part of the Ancient Tree Hunt. We are looking for people who can help us check out the detail of some of the records we receive so we can add even more to our Ancient Tree web map. Are you good with maps and have your own transport? Do you know your trees and enjoy using your computer? The volunteer roles come with full training and support, and relevant expenses are covered. Details can be found at www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk



Jill Butler of the Woodland Trust records an old Sycamore pollard (Jill Butler)

Celebrating 60 years of tree measuring

Hatton Gardner was born at Conington Hall in Cambridge in 1920 and went to school in Windsor-Imperial Service College. He walked a lot in Windsor Great Park and was aware of the ancient oaks there, though he had no special interest in them at that time. His father Bruce (R.C.B.) Gardner (1889-1964) worked for many years as secretary of the Royal Forestry Society and was awarded the OBE for services to forestry.

Gaining experience

Hatton left school in 1938 to work in the Estate Office on the Knebworth Estate training as a land agent. In 1944 he gained employment with a government department which saw him travelling to many parts of the country measuring tree plantations for pit props in the mining industry. He began measuring notable trees seen on his travels in 1946 when he started his first tree record notebook. In the late 1950's he joined the Roads Beautifying Association working in their office behind Charing Cross station, London. He often visited sites with a 'tree expert' recording planting recommendations. His role at this time was more clerical than advisory. I believe he had grown used to keeping records and checking references. This experience was to serve him in good stead when in 1959 he joined Hillier and Sons of Winchester.

Working at Hillier and Sons

His first job was as an assistant in the Landscape Department, his duties involving visits to clients gardens and estates recording and listing. All this time he continued to make the most of any opportunity to measure notable trees. He also spent much of his free time visiting estates, gardens, woodlands and churchyards over a wide area to look for and measure trees of interest. Being a bachelor he spent most of his daylight time measuring trees though his other interests included listening to music (classical and church), visiting cathedrals, old churches and historic buildings.

Researcher for acclaimed Manual

For a time, in the 1960's, he was employed in the Hillier Stock Office recording plants sold. This familiarised him with a huge number of names. He was also responsible for labelling at all the Hillier Chelsea Show Exhibits and was a familiar figure there during the 1960's and '70's. In 1964 I moved from Hilliers West Hill Nursery to the Hillier Arboretum to identify and record the collections and a year later Hatton joined me as my assistant. Together, we worked on the Hillier Manual of Trees and Shrubs, Hatton's role being researcher. He checked out every tree reference in the Gardeners Chronicle dating back to the mid 19th century. Hatton was also responsible at the Arboretum for measuring and preparing the labels for new plantings that in the period 1964 – 1985 were being

planted at a prodigious rate. The Manual was published in October 1971 to international acclaim. Hatton played a huge part in its compilation.

Recording the collection

He was a reliable and conscientious employee of Hilliers and worked long hours on their behalf. For 20 years he labelled and recorded the Arboretum collections, in so doing played a major role in bringing them to the attention of plantsmen, gardeners, dendrologists and botanists internationally. He took as much care fixing his labels and maintaining them as others did in planting and maintaining the trees and shrubs on which they hung.

Continuing to measure

Hatton retired from the Hillier Arboretum in 1985, the year Sir Harold Hillier died, but continued measuring trees at the Arboretum and elsewhere. In the summer of 2005 I spent a day with Hatton in the Hillier Arboretum re-measuring trees he had previously done 10-20 years earlier. I also persuaded him to measure some rare new plantings! Throughout the time I have known him he has excelled as a researcher and recorder of trees.



Hatton Gardner lives for tree measuring and was out measuring trees at Kew, 60 years after his first measurements. (Photo: Roy Lancaster 2005)

The Ancient Yew Group

Tim Hills

What we have achieved since July 2005

Since the launch of our web site in July 2005 we have brought together yew enthusiasts and organisations. Membership has been expanded to include individuals who are making a significant contribution to the locating of yews or working on aspects of their conservation. These individuals are responsible for locating many undocumented ancient yews, particularly on the Hampshire/Dorset border and in the north of Kent, while one contributor has sent us more than 700 yew images.

Campaigns

Participation in successful campaigns to save threatened trees, such as Beltingham, South Brewham, Havant and Acton Beauchamp. These experiences have highlighted the poor protection provided by law and the lack of training provided to those empowered to decide the fate of an ancient tree. It also demonstrates the crucial role of local activists.

Supporting projects

Supporting and being supported by such projects as Caring for Gods Acre, the Shropshire Hills AONB partnership, Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre.

Web site

The web site www.ancient-yew.org is constantly reviewed and updated. 454 new images have been added as well as information on 127 new sites. The gazetteer has been modified to allow an increase in the number of images that can be shown, enabling us to incorporate archive material.



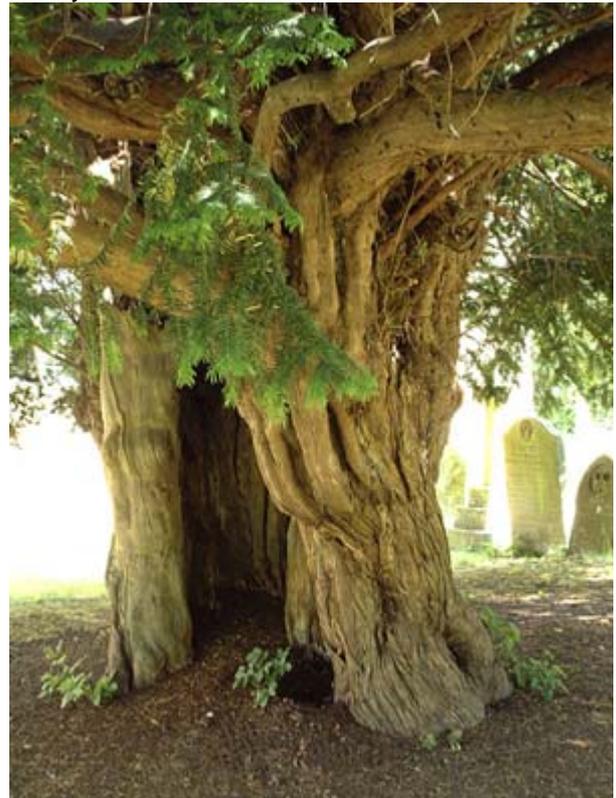
Ashford Carbonell, Shropshire (Geoff Garlick)

International links

Ongoing links with Eibenfreund (Friends of the Yew). The AYG are hosting a visit this summer of about 40 members of Eibenfreund and the German Dendrological Society, who are visiting England and Wales to see some of our finest yew sites.

New articles

The commissioning of new articles written by both members and non-Members. These include items about individual trees as well as advice on looking after yews.



Cradley, Herefordshire (Geoff Garlick)

Conservation Foundation

Assisting the Conservation Foundation in development of their Yew Guardianship initiative.

Contributing to TV

The raising of public awareness. The latest edition of Tree News features an article entitled *The Ancient Yews of Britain: Our neglected heritage*, tracing the history of our interest of yews. It finds that 'not all is well with our oldest and most mysterious trees'. We have contributed to TV and Radio and have featured as the Guardian's Campaign of the week. Bibi van der Zee's concluded this article by saying that The Ancient Yew Group "envisages a better, safer world for yews, with legal protection, a national consultancy on their care and feeding, research funding for studies into their growth patterns and history, a charitable trust for their conservation and somewhere, some day, a neglected churchyard bursting with yews, to be home to an ancient yew information centre with, let's hope, a teashop, perhaps serving scones, Eccles cakes, a profiterole or two...A dream worth having, if ever a dream was had."

Propping our heritage.....



(Left) Ancient Yew in St Cuthbert's churchyard, Doveridge, Derbyshire. Tim Hills says "the photograph was taken with my back to the yew. It shows some of the wooden frame supporting its spreading branches. The bole is also supported by a double circle of chains." More details can be found at www.ancient-yew.org

(Tim Hills)

(Below) The original Pagoda Tree (*Sophora japonica*) at Kew Gardens is one of five original trees obtained for Kew and planted in 1762. It was already lying in a horizontal position 100 years ago and is now supported with steel poles and a brick base – and remains healthy, the photo taken in April. (Tree Register)



Buckland-in-Dover (Tim Hills)

(Left) In about 1770 the yew tree in the churchyard at Buckland-in-Dover was struck by lightning. It split and shattered, and in doing so demolished the church steeple. Fortunately the yew was not cleared away, despite the fact that half of the trunk was lying on the ground, and the whole of the tree including the fallen section carried on living. Just over a hundred years later it was deemed necessary to extend the church, but the yew was in the way. The rector and parishioners were not willing to destroy the tree. Instead, they decided to carry out a tremendous feat, and to move the tree 60 feet away from the church.

"The operation commenced on the 24th February when a trench was dug on all four sides, four feet wide and five feet deep, and leaving a large block of earth, 18 ft by 16ft broad, and a long cutting was formed from the old position to the new one. Much work with huge planks of timber, chains, rollers and windlasses took place before the whole mass of the tree, estimated at 55 tons, began to move. It arrived within a yard of its destination at dusk on the 4th March." (Parish magazine, 1880)

.....arboricultural engineering



(Above) The Capon Tree (*Quercus petraea*), beside the Jedwater just south of Jedburgh on the A68. An ancient decayed tree with a wide low forking bole of 9.74m girth. 'Capon' derives from 'kep', to meet: it marks a meeting-place of the Border clans and is also referred to as Kepping Tree and Trysting Tree. The Capon Tree is one of the last oak trees remaining from the once extensive Jed Forest. The trunk has split in two and the branches are propped up with wooden struts.

(Below) Rather than resort to pruning an aging Rhododendron is given a helping support in Tregreham Garden, Cornwall. Here the props are being used as a climbing frame for two exotic climbers to create a living gazebo to walk through.

(Below right and right) A rare *Castanea sativa* 'Aureomarginata' at The Swiss Garden, Old Warden, Bedfordshire, has been supported successfully since the 1970's, whereas its twin collapsed.



The Chichester Elm

Richard I Smith

The provenance of *Ulmus Vegeta*

Thomas Holt-White FRS was the antiquarian, arboriculturist London ironmonger who I believe selected the “Chichester” hybrid elm at his residence Chichester Hall in Rawreth in Essex about 1777. Holt-White was the brother and active co-operator of Gilbert White of Selborne and like his other brothers had a decided influence on this famous eighteenth century cleric throughout his life as a Hampshire curate.

If anyone can establish a linkage between Holt-White and the Nurseryman of Norwich, George Lindley who first sold this “fashion” elm in 1801, I would be grateful to hear from them.

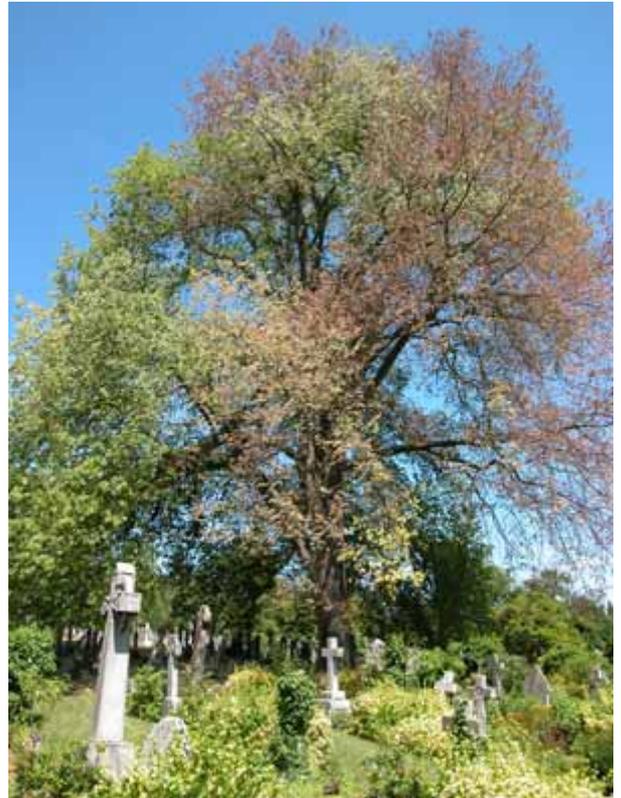
Norwich was probably the third largest city in the United Kingdom at this time and produced a remarkable number of eminent botanists such as Professor John Lindley FRS, Sir James Smith, the founder of the Linnaean Society, Humphry Repton the landscape designer and Dr Hooker Sr, the first Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. Benjamin White, of Fleet Street, London, brother of Thomas and Gilbert White was an eminent publisher of scientific books and the early Cambridge Horti of James Donn and the translated works of Linnaeus appeared from this business.



Ulmus x hollandica 'Vegeta' thriving as a street tree in 2006 (Tree Register)

Hybrid elms became an essential fashion item for estate owners during the early 1800s and some men boasted of up to 45 different selections, a habit

which continued with the emergence of both public parks and private cemeteries. Until the advent of the mature conifers assembled by English collectors from throughout the world elm trees were the tallest trees in the country and the Chichester clone, as the name “vegeta” infers was the most vigorous of the taxon.



An isolated 'Vegeta' in a cemetery finally succumbing to Elm Disease in 2006 (Tree Register)

Elwes & Henry (1913) in their great review of British and Irish trees cited the “Magdalen Elm” at Oxford, that toppled in 1911 as being a “Huntingdon” type elm but were confused as to its origin as this hybrid only officially was selected in about 1760 by John Wood Sr and the great Oxford tree was older than this by far! Perhaps this tree was an early Chichester elm, from the south eastern edge of Essex, since in 1711 specimens of a broad, smooth leaf elm had been lodged at the Chelsea Physic Garden by another clerical botanist, Adam Buddle, which Professor Henry in the early 1900s had called a Huntingdon elm!

Two giants however survive in Norwich's Chapelfield gardens today, perhaps remnants of nurseryman Lindley's stock, while a pair at Queens' College in Cambridge approach the height of the famous Magdalen elm of 1911 (142ft). If these historic links to the past can be evaluated in both a more historical and scientific way, perhaps with DNA analysis, one of the elm family's many problems will have been solved.

A creepy tale

Owen Johnson

Support for the climbers

Creepers ought, perhaps, to have no place on the Tree Register, but being so intimately associated with the trees they climb, they are sometimes bound to attract a taper's attention.

Champion trees with ivy

Ivy might not be welcomed when it smothers a prize specimen, but it is such a boon for wildlife that it ought to be tolerated if possible. Currently, 62 trees have reached 'champion' stature despite the burden of sufficient ivy to raise comment. The only champion I know whose ivy really had to be cut to help save it was the Golden Totara (*Podocarpus totara* 'Aureus') surviving bizarrely on the site of a dismantled hothouse in Swindon's Queens Park. Meanwhile the massed ivy on the champion Weeping Robinia (*Robinia pseudoacacia* 'Pendula') in the Arno's Vale Cemetery in Bristol has a smaller flea to bite it: the remarkable and local parasite Ivy Broomrape, *Orobranche hederae*.

Sticking power

Well-thinned forestry plantations suit ivy down to the ground. The unofficial 'champion', so far, is a plant bushing out and flowering up to 31m in the crown of a Norway Spruce in a 1920s plantation in the Coed Craig Glanconwy above Betws-y-Coed (SH793550). Douglas Fir plantations, which nowadays provide climbing-frames almost twice this high, often grow lots of ivy but the plant seems to lack the sticking power to make it through the dense middle crowns. The biggest ivy 'trunk' I have seen is 19cm thick, at 0.8m below the first fork, on a plantation oak in Russell's Inclosure in the Forest of Dean at about SO613090.



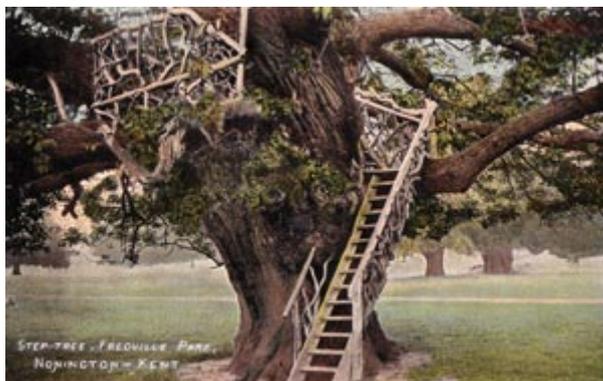
Wisteria sinensis using a Scots Pine for support (Tree Register)

Ornamental climbers

A few ornamental climbers are certainly more vigorous than ivy. *Rosa longicuspis* had reached 20m in the crown of a rhododendron at Chyverton in Cornwall in 1991 and a 24m *Wisteria sinensis* at Enys in the same county in 1996 was only limited by the height of the Coast Redwood it grew on. Mark Hanson reports a *Wisteria* planted in 1951 at Wickham Place Farm at Wickham Bishops in Essex which has spread along walls for 74m; maybe the Forestry Commission should start planting *Wisterias* at the bottom of all those Douglas Firs.

Historic postcards

A glimpse of the past sent to us by collector *Stephen Young*



The Step Tree (Sweet Chestnut) Fredville Park, Kent



The Mid Land Oak (Centre of England) Leamington Spa



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**We should like to thank Paul McCartney
for his continued generosity in sponsoring this
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