

The Tree Register



**Newsletter No.26
2017/2018**

- **7th European Champion Tree Forum**
- **Sandringham House**
- **A Purple Passage**
- **Mount Usher**
- **Borde Hill Lecture**

Sandringham House gardens, Norfolk

Tree Tour and Conference

Organising the 7th European Champion Tree Forum began eighteen months before with Leipzig based ECTF Secretary Gordon Mackenthun. As founding members in 2010 this was the first time the growing group of European champion tree enthusiasts would meet in the UK. Tree Register Trustee Tony Kirkham offered to host the presentations at Kew Gardens and so this became the focus for our accompanying tour.

Thursday 21st September - Syon House

The majority of our group met at the Kew Gardens Hotel and, thanks to some Dutch and Belgium communications, we rendezvoused with a Dutch group, representing *Stichting Wereldboom* (Worldtree Foundation), at Syon House, our first visit. Together we represented seven countries including; Czech Republic, Spain and Germany. Some had visited the UK many times but for a few it was their first visit, so it was good to discover that no one had visited Syon before. Head Gardener, Tophier Martyn, led an informative walk round the gardens. Highlights included the British champion Hungarian Oak (*Quercus frainetto*), Swamp Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) and Turkish Hazel (*Corylus collurna*). Despite light rain, everyone was in high spirits later in the hotel bar, before walking to a nearby pub for dinner.



Syon's Head Gardener, Tophier Martin, led the walk

Friday - Burnham to Windsor

The sun was shining as our group were joined by author Thomas Pakenham, who kept our group entertained with anecdotes and photographs. I arrived on time outside the hotel, showing no sign of the panic caused by our choice of location for the over-night parking of our minibus in Kew Gardens. We had inadvertently blocked access for the tourist train. Glad of my early breakfast, I yomped across the gardens but not before the arb team came to the rescue and dragged our bus out of the way! I hope the biscuits I left helped compensate!

Our first stop was Burnham Beeches where we were met by our guide, Helen Read, Conservation Manager for the City of London. This special National Nature Reserve is one of the best examples of ancient woodland in Britain. The fabulous ancient beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) pollards looked amazing in the autumnal sun. Many are more than 400 years old and we could easily have wandered amongst them for hours. Receiving confirmation that the barrier would be up at Langley Park, allowing access for our minibus, we headed off on



The ECTF meet the "Caged Pollard" at Burnham Beeches



Lukas Ameye with his trusty bicycle in Burnham Beeches

the short drive, with the *Stichting Wereldboom* group following behind. Here we visited the ancient yew, which was even a first for Thomas!

Champion Tree Charter

With the good weather holding it looked promising for our planned picnic at the Ankerwyke Yew. Lukas Ameye filled up his bike panniers with refreshments and cycled across to the historic tree. The rest of us helped carry our picnic. After a pleasant lunch and 800 years after the Charter of the Forest had been issued, the ECTF members signed their own Champion Tree Charter under the Ankerwyke Yew.



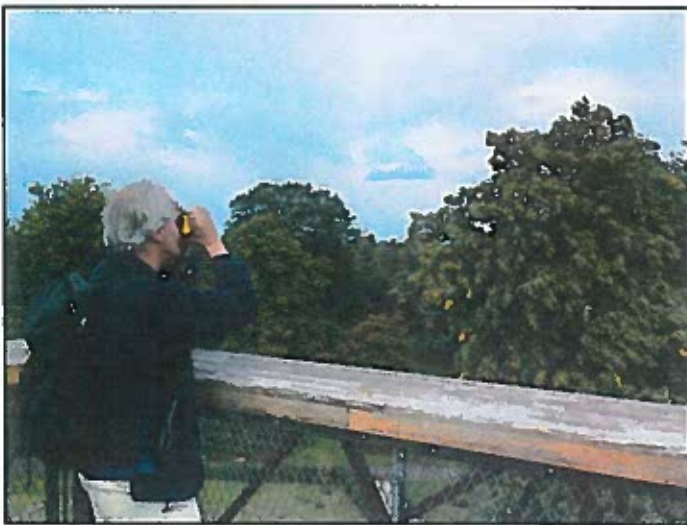
Our next stop was Windsor Great Park, where we met retired Head Forester, Bill Cathcart. Bill was a wonderful host as, single handed, he served up tea and cake (his homemade lemon drizzle was amazing!) Bill took us to see the Conqueror's Oak and Offa's Oak, a tree none of our group had seen before and where there was much discussion and photograph taking. It was a great tree to finish on and it was a tired but happy group that met for dinner in the hotel that evening.



Offa's Oak at Windsor Great Park

Saturday - The forum at Kew Gardens

After breakfast we walked into Kew Gardens and enjoyed views from the Treetop Walkway. From here we boarded the minibus and after checking out of the hotel, travelled the short distance to the Jodrell Laboratory. We were joined here by Tree Register members. After a general welcome the forum opened with a keynote speech by Owen Johnson, updating us on the latest news and tree discoveries here in Britain and Ireland. Before lunch, scientist and author Aljos Farjon, gave a summary of the research from his book *Ancient Oaks in the English Landscape*.



Jeroen Philippona measures tree heights from the Treetop Walkway, Kew Gardens.

The afternoon session was packed with short presentations from; Jeroen Philippona: Monumental Trees, Gordon Mackenthun: new ECTF website, David Mingot-Martín & Blanca Niño-Ray: Management of Champion Trees in Madrid, Peter Coles: London's Mulberry Heritage, Libor Sedláček: Monumental Trees in Czech Nature Conservation, Michael Spraggon: A

View from the Treetops and Lies van Lierde: Stichting Wereldboom. Most would have spoken for much longer and it was a shame to cut some people short. After a break we heard again from Gordon on News from the Jungle, before our headline act Julian Hight, who enthralled us with tales of his adventures visiting trees from his latest book, *World Tree Story*.

Following this ECTF members had a guided walk of Kew Gardens led by Owen Johnson. This included excited re-recording of the great Chestnut-leaved Oak (*Quercus castaneifolia*), confirmed by laser to be 36.6m tall and the tallest in Europe! That evening we drove to our next hotel near St Albans. The minibus was a lively affair once Lubos opened a bottle of Becherovka, a herbal spirit from Czech Republic.

Sunday - St Albans to Cockfosters

After breakfast we checked out of the hotel and travelled the short distance to the historic town of St Albans and a short stop to see a Cedar (*Cedrus libani*) at St. Stephen's church. From here we travelled to Hatfield House for an informal walk amongst the oaks in the old deer park, seeing Old Stumpy and the Elephant Oak.



Koen Smets and Jeroen Philippona measure The Elephant Oak in Hatfield House Park

Our tour ended at West Lodge Hotel, Barnet and the Beale Arboretum. Owner and manager, Andrew Beale greeted us and kindly lead us on a tour of the collection. We finished in fitting style with a traditional afternoon tea in the King Charles Room, where jam and cream was piled high on scones, punctuated with farewell speeches and thanks. From here we went our separate ways and my last port of call with the minibus was Gatwick airport, before finally making it safely but exhausted, home. I would like to thank all those who came along and to everyone who helped make our guests so very welcome.

"Thank you for this successful meeting, well organised, perfectly managed. We did have a wonderful time and met spectacular trees and great tree-people." Roel Jacobs (Belgium)

Philippa Lewis has volunteered for the Tree Register since 2002 and is currently our European Representative.