

ITS NEWSLETTER 2019



THE IRISH
TREE SOCIETY

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The Irish Tree Society gratefully acknowledges images provided for this publication by Gerry Douglas (GD), Margie Phillips (MP), Bat Masterson (BM) and Mark Johnson (MJ).

Cover Photo, Members of the Irish Tree Society members crossing the bridge in Ashford.

WELCOME ALL

It's that time of year that we reel in the year and take a trip down memory lane of 2019, and bring back some wonderful memories of the beautiful gardens that we had the privilege of visiting.

At this point we would like to thank all our members who gave lovely accounts of the gardens visited. It is always refreshing to meet with the owners and gardeners who were more than willing to share the knowledge and history of their gardens.

A special word of thanks to David O'Grady who started the season with organising a fabulous trip to gardens and arboreta in the London region in May, and to Peggy Masterson for her guidance and support in compiling this newsletter.

We hope you enjoy this account of 2019, and we look forward to our visits in 2020.

Gerry Douglas and Margie Phillips

THINK LIKE A TREE

Soak up the sun
Affirm life's magic
Be graceful in the wind
Stand tall after a storm
Feel refreshed after it rains
Grow strong without notice
Be prepared for each season
Provide shelter to strangers
Hang tough through a cold spell
Emerge renewed at the first signs of spring
Stay deeply rooted while reaching for the sky
Be still long enough to
hear your own leaves rustling.
(Author unknown)

MBE ANNOUNCEMENT

We should like to congratulate Tracy Hamilton on her well-deserved gong - an M.B.E.- in the New Year's Honours List. She earned it for her brilliant work in the family

food business. Her family firm, Mash Direct, now supplies lip-smacking delights to supermarkets in both parts of Ireland, Britain and beyond.

Tracy now follows in the footsteps of her father, Paddy Mackie, awarded an M.B.E in 2004 for his work in conservation. Both have been leading lights of our committee for more than 20 years. And both have given us delightful hospitality at their homes in County Down - Ringdufferin and Island Magee.

Thomas Packenham



Tracy Hamilton



Curraghmore, measuring Sitka (©GD)

NOTES FROM A TREE MEASURER

TREE HUNTING RESULTS FOR 2019

The following is a brief summary of important trees from memory as they have yet to be processed by Matthew Jebb, Glasnevin. About 500 trees were recorded or updated during the year which began with a search for all native black poplars in the Barrow valley counties of Carlow, Kildare and Laois. About 350 of these trees had been found nationwide in previous surveys, so to find 150 in my area alone suggests the Irish population may be under-recorded. Black poplars are a very important but vulnerable species in Ireland and Europe and tend to be of a few clones which occur naturally or planted along streams or ditches. They rarely seed themselves as I found only one place where males and females occur together.

Co Carlow's 50 trees are all female while about 90% of the trees in the Liffey and Shannon watersheds are male. I found five new trees of over 5 m in girth which doubles the previous known trees of such size including two within a mile of where I live that I had never noticed before. It just shows what lies before you if you open your eyes. Black poplars are a beautiful adornment to the landscape with their rugged leaning crowns.

Brian Rodgers, a tree society member from Co. Louth showed me around his stomping ground in May where I recorded many magnificent trees in various estates. The highlight is a new Irish girth champion of 4.5 m for a red oak.

The champion white willow near Carlow town featured in my book 'Heritage trees of Ireland' has fallen and died but another tree even bigger at 6.5 m girth was found

during a search for orchids near my home in June. Later in the summer I was shown by Tracy Hamilton a new champion common laburnum of 2.9 m girth at Ballytrim house in Co Down. It is a British Isles champion and looks ancient and replaces the previous champion sadly butchered from Oldcastle in Co Meath.

It was nice to see a champion *Nothofagus menziesii* from New Zealand doing very well at Belvedere near Mullingar during a re-measure there in July. I did not know if it would have survived the big freeze in 2010.

In October I surveyed all the trees in the Dargle valley at Powerscourt. Many new trees were found but some of the re-measures brought some interesting results. Firstly, the tall Douglas fir seems to have dropped down to 59 m in height due to its leader starting to droop. The big surprise is the huge Sitka spruce has overtaken the champion in Caledon Estate and is now over 8.3 m in girth and one of the largest in Europe. It would be very respectable among the giants of British Columbia. The Douglas fir girth champion is now almost 7 m and the Atlas cedar champion is 6.3 m.

Finally, the Derryconnery plantation beside Dereen in Co. Cork is a must visit for all our members. David Alderman from the tree register of the British Isles agrees that it must be one of the finest conifer groves outside North America and no need to get on a carbon belching plane to see it.

Postscript, good news from Australia is that the forest service managed to save the Wollemi pine grove from the surrounding bush fires. I measured the Wollemi pine tree at Kilmokea, Co. Wexford in July and now I confirm that it is the Irish champion at 8.3 m for height and 49 cm for girth. This makes it the second largest measured in Europe behind a tree in Monaco.

Aubrey Fennell

IRISH TREE SOCIETY VISITS 2019

LAMBAY ISLAND, DUBLIN APRIL 30TH 2019

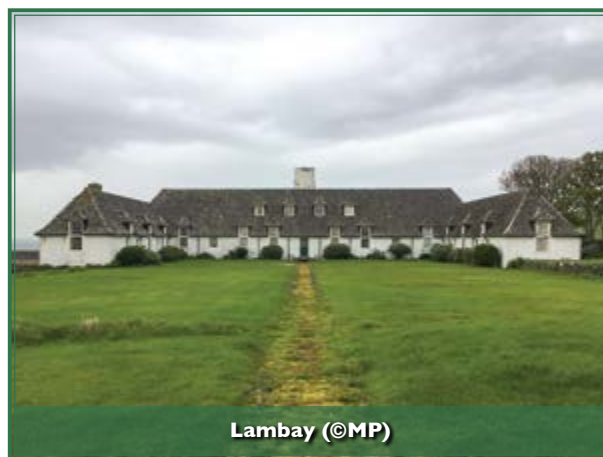
It was a roller coaster ride on the most powerful speed boat in Ireland, to Lambay Island. This engendered a spirit of adventure and exploration in us. We were not disappointed despite the windy squalls and several kilometres of field trekking to explore the rich fauna, flora and geology of this island jewel in Dublin Bay. Our excellent guide told us the full story. The island occupies 600 acres, and has changed hands from the Talbot's of Malahide, to the Parr family and nowadays to the Baring family trust in 1904. The island has 10 caves, 150,000 seabirds of multiple species in summer, hundreds of seals and a herd of Aberdeen Angus cattle. Fallow deer and a stock of red-necked wallabies are managed. The latter leap freely in the wild, breed and make their family homes in the gorse scrub. Today whiskey is produced from the pure springs of Lambay as the latest enterprise.

The medieval castle is a 15th-century blockhouse castle which was transformed by Sir Edwin Lutyens who also had a circular curtain wall built around it for wind protection. Indeed most of the trees on the island are within those walls. The success of sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) is a testament to its resistance to wind and sea spray. Sycamore has established where other species would not and has provided microclimates for other trees such as a few pine, evergreen oaks (*Quercus ilex*) and whitethorn. A few wild saplings and planted trees of common ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) were noted here and there. Each one had tell-tale symptoms of ash dieback disease. This confirmed that even on an island, several miles off shore, it was impossible for ash to escape the deadly spores *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*.

Gerry Douglas



Lambay (©MP)



Lambay (©MP)

OVERSEAS TRIP, ARBORETA OF OUTER LONDON 13TH TO 17TH MAY 2019

WINDSOR GREAT PARK AND SAVILL GARDENS MAY 14TH 2019

We spent the day in Windsor Great Park domain, which covers an area of over 4500 acres and has been a park since Saxon times. The morning was spent in the Savill gardens, 35 acres, and the afternoon in the Valley Gardens, 200 acres.

John Anderson, very generously showed us around for the day. He has been in charge for the last couple of years since the sudden death of Mark Flanagan. Windsor Great Park was really transformed by the Duke of Cumberland, second son of George II. In 1745 he was appointed first head ranger of the park. He changed the ancient heath-land landscape, with a large scale planting programme of beech, sweet chestnut and oaks. He also created Virginia Water reservoir, other small water features and an array of follies and decorative bridges. There are still parts of the Great Park with the ancient heath-land remaining untouched, often with a scattering of clumps of Scots Pine.

There was very little planting done in the Park during Victorian times and as a result there is a 'generation gap' in the Park. This has been a special issue for the beech, with many of the original beech over mature.

In 1932 Eric Savill, the Ranger at the time, got approval from George V to create a public Woodland Garden. The Savill Garden site is on a Bagshot sand with a low pH, and a good cover of oak. Work gradually began on clearance of brambles and undergrowth; two ponds were widened and connected. Progress was slowed by the interruption of World War 2. The arrival of Thomas Hope Finlay, as chief horticulturalist, rapidly brought the garden to fruition in the early 1950's.

Eric Savill was a pioneer in planning woodland planting and had a clear vision that it should be done in a layering pattern, with a top layer allowing enough light into the layer below and so on down through the canopy to optimise the light and environment for growing each layer of plants.

Oak is the main species in the upper canopy at the Gardens. It is also one of the best species for allowing light into the canopy below. The next layer comprises mainly Magnolias, Prunus and Acer with a wide selection of different Rhododendron, Azalea, Cornus etc., below. The base layer is comprised of woody ferns, hostas, pulmonarias and various bulbs.

In a woodland environment there is always the danger of lack of vistas and space. Eric Savill was insistent on vistas and open spaces being created and maintained. John has opened up even more space and light since he started, and has plans for more. Pathways have been created

throughout to manage visitor traffic. Irrigation systems have been installed in places.

The Savill Gardens was initially created as a spring garden but with its increasing popularity it has gradually extended its seasonal interest. John has been segregating parts of the gardens into different areas of seasonal interest, in the hope of moving traffic around different parts at different times of the year.

In the mid 1950's a large double herbaceous border was added, separating the two borders are a central cluster of *Podocarpus salignus*; they had been forgotten in a nursery bed during the war and had taken root. They were never moved and are now a focal point between the borders.

The dry garden was created in 1976 by John Bond, long before they were fashionable. The planting was intended to feature a number of plants adapted to dry conditions, and range in variety from tulips, alliums, cistus, phlomis and arbutus.

In 2002 a Golden Jubilee Garden was created and in 2006 the Savill Building was opened, designed by Glen Howells Architects. It replaces the old reception area with a modern restaurant and gift shops. It was short listed for the Sterling Prize in 2007. It uses oak and larch from the nearby Windsor Great Park and has a spectacular curved waved flowing roof line. It fits into the landscape very well.



The Valley Gardens, Windsor Great Park (©MP)

In 2007 a New Zealand garden was created with native plants that had been given to HM Queen on the 1986 Royal visit but had never found a home. Interestingly at least 80% of the plants in New Zealand are unique to the islands, and many are now under threat from human and naturally occurring events. In 2010 Andrew Wilson designed a Rose Garden, with a very modern 'Titanic' walkway up above the roses to give a different perspective.

We visited the Valley Garden in the afternoon. It runs along the North side of Virginia Water, with seven valleys running down to it. We only had time to explore a few of these but saw some wonderful *Nothofagus dombeyi*. Very large *Enkianthus* and a *Pterostyrax psilophyllus*, new to cultivation, a much more vigorous and earlier flowering tree. John again was doing lots of clearing. New plans were in progress for the Punch Bowl. One of the highlights of the area with a stunning display of azaleas.

John is a busy man in charge of all the royal gardens and he gave us a fantastic insight into both gardens and his enthusiasm is inspirational. We were very grateful to have him as our guide.

Robert Wilson Wright



The Valley Gardens Vista (©MP)

CHISWICK HOUSE MAY 15TH 2019

The English landscape movement started here, with William Kent's designs for the gardens of Chiswick House. With his mentor, Lord Burlington, Kent broke down the rigid formality of the early 18th century garden to create a revolutionary, natural-looking landscape. Our first impressions of the gardens were of the framing cedars planted as large trees in 1700 and now with some large branches organically grafted into each other. Chiswick has a landscape feature known as an 'exedra' i.e. a semi-circular hedge at the end of a rectangular space, in

this case of yew to act as a background to a collection of sculptures. Leading off the exedra was the oldest feature of the garden, an impressive 'patte d'oie' (goose foot) arrangement of radiating avenues of yew planted out round 1716 with each vista ending in an ornamental building. The garden is filled with references to antiquity such as the circular terraces surrounding a circular pond with an obelisk and mini Parthenon all flanked by a character-full evergreen oak (*Q. ilex*). The glasshouse dates from 1813, to house fashionable varieties of Camellias. The gardens have many impressive trees including *Cedrus libani*, *Cunninghamia lanceolata*, *Robinia pseudoacacia* 'Umbraculifera', monkey puzzles and a thriving, 15' high, Wollemi pine (*Wollemia nobilis*).

Gerry Douglas



Chiswick house Wollemi pine (©GD)



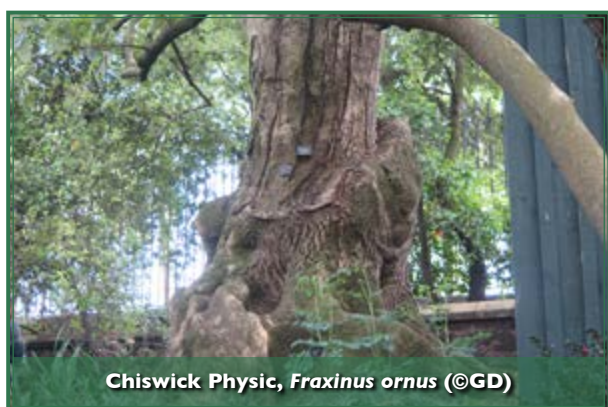
Chiswick house, 'Exedra' (©GD)

CHELSEA PHYSIC GARDENS MAY 15TH 2019

We were welcomed by Susyn Andrews. The Chelsea Physic Garden is like a local friendly garden, where one knows one will be well treated for a little cash. Nell Jones guided us excellently (Head of Plant Collections) to appreciate the many and varied trees of these special gardens. There are few places in London that are quite so warm where a large number of citrus fruit trees grow so well outdoors. On a south-westerly wall many pomegranates are still on branches from last year. Since

1673 the gardens have existed for apothecaries to grow their treatments. This apothecary garden was one of the first in the world of its kind. In 1712 after struggling, Sir Hans Sloane acquired the land and leased it for £5 per year in perpetuity; his statue is still in the middle of the gardens, looking proud. The gardens are divided into areas of medicines rather than into geographical locations. Nearly all plants are labelled and there are poisonous plants as well as plants with many varied medicinal qualities. Also there are many trees, particularly those suited to warm climates which the gardens provide so well. There is an olive tree (*Olea europaea*) and an avocado (*Persea americana*), both look healthy and productive. Also a Virginian date plum (*Diospyros lotus*) and a large *Quercus ilex*. A black walnut and a mulberry tree look long-lived and cheerful, as do a varnish tree *Toxicodendron vernicifluum* (formerly *Rhus verniciflua*). Close to the gates on the embankment are a male and female Ginkgo that are unusually well-established, at least 100 years old and perhaps the tallest in the UK. The boundary has a huge grafted tree of the manna ash, *Fraxinus ornus* with three ascending trunks. There are also trees of grapefruits, oranges and lemons, a very old *Catalpa bignonioides* and a large specimen of *Umbellularia californica* which has bark indistinguishable from a mature common ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), introduced by David Douglas in 1829. As with all gardens open to the public there is a place you can get lunch, and a rather good shop with all kinds of garden-related bits and bobs. Quite expensive too, although perhaps not for this part of London.

Barry Domville



Chiswick Physic, *Fraxinus ornus* (©GD)

KEW GARDENS

MAY 16TH 2019

Kew attracts two million visitors per year. We were very fortunate to be guided by Mr. Tony Kirkham MBE, the head of the arboretum, gardens and horticultural services. The arboretum stretches across two-thirds of the gardens.

He guided us to some of his favourite trees and provided much useful advice along his way. Kew has 14,000 trees which represent more than 2,000 species, including rare and ancient varieties. This great collection contains trees as old as the gardens themselves, many that cannot be found anywhere else in Britain. Some of the oldest trees date to the 18th century and include the Japanese pagoda tree (*Styphnolobium japonicum*), the black locust tree (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) and a Lucombe oak (*Quercus x hispanica* 'Lucombeana') planted in 1770. The latter was a rarity in its day and was grafted onto *Q. robur* as a means of its propagation. It was successfully moved as a 75 year-old tree and currently has three lightning conductors in its crown. The tallest tree lives in the Redwood Grove, a *Sequoia sempervirens* (a coastal Redwood), standing at 40 metres tall – the height of a 13-storey building. The fastest growing tree in the gardens is the chestnut-leaved oak, *Quercus castaneifolia* measuring over 30 m tall and 30 m



Mr. Tony Kirkham MBE (©MP)



Kew, *Paulownia kawakami* (©GD)

wide, planted by Hooker in 1846. We saw specimens of *Pinus bungeana*, *Picea smithiana*, and a relatively new addition of Chinese hickory (*Carya cathayensis*) whose edible nuts are highly esteemed by the Chinese. Tony advises tree planters to make square or triangular-shaped holes rather than round ones. Corners in the holes stimulate the roots to penetrate the soil more effectively. Small plants of trees become established quicker than large specimens that may be pot bound, and establishment is accelerated by allowing the trees to flex in the wind by using canes as initial supports rather than stakes. He also optimises the efficacy of Roundup herbicide by applying it at low doses (1/10 the recommended concentration), but crucially, it must be applied in early spring when weeds are germinating and beginning to emerge. The diameter of the root protection zone that is allocated for trees covers an area

which is twelve times the diameter of the tree. These areas are treated with 4" of mulch annually and crowns are thinned as needed in the old specimens. A most notable tree was *Paulownia kawakamii* in full bloom, from Taiwan, which produces fertile seeds at Kew. He favours the Chinese tulip tree *Liriodendron chinense* over *L. tulipifera* with its more truncated leaf tip and silvery leaf undersides. We left Kew inspired by Tony and full of enthusiasm for all matters arboricultural.

Gerry Douglas

SYON HOUSE AND GARDENS MAY 16TH 2019

Syon House is the spectacular London home of the Duke of Northumberland, visited by many including Thomas

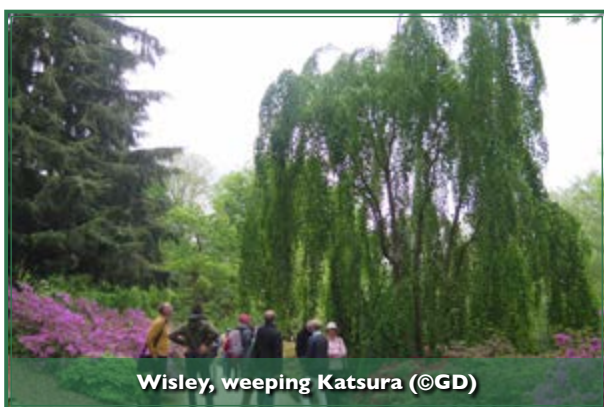


Syon, *Koelreuteria* (©GD)

Jefferson. The grounds cover 200 acres and is the only private estate within London. The house was built in the sixteenth century on the site of the medieval Syon Abbey, and came to the family of the present owners in 1594. In one of his first major commissions, the landscape architect Lancelot 'Capability' Brown undertook the transformation from formal gardens to the landscape form we see today. In the house the Scottish architect Robert Adam created a series of striking classical interiors, filled with antiquities shipped from Italy.

The tree collection at Syon dates back to the plantings of the late eighteenth century with a predominance of species from eastern North America. It has superb specimens and champions of many species such as the swamp cypress (*Taxodium distichum*). At the lake edge they showed off their vertical roots (pneumatophores/knees) protruding above ground level. Their function is not clear but one assumption (not proven) is that they are conduits for oxygen to the roots that grow in waters with low dissolved oxygen, i.e., typical of a swamp; mangroves have similar adaptations. Another more likely function is that of providing stability; swamp cypresses grown on dry ground rarely have 'knees' and also lack large buttresses while cypresses found in flood-prone areas tend to be 'kneed' and are strongly buttressed. Other champions noted were Liquidambers, Zelkovas, *Pterocarya fraxinifolia* and a large *Koelreuteria paniculata* (15 X 71) in front of the impressive conservatory which is over 300' long.

Gerry Douglas



RHS WISLEY GARDENS

MAY 17TH 2019

We were greeted on our visit to Wisley by the curator, Matthew Pottage, who gave us a personal tour. The original 'Wisley' was known as Oakwood, and it still exists today very much as it was when George Wilson started gardening on the site in the late 19th century. Wilson

was all about experimentation, and to this day Wisley hosts a rolling programme of plant trials. Scientists work hard to inform gardeners about the challenges of our changing climate with its extreme weather events, as well as emerging threats from new pests and diseases. After a brief overview of the vast site, Matthew suggested some additional aspects specifically of interest for our group that whetted our appetites for future visits.

Wisley is the place to see some of the country's most beautiful trees, many of which are the largest of their species in the British Isles. The Jubilee Arboretum was planted in 1977 but the great storms of 1987 and 1990 wreaked havoc, felling many mature trees. Wisley has 100 volunteers in the garden as well as a permanent workforce. Matthew estimates the garden is host to more than one million visitors each year.

We began the tour along the Broadwalk to Battleston Hill, where the famous double mixed borders frame each side of the walk up the slope, and the spectacular herbaceous planting is set against a backdrop of Acer, Betula, Castanea, and Stewartia. Bindweed is an issue, but the Wisley solution is to mow it out.

Battleston Hill was full of surprises: the woodland is home to significant collections of Rhododendron, of which 500 are considered rare or endangered in cultivation. This section was ablaze with colour with camellias, magnolias, rhododendrons and azaleas – many were beautifully scented. These species thrive on Wisley's acid soil. May was the perfect month to visit this woodland.

Matthew emphasised the importance of canopy management to preserve sight lines; this was also a theme stressed by John Anderson when we visited Windsor. It does occasionally mean giving consideration to removing mature trees, which is always controversial.

The Stumpery and Dell was a surprise find; the ferns, Wollemi pines and tree ferns among the stumps and roots were amazing, and the Dell also featured a wooden dinosaur sculpture as a centrepiece. We saw some amazing trees, including a spectacular *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, *Pinus coulteri*, a multi-stem *Parrotia persica*, and the fastigate English oak (*Quercus robur* 'Fastigiata') – one of the finest in the country. Finally, on top of the hill we came upon a spectacular *Toona sinensis* 'Flamingo' (now *Cedrela sinensis*) named for its bright salmon pink colour in Spring. This area was also the site for a large sculpture which is changed every few years.



We continued our descent through the Bonsai Walk, an avenue of evergreen deciduous and flowering bonsai trees typically aged 40-100 years, presented on simple wooden stands in front of a yew hedge.

Our guided walk with Matthew ended after three hours, and we adjourned for lunch. We had some free time after lunch to further explore the wonders of Wisley. Some members visited the spectacular glasshouse, a journey through a jungle of tree ferns, palms and lush-leafed creepers. There they had an opportunity to experience three climatic zones and view an exciting range of the plants which thrive in the moist temperate, dry temperate, and tropical zones. A whistlestop tour around the planet!

A small group of members visited the Pinetum, home to the oldest trees in Wisley. Some of the oldest *Pinus nigra* were planted by the original owner, George Ferguson Wilson – the magnificent redwoods were planted around 100 years ago. The tallest tree in the pinetum was a *Sequoia sempervirens* at 35 m (115 ft). A *Thuja plicata* 'Zebrina', the highest in the British Isles, featured a huge pyramid of zebra-like, striped foliage. Additionally, the Pinetum was home to a *Pinus x holfordiana*. It is a spontaneous garden hybrid that has also been deliberately made between two widely separated tropical mountain species, namely Mexican white pine (*P. ayacahuite*) and Himalayan white pine (*P. wallichiana*).

Wisley is a must for a return visit.

Peggy Masterson

PAINSHILL MAY 17TH 2019

On our last afternoon we went to Painshill Park and Garden near Cobham in Surrey. It was designed by the Honourable Charles Hamilton between (1738-1773), who was born in Dublin in 1704, the 9th son of a family of fourteen of the Earl of Abercorn and his wife Elizabeth. Charles Hamilton travelled extensively and spent two years in Italy, where he was inspired by the Renaissance Art and his grand tours. He was one of the best customers



of John Bartram (1699-1777) from Philadelphia who collected and sold him seeds and plants of American species, and some of which, such as *Robinia pseudoacacia*, may be still extant today. At Painshill, Hamilton went on to create a sequence of wonderful views, follies and trees after he acquired the land at 1704. The planting of trees was paramount, many of which he got from the United States. Some of the trees that we saw were among the original planting and included important specimens of Cork Oak, Yew and Cedars of Lebanon. One of the great Cedars, 120 feet high and over 100 feet in width is thought to be the largest Cedar of Lebanon in Europe. We were taken on a circuitous route by a local guide and at the top of a gentle slope we came upon the Fir tree walk, and our first folly – the Amphitheatre, an oval lawn similar in shape to a Renaissance Roman hippodrome and at one end a large, dark-coloured sculpture of the Rape of the Sabines, and at the other a white Gothic temple framed by dark trees with five of its pillared arches left open.

The view from the Gothic temple was reputed to be Charles Hamilton's favourite, looking across the lake in the valley to the wooded area on the other side. The lake was created by diverting the River Mole and is fed by water drawn up to a height of sixteen feet by a water wheel, a feat of engineering in its time.

Like most great landscape parks, Painshill has a grotto, built on what was known as grotto island. It is made of bricks which were left over from a failed brick kiln business. Inside, the grotto is divided in two by a channel of water spanned by a little bridge, the underside of which is hung with glittering stalactites, crystal calcite and quartz. Beyond an iron gate is a mysterious passageway leading to an internal cavern that opens onto the lake side. We expressed surprise to see the Turkish tent in the view across the lake, a construction made with purple and white draperies.

Hamilton sold the estate when he ran out of money in 1773. Painshill was then owned by a number of private owners. Following WW2 the estate was split up, which led to a period of neglect. The park soon disappeared and its features fell into decay. In 1980 the local authority had begun work on the restoration of the garden and the following year the charity, The Painshill Park Trust, was founded in order "to restore Painshill as near as possible to Charles Hamilton's original Concept of a Landscape Garden for the benefit of the public"

Anne Martin



Painshill, original Robinias (©GD)

MAYO/GALWAY TRIP

DRIMBAWN HOUSE

JUNE 22ND 2019, MAYO

Drimbawn House, Tourmakeady (Tuar Mhic Edaigh) is nestled in the heart of the Mayo Gaeltacht, a beautiful setting on a hillside leading down to the shores of Lough Mask. It was here we remembered Sheila Wilson Wright on this day, the day of her remembrance service, a part of the country Sheila was very much acquainted with; Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam.

Drimbawn house originally known as Lough mask cottage was designed by Patrick Byrne an eminent architect in the 1850's for Catherine Plunket cousin of Sir Richard Bolton Mc Causland. Byrne was commissioned to design many churches in Dublin after catholic emancipation in 1829. Drimbawn house was unusual as it was one of the few houses designed by Patrick Byrne. Catherine engaged Ninian Niven to design and layout the gardens where some of the original trees and structures still remain. The house remained in the ownership of Sir Richards Decadence until the early 1960's; in 1970 the actor Robert Shaw of 'Jaws' fame purchased the house.

It was in 1997 that Doris and Robert Wilson bought Drimbawn house and developed the garden in consultation with Daphne Levinge Shackleton. It is obvious, on entering the garden, that they had cleared much of the invasive species *Rhododendron ponticum* var *ponticum*. Along the driveway a *Cedrus atlantica glauca* was flourishing. Planting of many rare trees and unusual trees has been established since 1997, namely *Pseudotsuga chienii* (both rare and endangered), *Acer conspicuum* "Phoenix" (beautiful snake bark) and *Stewartia sinensis*, all planted in the new woodland. I also noted some lovely *Kalmia latifolia* including 'Pinwheel' and 'Olympic fire'.



Drimbawn House (©MP)

On behalf of the Tree Society I would like to thank Doris and Robert Wilson for allowing us to enjoy their beautiful garden and showing us some wonderful hospitality.

Last but by no means least, thanks to Daphne for taking the time to guide us around, a garden that won the hearts of the Tree Society. This garden was well crafted, fresh and a garden that can be appreciated by future members of the Tree Society.

Margie Phillips



Walled Garden at Drimbawn (©MP)

ASHFORD CASTLE

JUNE 22ND 2019, MAYO

On leaving the wonderfully inspiring gardens of Drimbawn House, Tourmakeady, we headed on the scenic route to Ashford Castle, taking us over the Partry mountains. It was refreshing to see the natural flora and fauna flourish on these mountains.

Ashford Castle, a 350 acre estate set on the edge of

Lough Corrib is owned by the Red Carnation Hotels group. The history of Ashford is very interesting and should be mentioned.

In 1228 after the defeat of the O'Connors of Connaught, the Anglo-Norman de Burgos lived at Ashford for three and a half centuries. Then in 1589 Sir Richard Bingham forced out the de Burgos, and the Bingham family fortified the castle. In 1715 the Browne family established Ashford as an estate and a French style chateau was added. In 1853 Sir Benjamin Lee Guinness extended the estate to 26,000 acres, built roads and planted thousands of trees as well as adding a Victorian style extension. In 1868 the estate was passed on to Lord Ardilaun; both he and his wife were avid gardeners. The estate was retained by the Iveagh Trust in 1915. John Mulcahy bought Ashford Castle in 1970 and opened it as an exclusive hotel.

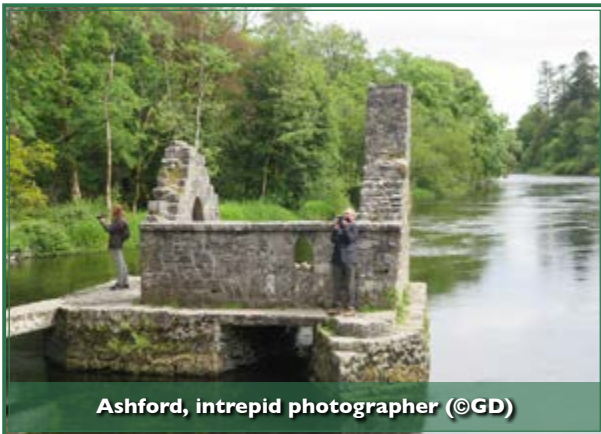
2013 saw the hotel being purchased by the Red Carnation Hotel group, when the hotel for the first time went under major restoration. In 2014 the gardens underwent major restoration and development under the guidance of Arthur Shackleton. Much of the original plantings were over aged and many trees were in need of tree surgery. Most of the trees of note are now labelled so the public can enjoy them.

Mature specimens of note are the *Podocarpus salignus*, *Platanus orientalis*, and *Liquidamber*. At one stop on the tour we noted that our esteemed colleague, Tracy Hamilton MBE, was lending a helping hand to prop up

the champion cypress (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* 'Erecta viridis'). We were lucky to have Arthur Shackleton to guide us through this historic garden, Thanks Arthur.

I would like to thank Mary Fitzgerald for spending the day with us and sharing her knowledge of all matters historical by bringing us on a tour of Cong village, and for showing us the wonderful Harry Clarke windows in the local parish church, and at Cong Abbey, the monks fishing house she had not a mention of "The Quite Man" filmed in Cong in the 50's. Thanks Mary.

Margie Phillips



Ashford, intrepid photographer (©GD)



Ashford, Tracy MBE propping up a cypress (©GD)

CASHEL HOUSE, GALWAY

JUNE 23RD 2019

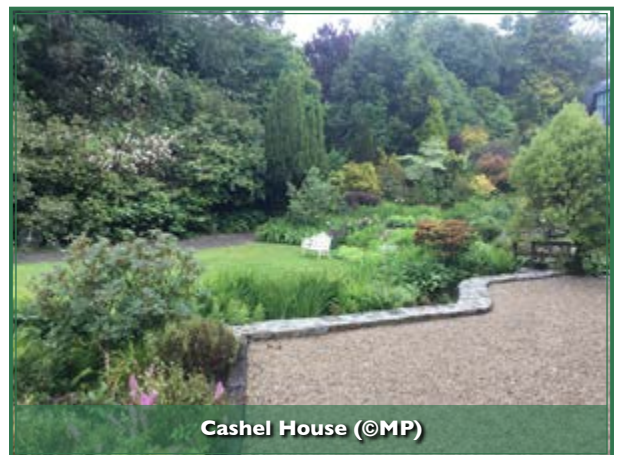
On Sunday morning, not blessed with the weather, we took the road westward to Cashel house hotel, run by the McEvilly family since 1968. Traveling to Cashel house we passed through open wild countryside whose flora is dominated by native and naturalised species such as *Crataegus monogyna*, *Salix spp.*, *Alnus glutinosa*, *Betula pubescens*, *Fuchsia*, *Crocsmia* and Heathers. On reaching the 50 acre site of both garden and woodland we found this a real gem nestled on the Connemara shore. One can't but be impressed with the collection of mature trees growing here making it a plant person's paradise in Connemara. The preservation and restoration of the garden in 1968 was carefully undertaken by Mrs Kay McEvilly, herself a keen gardener. Mrs McEvilly had listed and numbered the trees of importance in the garden, allowing the visitors to enjoy and learn the names of all trees planted here.

Cashel house was built in 1849 for Captain Thomas Hazell who was an agent for kelp, selling it to Scotland. Mrs Hazell laid out the garden and planted many of the flowering trees and shrubs: *Cornus*, *Magnolias*, *Embothrium coccineum*, *Styrax*.

In 1919 Jim O'Mara, a keen botanist added more Rhododendrons, rare trees and heathers to the garden and in 1952 the house became home to Lt. Col Brown Clayton who added a notable collection of Fuchsias. I would like to thank Brian for his hospitality and we wish him well in making Cashel house a garden/hotel destination.

Trees of note at the garden were: *Perrotia persica*, *Styrax japonica*, *Liriodendron tulipifera*, *Nothofagus cunninghamii*, *Magnolia grandiflora*.

Margie Phillips



Cashel House (©MP)

BALLYNAHINCH CASTLE

JUNE 23RD 2019, GALWAY

On the afternoon of Sunday 23rd June 2019, after a morning of torrential rain at Cashel House, we arrived in heavy West-of-Ireland mist at Ballynahinch Castle Hotel, a 700-acre estate with woodland, rivers and walks in the heart of Connemara. The Ballynahinch estate is rich in history dating from 1546, when a small castle was built by Donal O'Flaherty, the husband of Grainne O'Malley (Grainneuaile). The present hotel was built in 1756, and there has been a large number of famous and exotic owners throughout the years, including the Maharaja Ranjitsinhji who owned the estate from 1923 until his sudden death in 1933.

Our visit began with a walk through a woodland section close to the hotel. This area has undergone a major clearance of the invasive *Rhododendron ponticum* var *ponticum* and has been replanted with a good variety of broad-leaved trees. The real treat of our visit was a tour of the recently restored walled garden with head gardener and estate manager, Cian Cuniffe.

The restoration of the garden began in 2017, designed and executed by Rachel Lamb with the assistance of Cian and his team. The original walls presented a challenge, but with the skill and expertise of local stone-wall builders, the restoration was completed. The added bonus of warm stone walls was perfect for espalier-grown apple and pear trees. During the redevelopment the ground was made as fertile as possible by incorporating mushroom compost

and seaweed, and also by sowing green manure and adding a huge amount of organic matter and nutrients to the soil.

Within the walled garden each area has its own points of interest: the greenhouse surrounded by the edible garden, the pleached pyramidal trees underplanted with herbaceous beds, a living archway tunnel with rose bushes, and a mixed tree area planted with green manures which are bee and butterfly friendly.

Throughout the estate there are both new and mature trees from maple to lime trees, and magnolias to weeping willows. We saw the magnificent *Cornus controversa variegata*, a beehive hornbeam, *Carpinus betulus*, and a liquidambar, *L. styraciflua*.

The Connemara mist did not deter our enjoyment of a very special visit.

Peggy Masterson



18th Century Oaks at Ballynahinch (©MP)



Ballynahinch, vista (©GD)

COUNTY DOWN TRIP

BALLYWALTER PARK JULY 6TH 2019

Ballywalter Park is the home of Lord & Lady Dunleath and it has been in that family for 170 years. We were welcomed most warmly with tea on arrival, followed by their guided tour of the pleasure grounds. The Mansion House is situated within the walled demesne of some 270 acres. It was built in the Italianate Palazzo style and has been afforded Grade A listing as being of exceptional architectural importance.

We were taken on a tour of the 30 acres of pleasure grounds where recent storms have felled quite few of the mature specimens of various species, leaving opportunistic gaps which are currently being replanted. From the house we admired the open sweep of lawns punctuated with trees of pine, cherry, Cupressus, silver birches and a large evergreen oak (*Quercus ilex*). Our first tree of note as we walked along the garden wall was the New Zealand Christmas tree, *Metrosideros excelsa*. It was in full display

with its crimson bottle brush flowers among the evergreen leaves. We then admired a perfectly shaped mature specimen of Nordmann fir (*Abies nordmanniana*), with a height of 25 m and girth of 2.54 m. This tree can attain a girth of up to 7 m in Ireland and will thrive for over 250 years. Our chairman advised to plant Nordmann firs in preference to silver firs (*Abies alba*) because the former retains its head with age and the latter loses it to leave a crown reminiscent of a lavatory brush. The grounds had several trees of *Acer davidii* with the new growths showing the typical red coloration. We saw a fine tree of the rare Tasmanian *Nothofagus cunninghamii* 17 m high and 2.21 m in girth, one of just three species of *Nothofagus* from Australia along with *Nothofagus gunnii* and *Nothofagus moorei*. We admired several Pines some of which we failed to identify, but the *Pinus nigra* was unmistakable; with an impressive girth of 6 m and a height of 30 m. Other trees and shrubs of note included: the Andean native *Podocarpus andinus* (formerly, *Prumnopitys andina*), *Athrotaxis selaginoides*, coastal redwoods, several *Rhododendrons*, *Lomatia ferruginea* and *Kalmias* flowering beautifully.

Gerry Douglas



Ballywalter, *Nothofagus cunninghamii* (©GD)



Ballywalter, *Abies nordmanniana* (©GD)



Ballywalter - Lord Dunleath discussing plans (©MJ)

WOBURN LODGE

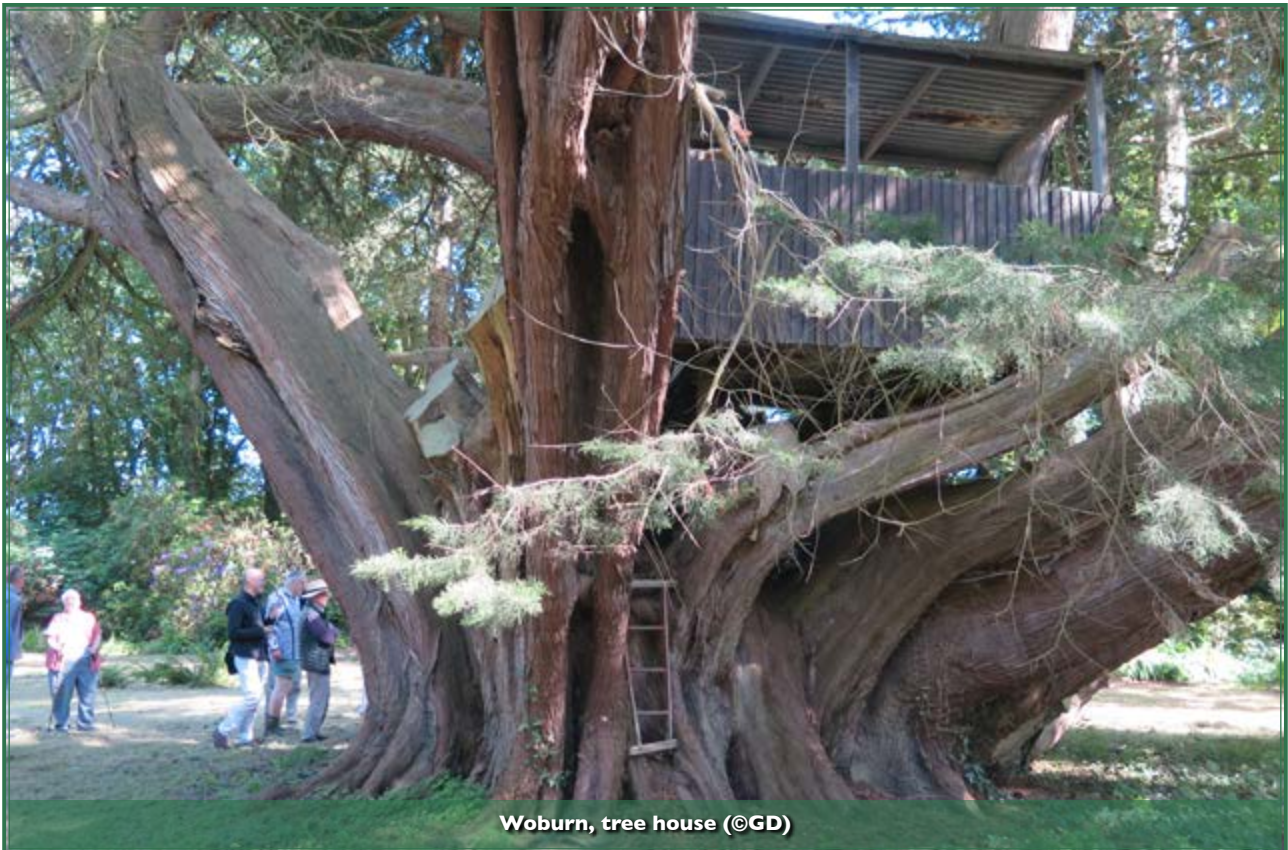
JULY 6TH 2019

Following the visit earlier in the day to Ballywalter whose grounds were very grand and spacious, the afternoon saw us all at nearby Woburn Lodge in the more intimate confines of its Victorian Arboretum.

The hosts for the afternoon were Charles & Susan Scott, descended (through marriage) from George Dunbar, an early planter on this site. When Dunbar started on the site there had been very little planting on the Ards Peninsula

and the site was a flax mill. Dunbar started on the original planting of the Victorian Arboretum in the mid-19th century aided in part by H. M. Fitzpatrick, the renowned botanist of tree conifers. The original planting specialized in southern hemisphere plants and there was a second wave of planting in the 1930s. There had been a previous ITS visit to Woburn Lodge in 2006.

A very impressive *Rhododendron protistum* from Burma and planted in 1935 provided wonderful shade as we listened to Susan Scott's account of the development of the arboretum. A very beautiful Tibetan Cherry (*Prunus*



Woburn, tree house (©GD)

serrula) kept us company nearby and we passed on to the *Myrtus luma* (*Luma apiculata*) with its wonderful, peeling cinnamon-brown bark and aromatic leaves.

The Maori/New Zealand native *Pittosporum tenuifolium* is a very pretty evergreen tree and thrives in this arboretum and was much admired. Another evergreen near it is the *Cornus capitata* a dogwood native to the Himalayas of China and India but naturalised in parts of Australia and New Zealand.

An Irish champion for height, the Chilean Lantern Tree (*Crinodendron hookerianum*) maintains a special place and was a great favourite. Another champion (also for height) was a hybrid holly, a hybrid of Irish and Madeiran holly. Nearby was a confident Cappadocian maple (*Acer cappadocicum*), not worried that it wasn't a champion.

However, hugging the most attention, and not only for its enormous and snake-like branches but also for the spectacular tree-house nestling in it, was a Monterrey Cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*). This provided endless opportunities for group photos, selfies, tree-hugging and a dendrological blessing from our chairman. The entire arboretum is dense and confined within a very limited space and full of charm.

At the end we enjoyed delightful tea and sandwiches, in a sun-drenched glade beside the house and a wild flower meadow hosting thousands of bees.

David O' Grady

BANGOR PARK AND GARDENS

JULY 7TH 2019

Our visit to Bangor park was eventful with some members getting lost and others losing keys, friends, phones, handbags, backpacks and dogs. A lot of searching for these items distracted us from searching for nice trees. However, by the end of the day all were happily reunited with their losses.

The Ward family designed the parklands and walled garden of Bangor Castle in the 1840s. For many decades it was closed to the public and was considered by many as a secret garden! North Down Borough Council restored this beautiful garden and parkland and it was officially opened as a visitor attraction in April 2009. The garden won the Royal Horticultural Society Award for Permanent Landscaping in its first year of opening. Most of the trees



Bangor, admiring *Eucalyptus globulus* (©GD)



Bangor *Eucalyptus* seed capsules (©GD)

were mature and were generally well labelled. The car park area had a graceful specimen of the weeping pear (*Pyrus salicifolia*) and a perfectly healthy weeping form of Wych elm (*Ulmus glabra* 'Camperdownii'). This tree had weeping branches from a height of about 2 m. Elms less than 2 m high survive very well in hedges as they seem to be bypassed by beetles which carry the fungus of the Dutch Elm disease. The parklands had many fine specimens of various species including: Douglas fir, Acer, Tsuga, and Abies. The cones of the Yezo spruce (*Picea jezoensis*) from Japan, were available for close inspection on brown shoots among glossy green leaves which had very white bands of stomata beneath. We saw trees of the American

white or Weymouth pine (*Pinus strobus*). When first presented to Linnaeus it had the normal epithet of the day, which by convention described its distinguishing botanical features as: '*Pinus Americana quinis ex uno folliculo setis longis tenuibus triquestris ad unum angulum per totam longitudinem minutissimis crenis asperatis*'. Thanks to Linnaeus *P. strobus* is more manageable. From its introduction to Europe in 1705 it has been popular, for it has a graceful appearance with 3-5 inch long needles in tufts of five. It was much planted by Lord Weymouth at Longleat as a source timber for ship masts which were stronger than masts made from Baltic pines. Its commercial potential in Europe declined because of its susceptibility to white blister rust. Bangor has some very fine specimens of *Eucalyptus globulus*, which littered the ground with its large seed capsules. The capsules are induced to open after fires and spread their huge quantities of tiny seeds onto the burnt forest floor where there is no competition and a transient supply of nutrients in the ash. A wonderful adaptation which has ensured their survival throughout Australia.

Gerry Douglas

CLANDEBOYE ESTATE JULY 7TH 2019

The estate, which is currently home to the Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, was first settled in 1674. A series of intimate walled gardens adjoin the courtyard and house.

The gardens include a bee garden, a chapel walk and a conservatory garden. The bee garden has a fine selection of old Irish varieties of apples surrounding a wild-flower meadow. Further afield, the woodland gardens and arboretum display a large collection of Rhododendrons and exotic tree species suited to the unique mild climate of this part of County Down. *Styrax japonica* was in full flower emitting a beautiful scent. We travelled through the arboretum and noted fine specimens of cork oak (*Q. suber*), *Nothofagus nervosa*, *Podocarpus salignus* and *Abies delavayi* with its very attractive violet-black cones. The mature noble fir (*Abies nobilis*) was also in full cone mode. Other mature specimens of conifers included Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and *Tsuga canadensis* on the more acid soils. The bark of the *Eucalyptus coccifera* was particularly attractive. More recent plantings of unusual conifers included *Atrotaxus selaginoides*, and the two graceful trees: *Fitzroya cupressoides* from Patagonia and a 14 year-old *Dacrydium franklinii* from Tasmania. For many of us it was the first time to see trees of the

relatively new introductions of *Xanthocyparis vietnamensis*. As the name suggests it is from Vietnam, introduced to cultivation in 1999 and expected to grow no higher than 15 m. It is a critically endangered species in the wild. DNA analysis has aligned it closely with *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis* and the latter has now been transferred to the genus *Xanthocyparis*. *Pilgerodendron uviferum* is a conifer which can be found growing from 40 to 55 degrees south in Tierra del Fuego, where it is the southernmost conifer in the world and its status is currently threatened in the wild. *P. uviferum* is a slow-growing, narrowly conical evergreen reputed to grows from 2–20 m in height.

Gerry Douglas



WATERFORD TRIP

LISMORE CASTLE

SEPT 14TH 2019

The Irish home of the Dukes of Devonshire in County Waterford, which dramatically rises above the River Blackwater as you cross the bridge into the town. Lismore Castle is a largely 19th century castle built in the 1850s for the sixth duke by Sir Joseph Paxton, incorporating a medieval bishop's palace and the early 17th century home of Richard Boyle, the Great Earl of Cork. It is approached from the town to the south along a walled walk from which a building known as 'The Riding House' (built 1626) gives access to two gardens, the walled 'Upper Garden' on the west side and the informal 'Lower Garden' on the east side. We first visited the three-acre Upper Garden which was built on two terraces in the 1620s and is

surrounded by high stone walls with corner turrets and a high terrace stone at the west end. An axial path aligned on the medieval cathedral divides the area, which has been used since its creation as a productive kitchen garden, with a mixture of flowers, vegetables and fruit; in the north-west corner part of a ridge-and-furrow glasshouse survives, one of only two left in these islands (the other is at Somerleyton Hall in Suffolk). Back across through the Riding House, the visitors enter the very different three-acre Lower Garden, created as a fashionable Pleasure Garden by the 6th (Bachelor) Duke around 1830 and from the outset filled with rhododendrons, azaleas, and a variety of other exotic trees and shrubs. The castle wall has a champion specimen of *Magnolia delavayi* and provides a favourable environment for a tree of *Phellodendron amurense*. Similarly, the garden walls protect a large specimen of *Osmanthus yunnanensis*, the Chinese trumpet vine (*Campsis grandifolia*) and *Schizandra rubrifolia* which displayed a few red berries. The walled garden also had a tree of Chusan palm which was laden



Lismore, *Eucryphia* trees in flower (©GD)

with fruit indicating the very favourable growing conditions for this palm, *Trachycarpus fortunei*.

Among the exotics, trees of *Eucryphia x intermedia* 'Rostrevor', over 30' high were in full flower in the lower garden. Other specimens of note included a very old tree of *Magnolia sprengeri* 'Diva' which must be worth visiting in April to experience its rose pink scented flowers.

Terence Reeves –Smith



Lismore, *Magnolia sprengeri* Diva (©GD)

CURRAGHMORE

SEPT 14TH 2019

Curraghmore Estate, which lies adjacent to the village of Portlaw, is the largest enclosed demesne in Ireland. One appreciates its size from the outset as the avenue from the main entrance gates to the house, the home of Nicholas de la Poer Beresford, 9th Marquess of Waterford, is over 1½-mile long, dramatically passing through high woods alongside the River Clodiagh. Visitors arrive into a vast courtyard, each side flanked with magnificent stone cut Classical stables and office ranges built in the 1740s (possibly by Francis Bindon) and the only true example of a *Court d'honneur* in Ireland. At the south end stands the impressive house crowned by a large St Hubert's Stag with crucifix, the family crest of Le Poer. It was the Le Poer or Power family who first built a tower house here in the medieval era, later enlarged c.1700 into a massive square block enclosing a small central court. This was remodelled by James Wyatt (who never came here) and Thomas Penrose in the 1780s for the 1st Marquess of Waterford, whose father Marcus Beresford had inherited the place following his marriage to the heiress Catherine Power. The building was re-clad in the 1850s and 1870s, but prior to this last phase of building work, the surrounding grounds had been remodelled in 1843 by James Fraser,

the celebrated garden writer and designer. In the area between the 18th century parkland 5-acre lake and the main garden front of the house, he built an enormous 9-acre balustraded terrace in French baroque style, while on the north-west side of the house, inspired by various works of Le Nôtre, he created a *patte-de-oie* incorporating various separate pleasure grounds with ornamental plantings and an earlier shell house of c.1745, with a fine statue of younger John van Nost of Catherine Countess of Tyrone. Further ornamental planting exists south-east of the house and its terrace and also alongside the river to the south-west.

The tree in Curraghmore of greatest note is the Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) which is 56 m in height x 7.1 m girth. It is one of two original David Douglas introductions which still survive in Britain or Ireland; the other is in Abbeyleix. It was planted out in 1835 and was the tallest tree in Ireland from the 1960s to the 1980s when it was overtaken by the Shelton Abbey sitka spruce and more recently by a Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) in Powerscourt.

Terence Reeves–Smith

MOUNT CONGREVE

SEPT 15TH 2019

Michael White, the Curator of Mount Congreve gardens was our guide for the afternoon visit. He gave us an excellent history of the garden's evolution and the histories of the many tree and shrub species of note for the time of year. Its fame is due to Ambrose Congreve (1907-2011) who planned the garden and attributed his long life of 104 years to 'having a garden to care for'. He also advised that 'when one plants anything, whether it involves five or fifty plants, they should be planted together and not dotted here and there'. Good advice if one has around 70 acres to plant. There are several garden areas: a bamboo garden, the bluebell walk, the walled garden, and the woodland garden which had a very striking low hedge of *Pseudowintera colorata* 'Marjorie Congreve'. It is not usually grown to such good effect as here. Mount Congreve's entire collection consists of over three thousand different species and cultivars of trees and shrubs, over 2000 Rhododendrons, 600 Camellias, 300 Acer cultivars, 600 conifers, 250 climbers and 48 types of Pieris. New introductions are added each year such as the Taiwanese elm (*Ulmus uyematsui*), which had leaves rather similar to our once common Wych elm (*Ulmus glabra*). Our timing was perfect to see the rare

Poliothyrus sinensis in full flower at about 25 feet in height. It was covered in terminal panicles of small creamy white flowers. It belongs to the monotypic genus in the botanical family Flacourtiaceae. It was discovered in Hupeh China by Augustine Henry in 1889 and later introduced in cultivation in 1908 by E. H. Wilson. Although it germinates readily from seed it is not often seen in arboreta.

Gerry Douglas

SALTERBRIDGE

SEPT 15TH 2019

We were fortunate to have had our AGM at Salterbridge house and gardens. We were made most welcome by the owner Mr. Philip Wingfield, and after our deliberation, he escorted us to the tree delights on a beautiful sunny day. The west lawn had four Irish yews (*Taxus baccata* 'Fastigiata' which had transitioned from the sleekness of youth to the rotundness of age. A large and impressive European larch (*Larix decidua*) overlooked the beautiful west lawn and borders. It had some remedial branch removal but looked very respectable for its age with fissured bark and somewhat flattened crown.

More recent additions to the gardens included the drooping juniper (*Juniperus recurva* var. *coxii*). It was planted in 1980

but originally introduced to cultivation in 1920 from Burma by the Scottish horticulturist Euan Cox. He had travelled and collected with Reginald Farrer on the latter's last expedition in the region which he described at one of his encampments as 'perched on a wall coping of the world with India, Burma, China and Tibet all fluttering in my view'. Apart from this juniper, they gathered and introduced to horticulture, many species including *Rhododendron mallotum* and *Deutzia calycosa* among others. Euan Cox later established the famous rhododendron nursery at Glendoick Scotland. We greatly admired a majestic evergreen oak planted round 1800 as the hybrid *Quercus X hispanica* 'Lucombeana'. Although some lower branches had been removed over the years it had a full healthy and spreading crown (picture). Natural hybrids arise in Iberia where both parent species co-exist, i.e., the Turkey oak (*Q. cerris*) with the cork oak (*Q. suber*). It was popularised as a rarity by the nursery Lucombe of Exeter in the 1760s and was propagated by grafting. Thereafter, some trees produced seeds; the products of natural backcrossing with either parent and these offspring were more widely distributed.

The oak at Salterbridge was measured at 13 m in height x 4 m girth.

Gerry Douglas



Salterbridge (©BM)



Salterbridge (©BM)



Salterbridge (©BM)



Salterbridge, Turners oak (©GD)



Salterbridge, *Cryptomeria* (©GD)



Paddy Mackie, Greg Fletcher, Thomas Packenham & Cian Cunliffe



Ronnie Wilson, Drimbawn House & Philip Harvey (©MP)



Lismore, *Magnolia delavayi* (©GD)



Woburn, the dendrological blessing (©MP)



Thomas Pac, Andrew Kavanagh,
Nell Jones Physic garden



Conservatory at Syon house



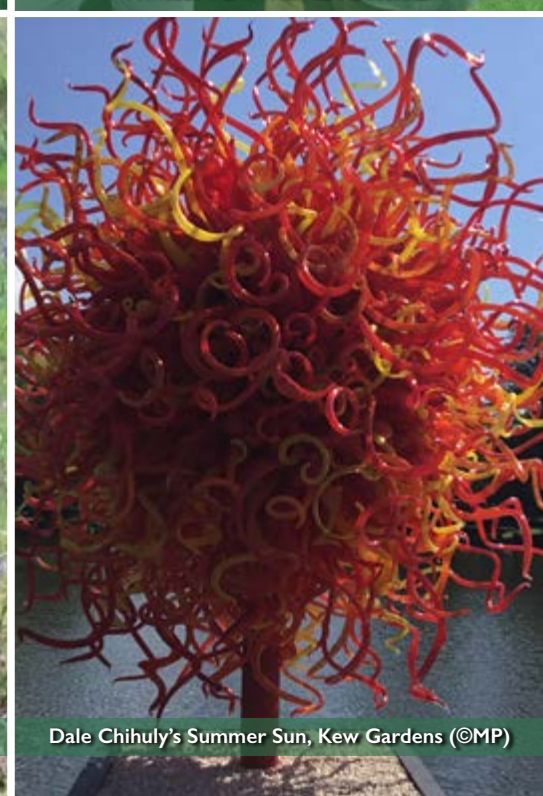
John Anderson with head gardener,
Windsor Park Thomas Packenham



Temperate House Kew (©MP)



Lambay Island Wallabee (©GD)



Dale Chihuly's Summer Sun, Kew Gardens (©MP)