

Report on the Trees, Woods and Hedges of the Royal Bath and West Showground 2010

Introduction

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This report is to identify all the wooded areas, individual ornamental trees and hedgerows on the showground with a view to preserving and incorporating them in any future development, and also to identify any which should be removed, or sacrificed without loss of amenity.

There are no tree preservation orders in existence on this property.

The background.

The Society bought the showground in 1964. Virtually all hedges were removed and ditches filled in. All hedgerow elms were either felled at the time or later died of Dutch Elm Disease.

Only a few short lengths of farm hedge remain. A few ash trees were spared, but one of these was recently felled. There are also a few mature oaks in the car parks. The picture is of a very young, bare and artificial landscape which the Society and its advisor, or "Conservator", have sought to soften and enhance by tree planting. There is one special area (1, 2, 3 and 4 below and on attached map) where the planting is designed specifically to demonstrate plantation management, to enhance wildlife and to educate and entertain visitors of all ages. Elsewhere there are large areas with isolated trees or no tree cover.

Description of the trees. See map for details

1. The Lang Brown Copse. Beech, ash, Small-leaved Lime, Norway Maple, with Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*), whitebeam, hawthorn, poplar, White Willow, Lawson Cypress, Scots Pine, dogwood and other native shrubs.
2. The Coppice. Ash, oak, Wild Cherry, some Large-leaved Lime, with hazel, holly, yew and box. Many snowdrops and bluebells. Fronted by five timber clone poplars – Primo, Gibecq, Goy, Beaupré and Boelare. The biggest is Beaupré.
3. Also within this area (the former Conservation Section) are groups of native shrubs, laid hazel and hawthorn hedges, willows, two ponds, bee hives, stone walls; all of the greatest value for enlightening young and old alike.
4. "Men of the Trees". A short belt of Scots Pine, birch, Small-leaved Lime and oak, with hazel and other native shrubs.
5. The Plantation. Our largest area of woodland. Very largely Corsican Pine, Scots Pine, *Abies grandis*, *A. nobilis*, Lawson's Cypress, beech, ash and Douglas Fir, with an understorey of elm suckers and an array of minor species which are being shaded out. These include *Sequoia sempervirens*, *Nothofagus procera*, Norway Maple, White Poplar and non-native shrubs. There were plantings of supposedly disease-resistant elms after the DED, many of which survived and have grown fast, viz: lobel, dodoens, plantyn, urban and 'Autumn Gold'. These are of the greatest interest for research into resistant elm clones, and also as host to the now very rare white letter hairstreak butterfly.
6. The Beadle Arboretum:
Cornus kousa var chinensis, Amelanchier laevis villosa, Arbutus unedo, Prunus subhirtella autumnalis, Crataegus x lavalleyi carrierei, Sorbus 'Apricot Queen' Prunus padus, Sorbus intermedia,

Crataegus oxyacantha 'Pauls Scarlet', Acer platanoides 'Crimson King', Malus floribunda hillieri, Davidia involucrata, Populus candicans 'Aurora', Malus 'Golden Hornet', Fraxinus excelsior 'Jaspidea', Salix vitellina pendula, Malus sieboldii, Acer rubrum, Robinia pseudoacacia 'Frisia', Malus 'Veitch's Scarlet' Sorbus hupehensis, Crataegus prunifolia, Cotoneaster watereri, Acer brilliantissimum.

The above is the list of species planted. Some have succumbed to fireblight, some were a poor choice, e.g. *Pop.candicans aurora*. All groups of three should be reduced to one, and several should be removed completely. A field check in May would be needed to see which have survived.

7. The James Myatt Belt. A disappointing belt, but vital, being on the boundary. Leyland Cypress, Scots Pine, Horse Chestnut and oak. Could be much improved by removing all the leylandii.
8. At Green entrance is the high stump of the old ash recently felled. The regrowth will give it a new lease of life and should be preserved.
9. Girl Guides. Similar to the Myatt Belt, above, but without the leylandii. Attractive.
10. The Paraplegic Games area. Five splendid White Willows and a Horse Chestnut.
11. The Geoffrey Rouse Walk (west). Beech, ash and oak, with a few hawthorn, Scots Pine, Wild Cherry, Small-leaved Lime, alder and Japanese Larch. There is a path through the middle.
12. The Beech Wood. A beautiful wood. Predominantly beech, with a few ash, Lawson's Cypress and Jap. Larch.
13. The Tip. This area, between the Beech Wood with a small patch of natural woodland in the northeast corner of the showground, was a rubbish tip. This was covered in soil removed from the old quarry face. The lower side of the bund was planted with Wild Cherry, Sorbus species and alder.
14. The Geoffrey Rouse Walk (east). Wild Cherry, ash, lime, and native shrubs including hazel, blackthorn and hawthorn. No path.

All the above, from the conservation area round the northern perimeter to the eastern boundary constitutes the most interesting and least visited part of the showground. It not only shows many aspects of woodland and conservation management, it includes the Darling Pond, which may host crested newts, and the quarry with its exposure of Lias Marlstone. It forms a classic wildlife corridor, connecting three patches of woodland, allowing species – plants, vertebrates and invertebrates – to migrate from cover to cover.

15. Near Purple Gate there are two fine ash trees, and running south from there is a line of Horse Chestnuts with one Sorbus.
16. Continuing the same line southwards is a line of Sorbus (Whitebeam) alongside the Council car park.
17. The permanent entrance to the flower marquee is beautifully landscaped with an Acer and an ash.
18. The area to the north of the former conservation section (3, above) has a small orchard of cider apples and perry pears, and a screen of coppiced alder screening the latrine block.
19. The Village Green. Two young oaks and two *Aesculus* sp., to be identified later. They appear to be the red species (*Aesculus. carnea*) – decorative, but small and slow growing.
20. The Main Ring. On the north side are 12 Large-leaved Limes and two groups of Whitebeam.
21. All those belts numbered 15 on the map were planted in 2002 after the Gardening Show. They comprise, at wide spacing, Acers, birch, Sorbus and Viburnum species, giving over 600¹ metre run of a very pleasant informal screen.
22. Brick Cottage. The garden hedge contains two good beech and a Scots Pine. To the north and south of the cottage are Horse Chestnut, Wild Cherry, Acers and an oak. Also near this group is a Common Lime (the base surrounded by suckers). This should be felled, and the stump removed.

¹ All measurements approximate, as the map has no declared scale.

23. Alongside this grove is a 120 metre long row of very good Norway Maple. In years to come one could remove alternate trees. For the moment they are to remain.
24. To the north of the main entrance is an unfortunate rectangle of Leyland Cypress. These should be felled. Between them and the entrance road is a group of alder, beech, Horse Chestnut and birch.
25. To the south of the main gate is a triangle of exotic ornamentals including Catalpa, Liriodendron, birch, ash and cherry. More will be identified when in leaf. The poorer birch must be removed. Between them and the perimeter fence is a row of perry pears.
26. Scotts' Copse. This was planted for us by Scotts of Merriott along the Prestleigh Brook. It forms one of the most attractive corners of the showground. Included are Acers (possibly *A. rubrum*), ash, pines, cedars, *Robinia pseudoacacia*, willows and Grey Poplar. Again, the rarer ones must wait till in leaf. This lovely belt must be treated with great respect. No thinning is envisaged, and no development works can be allowed nearby.
27. Running SE down the canalised stretch of the brook is a magnificent row of the hybrid poplar 'Balsam Spire' (though the first tree is a Cricket Bat Willow). They are the pride of the showground. Though they will soon reach 30m height they are yet young and will continue for many years. To the west are two lovely mature oaks.
28. To return to the main entrance: along the A371 is a dense sight screen of many species, including Turkey Oak, alder, pines, dogwood, cherry, willows, holly, hazel, Horse Chestnut, and others.
29. At the Blue Gate are a few Acer, ash, Sweet Chestnut and London Plane. Not doing well; one of them dead.
30. A long row (about 200m) of Large-leaved Limes running along the road frontage to Blue Gate. At the southern end a splay has been created and the fence realigned. Ten trees have been planted inside the fence; the 11 outside should be felled. Either side of blue gate are several more limes and two poplars.
31. On the SW side of the Prestleigh Brook is a row of perry pears, with cider apples on the opposite bank.
32. Along the Blue/Yellow car park road is a very fine run of nearly 450 metres of Large-leaved Limes. They are planted alternately with poplars, but these are to be removed before they start to dominate the limes. Over the next generation the limes will become one of our finest features.
33. On the western side of Yellow car park is a row of sycamore and Balsam Poplar. These are not impressive, and may go in due course to make way for more imaginative landscaping. At the northern end are two Horse Chestnuts, one of which is so badly damaged it should be removed.
34. The Berm (or perhaps it should be "The Bund"²). This is the most imaginative planting of recent years. The bank was created to screen the perimeter road, and the crest of it was planted densely with oak, ash, cherry, hazel, Norway Maple, *Viburnum opulus*, hawthorn, Field Maple, holly, alder and willow. At the lower end it widens out onto flat ground and includes birch, *Sorbus* spp. and other shrubs. The trees and associated grass and herbs will form a wonderful wildlife haven.
35. A good screen of ash, sycamore, willow and Norway Maple. Will become too open as it matures, so should be pollarded/coppiced to keep it dense.
36. The Main Square, or Main Lawn. Ornamental planting of *Cedrus atlantica glauca*, *Liquidambar styraciflua*, *Carpinus betulus* 'Fastigiata', beech and *Sorbus* sp. These identifications will be checked when they are in leaf.

This report lists all the trees, woodlands, shelterbelts and hedges on the showground (E&OE). All are valuable to the landscape, as windbreaks, for conservation and education, for screening the uglier buildings, and for ornament e.g. round the Main Lawn and the flower marquee. It is assumed that no development will be planned which necessitates felling, apart from those noted above as damaged, dead or redundant. Any proposed roads, buildings or building activity near trees must not impinge on root

² A berm is a shelf, like a lynchet, on the side of mediaeval defensive earthworks. A bund is an embankment.

protection areas. If there is any possibility of damage there shall be a proper assessment under BS 5837, and full root protection measures shall be taken.

Finally a note on Horse Chestnut, of which we have a large number. There has been a steady increase in the spread of bleeding canker over the past five years. While many of our trees show symptoms, they are as yet not threatened. Dying trees pose a serious threat however, not only losing branches, but in the later stages the disease can spread rapidly. Mild cases can recover; indeed the cold winter may halt the spread. I suggest an annual survey. The worst affected should be felled and disposed of by thorough burning (difficult) or by chipping and composting.

While not part of the tree report, I have taken the opportunity to indicate the approximate routes of two public footpaths crossing the showground. No development should be allowed to interfere with them unless they can be legally rerouted. They should also be more adequately waymarked.

James Lang Brown
Hon. Conservator
30 March 2010