



One of the old oak pollards in the parkland at Hatfield; some of these are possibly up to 1200 years old and one, was measured to have a diameter of 3.47m (among the largest in England).

Beale Arboretum and Hatfield House

Every year, during Chelsea week, the IDS has a one day tour of gardens within reasonable distance from London. In 2009 the coach took a party members just to the north of the capital.

JOHN BULMER wrote the following notes.

Beale Arboretum Around the family run West Lodge Hotel at Hadley Wood there are 14ha of park-like grounds with trees and shrubs of some 800 taxa. The Beale family bought the property in 1945 and started to increase the collection in 1963. Dendrologist Derek Honour has helped greatly in the selection, labelling and care of the trees for over 40 years. The arboretum lies just inside the M25 orbital motorway but is tranquil and can be visited at any time.

Old cedars, redwoods, poplars and oaks give high cover. There is a National Collection of *Carpinus* and a collection of *Taxodium* has been started. Unusual conifers include a yew pruned and clipped to form a 6m-diameter parasol and *Fitzroya cupressoides* from Chile with drooping branchlets. *Taxodium distichum* var. *imbricarium* has erect needles and *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Spiralis' has needles spirally twisted around the stem. *Picea abies* 'Acrocona' has cones at the branch tip. Aljos Farjon gave a botanical explanation of some of these strange variants.

The chimera +*Laburnocytisus* 'Adamii' was in bloom with three different flower colours. The cut-leaved *Quercus robur* 'Filicifolia' was said to be the most rare tree present. Flowering shrubs of merit included *Cornus kousa*, *C. controversa* and two bushes of *Symplocos paniculata*.

Mr Beale led one party and Mr Honour the other but we joined for farewell thanks and presentation of a *Cornus* 'KN30-8' Venus®, a cultivar with exceptionally large bracts (see IDS Yearbook 2006, pp. 27-29).

Hatfield House This Hertfordshire estate is of great historical interest and part of the palace, occupied by Elizabeth before she became Queen in 1588, remains. The newer house was built early in the seventeenth century for Robert Cecil, the first Lord Salisbury. The parkland covers 3000ha and the gardens 14ha.

Lady Salisbury and three of her staff took us through the shrubbery, a Victorian arboretum with fine oaks, beech and conifers. There had been damage from wet snow in October 2008: magnolias, maples and camellias have been underplanted together with *Syringa* × *persica* a shrub which has been grown in England since 1640. *Nothofagus dombeyi* and *Trochodendron aralioides* were seen and the IDS presented a *Cornus* 'KN30-8' Venus® to add to the planting.

In the parkland, an old wood pasture, were very large old oaks possibly up to 1200 years in age. One, measured to have a diameter of 3.47m, is among the largest in England. This old pollard will be fenced to prevent ground compaction. Wake wood was planted in 2000 after the expulsion of most of the hereditary peers from the House of Lords. Hornbeam pollards aged at 600 to 800 years had originally been used to provide stock fodder and later for firewood until the 1940s. One, with a diameter of 1.47m, is also a near champion size.

John Tradescant the elder had been head gardener in the seventeenth century but each generation has made changes and during the period from 1972 to 2002 the Dowager Marchioness was known for her skills. The 1830 yew maze was neglected during the war but is now in excellent shape with 3m-high walls. Before the war 101 gardeners tended the formal gardens but now there are three. The fruit garden has 116 old apple varieties, the lake is surrounded by wild flower meadows and quince trees (*Cydonia oblonga*) enhance the swimming pool.

This instructive and enjoyable one-day tour was organised by Arabella Killander on 20 May 2009.