

# Cheltenham Tree Group

**President The Earl of Wemyss**  
**Vice-President Joyce Goldring**

**Chair Bob Beale Tel 01242 516469**

Address 10, Bafford Approach, Cheltenham GL53 9HP email [hilary@beale.tc](mailto:hilary@beale.tc)

**Treasurer Helen Fielding Tel 01242 513179 email [fieldingfamily@btinternet.com](mailto:fieldingfamily@btinternet.com)**

Address 15, Battledown Close, Cheltenham GL52 6RD

**Co-ordinator Nick Edwards Tel 01242 242586 email [windsorlodge@btopenworld.com](mailto:windsorlodge@btopenworld.com)**

**January 2012**

Dear Members,

A Happy New Year to you all. I am sending this out to you earlier than usual as I wanted you to have plenty of notice of something which will be taking place on **Friday 10th February at 7.30 pm. Dr John Page**, retired Head of Languages at Birmingham City University will be giving an illustrated talk under the general title of **"Trees by the Way."** He travels extensively around the world in pursuit of his passionate interest in plants and lectures widely around the country. In our case he intends touching in the course of his lecture on topics such as trees in the wild at home and abroad, the impact of trees on garden design, and their links with other plants. This will take place at **St. Philips and St James Church Hall in Painswick Road, Cheltenham GL50 2ER**. We shall be putting this on in collaboration with the local residents association and refreshments will be served. There will be no charge for admission as Dr Page is donating his services free and having known him for many years I can guarantee an entertaining and illuminating evening. Please make every effort to come if you can and encourage others to do so too.

Our **Annual General Meeting** will take place on **Thursday February 16th at 2.30 p.m.** The venue will be at **10, Bafford Approach**. A bus goes past the door. There is parking in nearby Lawson Glade as well as in our lower drive. There have been a number of developments over the past year which we need to discuss, so I do hope you can come.

**Good News and Bad News Tree Wise.** We have been lucky with the weather up to now so far as lifting stock is concerned with a good number of clients, and as last year several contacted us as a result of visiting our website, for which we owe many thanks to Karen Jolly for the work she has put in to make it more easily accessible. We still have plenty of most species still in stock though, so please contact Peter on 01242 578983 if you want any.

I expect you have noticed the berries in the hedgerows this year. The hawthorns are still a mass of colour for example, while the hollies have not been stripped by the birds as yet. Consequently they have not been coming to the feeders in our gardens in their usual numbers for the fine spring we enjoyed has meant the insects were able to pollinate the blossom and consequently this has been what is termed a mast year.

Thus far the good news. At the same time we did lose a number of whips in the spring due to the lack of rain and we intend to have our tree planting day rather earlier than previously, on Saturday March 3rd, in fact. This might give the whips a better chance to get established if this happens again.

**Personnel.** Cherry Lavell definitely feels the need to have at least some of the work she undertakes as Tree Warden taken off her shoulders and she has really given the Group

sterling service over the years for which we are all extremely grateful. She and Katy Stanley do not always have their comments upon projected treeworks acted upon but their views are certainly respected in the Borough and the whole town has benefited as a result. In terms of supplementary assistance or a replacement there are some positive possibilities which we hope to be able to report on at the Annual General Meeting. .

On health grounds .Sheila Houston has been obliged to give up her role as Membership Secretary. She has also one of the most assiduous of helpers at Balcarras and Cox's Meadow Thank you both very much indeed for all you have done.

**Dr. Wangari Maathi.** Many of you will have read of the death of Dr Maathi which occurred just after the last newsletter came out, but in view of the outstanding contribution she made to the conservation movement I felt it appropriate to mention something about her in this newsletter.

Although she came from a poor rural background in Kenya her outstanding ability meant that she was picked out and gained the chance in 1959 to study in the United States and subsequently Germany. Her particular significance for us is that she founded the Green Belt movement in Kenya which, from being just a small number of women in a small number of villages, had resulted by 2004 in 30 million trees having been planted in Kenya with 600 community groups and 5,000 tree nurseries having been established. In 2006 she established under the auspices of the United Nations a tree-planting scheme worldwide which has resulted in the planting of seven billion trees across the planet. Although this was obviously environmentally highly beneficial it was conceived of as a source of employment in rural areas and as a means of giving more empowerment to women since their position was definitely regarded as being one of subservience to men.

Her outspoken campaign for human rights and against corruption in the government particularly in regard to the creation of a large construction project resulted in her being imprisoned and also being targeted for assassination, but in 2004 she became the first black African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for her work for human rights and environmental issues.

Her most recent campaigns were against the creation of palm plantations resulting in the destruction of rain forests in Malaysia and Indonesia. Had she lived she would have delivered a speech entitled "The Silent Forest" at the recent Cape Town Conference on climate change detailing how deforestation and replacing indigenous woodland with exotic trees have had a catastrophic effect on climate change.

Transition Town We were invited to mount a display for this event in Montpellier Gardens at the end of November and did so. Personally I found the opportunity to make contact with a number of people with abutting interests valuable and their presentations provided me with a number of ideas, although when I was there the number of visitors was rather disappointing.

Reports from Abroad We have received newsletters from SOS Sahel and DORS recently. SOS Sahel's newsletter focuses primarily on the challenging situation in the new country of Southern Sudan now that it has separated from Sudan as a result of the recent referendum and where the situation in some areas remains extremely uncertain.

DORS which as you know stands for Development Organisation of Rural Sichuan writes as

follows:-"Villagers from Pian Ma Town of Harryuan County have started to plant trees to fulfil the global action. Men and women walked to the barren mountain and carried hoes and saplings. All saplings were planted on the barren mountain, which carries all people's hopes of having a green mountain by next year. They all got sweat when planted all the saplings, but they were all very happy as they could contribute a little green to our Earth."

A second newsletter outlined a project for training villagers in grafting and managing their walnut trees.

A subsequent newsletter ran as follows:-" Evaluation for Ranmo Village Walnut Project. The walnut trees grafting situation is not good as expected from our evaluation. Villagers had the impression that it was caused by the changing weather as it was snowing after grafting and suffering from high temperature afterwards. No matter how the weather was ,the management is very important to the walnut trees growth, there is a big difference between different management. Except the demonstration households, other villagers did not do well on the walnut tree management. Mr. Kang, the hamlet 8 leader, said, 'I did take care of the walnut trees, see I got harvest this year, I will continue to do it.' We hope the others can strengthen their walnut trees management awareness and technique for high yield."

**Nearer Home.** Thanks to the initiative of Michael Dower the ideas he mooted at last year's AGM have begun to come to fruition. Trees have been planted in Grafton Road as well as on a housing estate in Unwin Road and hedging has gone in at Caernavon Road with a possibility of further planting elsewhere with management being undertaken by the council and trees in the latter cases being supplied by us. Hopefully he will be able to tell us more at the AGM..

Tree Warden's Report. I'm still hopeful of finding a replacement person to look after the Council notifications of tree works in conservation areas etc! Having done it for 9 years plus I really would like a rest.

Meantime, Katy (Stanley, for Civic Society) and I have been out regularly looking at the trees and reporting comments to the council's Tree Officers. We continue to be distressed at the sight of trees which have been rudely chopped and consequently have sprouted in all directions. In the case of previously pollarded trees we have to give in, as once this form of treatment has started (and it does, of course, extend the tree's life) it has to carry on. We do not relish the thought of many of Cheltenham's trees acquiring gnarled elbows and fists!

The really important tree news nationally is of course the government's short-lived proposals to sell off quantities of Forestry land. Caroline Spelman, Environment minister, said in Parliament, 'I'm sorry, we got this one wrong', and pulled the consultation that was then in progress. An Independent Panel on Forestry was appointed under the chairmanship of the Rt Reverend James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool, known for his environmental credentials. The Panel received 42,000 comments from the public, and issued a progress report in December which expressed its belief in a role for a national public forest estate. Future forestry policy, they say, should reflect the economic and ecological timescale of woodlands (which I take to be a polite way of saying 'woods last a whole lot longer than governments'!) They want more woodlands created and more of them managed. Moreover, having visited the Forest of Dean the Panel realised that it had been shaped by the national politics at the time of planting – it is in fact 'a political landscape' – so they will be exploring

more about the benefits for society, the environment and the economy of forests. [I'm glad they put the economy last this time...] See more of the report (issue 2) at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel/reports>; the final report is due in the spring.

At a seminar 'What Future? New Ideas for Urban Living' arranged by the Guardian and the Ove Arup Foundation, many felt it was crucial for architects, town planners and developers to take a much more integrated approach to development. Among the many interesting ideas, Kevin McCloud (Channel 4's *Grand Designs*) argued that 'tree and grass planting should be the starting point for developments, rather than "fluff" to be added afterwards'. That, he says, would create biodiversity and microclimates, absorb excess water and give valuable play spaces, not to mention fruit and vegetable plots – as well as a sense of ownership for the occupants.

Back to things local. Grafton Road area residents managed (after some determined talking to Glos Highways!) to get four new Indian horse chestnuts planted in gaps left by removal of diseased street trees. This restored the historic avenue to its proper look. Funding came half from a borough Community Pride grant and half from the county. Over 20 trees removed for safety reasons from near the runway at Gloucestershire Airport were donated to the Lido and planted as part of the airport's carbon emission offsets. Public open spaces in Cheltenham are getting numerous new trees this season, some from residents' donations (always welcome!)

Glos Highways' autumn list of street tree replacement plantings catches up on some earlier losses. Highways also consulted about a proposal that residents who asked for removal of a street tree should be asked to contribute towards a suitable replacement; the general feeling seemed to be against that idea.

Quite a lot of passion was aroused over a 22-metre Leyland cypress at Warren Close, Warden Hill. The owner and neighbours felt it was out of scale with the small houses in the road; it certainly is the most impressive item in that landscape! Katy and I thought that pruning near ground level would help pedestrians and clear the driveway, and Planning Committee after debate confirmed the TPO. Also saved was a magnificent pine tree in Hales Road, where a house sale was said to be stalled because of worries about the tree. Planning Committee dismissed the worries and upheld the TPO. Sadly a fine ash tree in The Burgage (Prestbury) was lost because access was needed to a Scout hut.

More worries about tree diseases – up to eight are now seen as a threat, including two types of Phytophthora, three types of moth caterpillars and the bleeding canker of horse chestnuts. Forestry Commission and Kew Gardens experts say that as many new diseases have appeared in the last ten years as in the previous half century, the reason being the importing of so many foreign plants. Some diseases relate only to certain species, but others can jump species. The awful memory of Dutch Elm Disease prompted Defra to give £7m for some necessary research. *Cherry Lavell*

Best wishes Bob Beale