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MAGAZINE OF The Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum 

Westonbirt

SPRING/SUMMER 2023

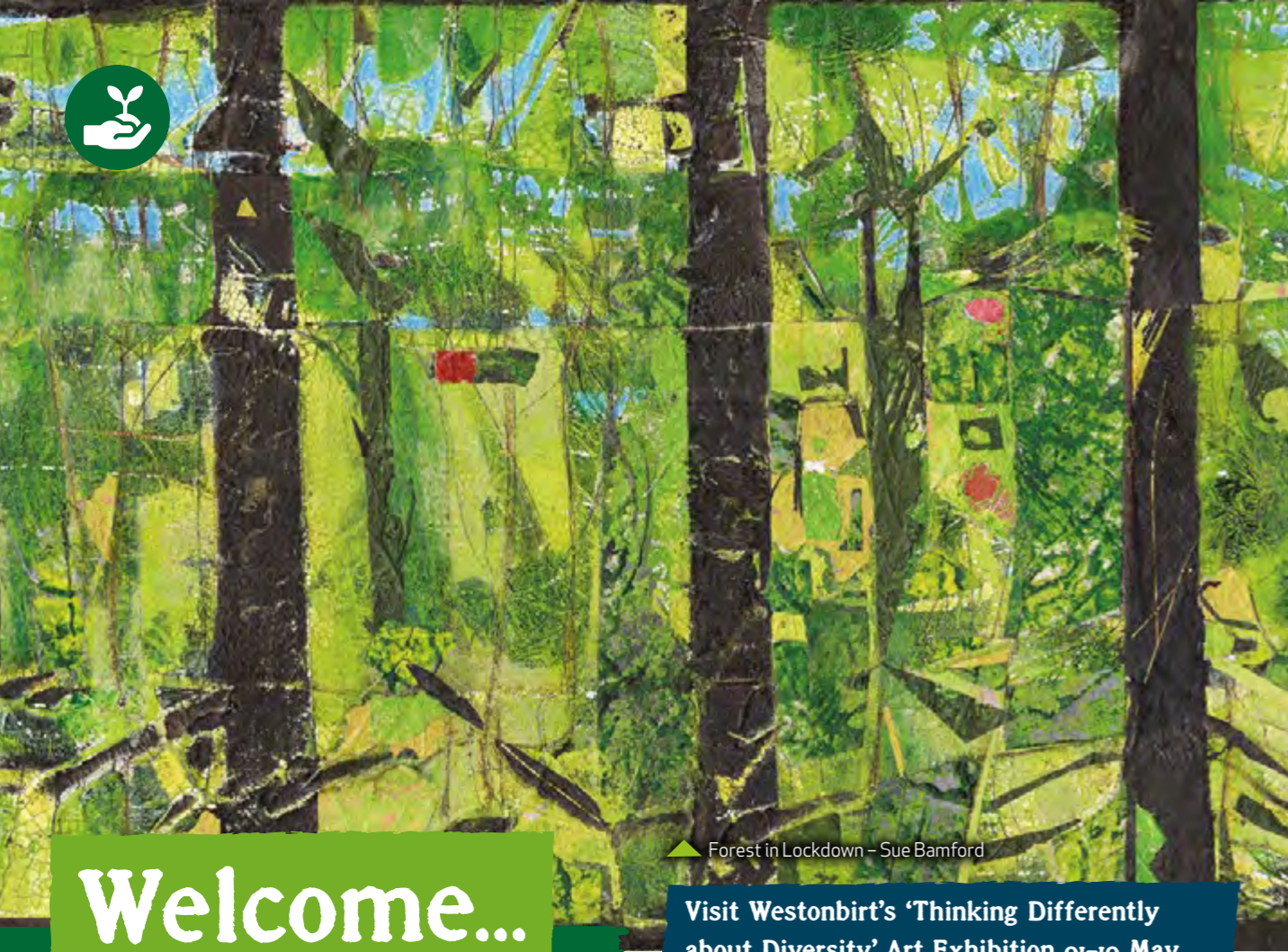
Inspiring Creativity

Celebrating diversity through art

Get crafty with family activities

Beat The Friends' quiz!





Welcome...

...to the spring and summer edition of the **Westonbirt Magazine** brought to you oozing with creativity.

Jane Shute, Head of Supporter Journey

Did you know that Westonbirt offers family activities during the school holidays? Find out details on pages 8-11. Explore the creative benefits of the great outdoors on page 21. Discover how the Westonbirt Shop Team have sourced arboretum inspired silver jewellery from a local artist on pages 22-23, making the perfect gifts.

▲ Forest in Lockdown – Sue Bamford

Visit Westonbirt's 'Thinking Differently about Diversity' Art Exhibition 01-10 May in the Great Oak Hall

In May you will be able to explore Westonbirt's 'Thinking Differently about Diversity' art exhibition in the Great Oak Hall over a ten day period, celebrating the strength diversity brings to society, as well as to the environment. In partnership with Artspace Cinderford and the Barnwood Trust 'Creating Change' network, a series of artist-led workshops have been delivered around Gloucestershire with people who identify as neurodivergent.

By using their own perspectives to creatively explore the themes of roots, branches, leaves and trunks, participants are creating artwork that will be showcased here at Westonbirt for you to enjoy.



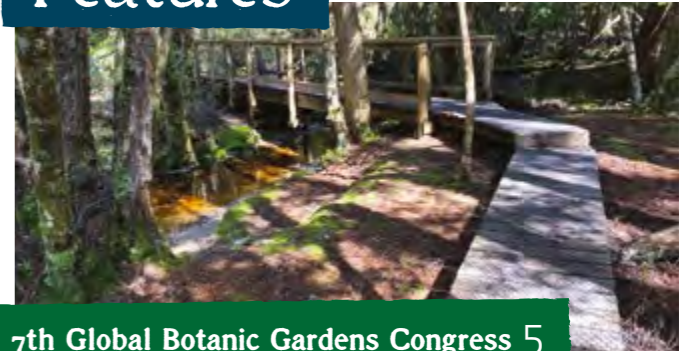
▲ Fire Tree – Clancy Ward

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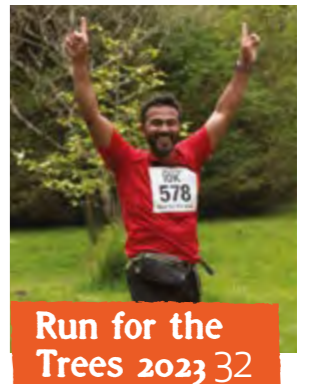
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Westonbirt

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Welcome to Emma

Our Vision progress builds momentum



I'm Emma Griffiths, the new CEO of the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum. I have been a member for over 20 years. I feel excited and privileged to be offered this post.

I am looking forward to supporting the

implementation of the 10-Year Vision for Westonbirt Arboretum, working with the Forestry England Team to achieve the best possible outcomes for the arboretum and ensure the money we raise through membership and fundraising is put to the best possible use. In the context of climate change and sustainability, the arboretum's work has never been more important. I will work with colleagues to help shape the role that The Friends play to achieve the arboretum's aims and ensure future generations can continue to enjoy the beauty and benefits of Westonbirt Arboretum.

Emma Griffiths
CEO, Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum



I am very fortunate to lead a team who are passionate about their work and are totally committed to achieving the arboretum's vision.

Over the past 12 months I have introduced new job roles to ensure our progress continues

to gather momentum in 2023 and beyond. A Tree Conservation Manager is leading our work on threatened trees and collaborations in the UK, and around the globe. A Wildlife and Conservation Ranger is helping us to better protect our trees and help the arboretum's wider biodiversity to flourish. A new Engagement Manager now heads up our team that focuses on education and participation themes.

Finally, I'm delighted that funding from The Friends has enabled a partnership with the University of West England for a PhD student to research diseases of lime trees.

Andrew Smith
Arboretum Director, Forestry England



7th Global Botanic Gardens Congress

Sharing knowledge and understanding for positive change

Thanks to generous funding from The Friends, we were very fortunate to head to the glorious city of Melbourne, Australia, for the 7th Global Botanic Gardens Congress (7GBGC) in September 2022. The title of the congress was *'Influence and Action: Botanic Gardens as Agents of Change'*, with the aim of exploring how botanic gardens and arboreta can play a greater role in shaping our future.



Mark Ballard,
Curator,
Forestry
England

The accelerated loss of biodiversity across the globe, increased urbanisation, population growth and climate change, means that the need to work together to find new solutions for the future has never been greater.

In the 10-Year Vision for Westonbirt Arboretum, entitled 'Our Place in a Changing World', we aim to be a world leader in trees, inspiring people through education, conservation and participation. Westonbirt has long played a key role on the international stage, working closely with partners and institutions across the globe for mutual benefit. After all, the wonderful living collection of trees and shrubs that we enjoy today originate from across the temperate regions of the world, and many of our rare and endangered specimen trees form an important part of ex-situ conservation.

Around 500 international delegates gathered at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. The congress programme was packed full of inspiring speakers, fascinating workshops, panel discussions, symposia and presentations. We were also joined by our colleague Dan Luscombe, Collection Manager at Bedebury National Pinetum and Forest. We attended 17 themed sessions with multiple speakers during each session, not to mention further networking opportunities outside these sessions and during the informal evening events.



A Pandani grove (*Richea pandanifolia*)



The Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan contains a highly impressive Seed Bank and The National Herbarium of New South Wales



Fallen *Nothofagus gunnii* (the tanglefoot) leaves, which is Australia's only native winter deciduous tree and has stunning autumn colour

A valuable and inspiring experience

One of the main take-aways for me was the need for more focus on conservation horticulture. Conservation has always been part of our modern role at Westonbirt however, after being suitably inspired, I am currently developing a Tree Conservation Project that will enable us to concentrate our efforts even more on this vital aspect. This project will encompass international fieldwork but importantly, will also embrace conservation of threatened native tree species within the UK – more details to follow in the near future!

To take full advantage of our international travel, we arranged a full itinerary post-congress which entailed visiting native habitats, temperate rainforests, and botanic gardens in Melbourne, Tasmania, and Sydney. We are always incredibly lucky to be hosted by fellow professionals wherever we go who generously give up their time to show us around, as well as share knowledge and experience. We also discussed how we can help Australian counterparts with in-situ and ex-situ conservation, specifically providing expertise with wild seed collecting.

The benefits and value of international expeditions like this cannot be overstated. There are obvious achievements and outcomes in terms of exciting new collaborations and conservation projects, permitted plant and seed exchange; growing our network of global contacts and forming relationships. However, there are also many less apparent positives that last for years to come, as we put the lessons learned from speaking to counterparts into practice, and understand how other living collections are managed and curated. We all face significant challenges within our global community and it is vital that we continue to share.

Essentially at this moment in time, I am Westonbirt's landscape gardener, and therefore it is always helpful and inspiring to see how and where plants grow in the wild, drawing inspiration from nature in terms of landscape composition – the real picturesque landscape that we can but hope to emulate!

Some of the amazing gardens and natural habitats that we visited:

- **Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria**, Melbourne
- **Dandenong Ranges, Tall Temperate Forests, and Healesville Sanctuary**, near Melbourne
- **Mount Field National Park**, Tasmania
- **Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park**, Tasmania
- **The Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens and Seed Bank**, Hobart
- **Inala Jurassic Garden**, Bruny Island, Tasmania
- **Freycinet National Park**, Tasmania
- **The Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan**, near Sydney
- **The Royal Botanic Garden**, Sydney

Sharing educational ideas

The congress was a great opportunity to learn about education at different gardens and meet people doing similar work from all around the world. I made some great contacts and have zoom calls set up (at funny times of the day) to chat to people in Australia, America, Canada, and Abu Dhabi to share ideas about their learning offer.

Hannah Griffiths, Learning & Participation Officer, Forestry England

I was also able to watch some school sessions at the botanic gardens in Sydney and the Australian Museum. This was a great opportunity to see how programmes can run differently in these settings and have discussions with the teams planning and leading them. This helps to inform future planning of our formal and informal learning offer.

In Tasmania, I was invited on a private tour by one of the delegates. We went exploring through the Florentine River Regional Reserve, which is less than two hours from Hobart but feels like stepping into another world. It is covered with dense rainforest and forms part of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. The floor is carpeted with ferns, mosses and lichens with the towering trunks of some of the tallest trees on earth overhead. The incredible *Eucalyptus regnans*, also known as giant ash, can get to heights of 85 metres and over.

I took every opportunity to visit attractions whilst we were away to discover more about their learning offers and ideas for interpretation. One of the sessions at the congress was about the new seed bank in Sydney which included an interpretation project. I visited the site and saw it in action, which was really inspiring and has given me lots of different ideas for delivering interpretation in a variety of ways!

Tall trees in the temperate forests at Dandenong Ranges, near Melbourne



Coming up



Arb Show 2023

Britain's longest running arborist trade show is back after a three-year break, promising a wonderful day out for all those with a passion for trees.

Fri 12 & Sat 13 May Free after entry



Forest Live

Credit: Johnny Hathaway

In June Forest Live returns to Westonbirt Arboretum! This year we are excited to be welcoming:

- **Thu 08 Jun** – Paul Weller
- **Fri 09 Jun** – Tom Grennan
- **Sat 10 Jun** – Jack Savoretti, with special guest Natalie Imbruglia

Tickets are available at forestryengland.uk/music



Credit: Alison Cobb

Guided walks and tours

Westonbirt Guided Walk

Explore the seasonal highlights of Westonbirt's Old Arboretum.

Daily, 11am & 2pm, Apr–Nov

Price: Free after entry

Wild Flower Guided Walk

Discover the fascinating world of wild flowers and other flora at Westonbirt Arboretum.

First Tue of the month, Apr–Sep

Price: Free after entry

Sensing Nature Guided Walk

Let our visually impaired guides lead you through an immersive and interactive sensory experience.

Every second and fourth Fri of the month, Apr–Sep

Price: Free after entry

Active Forest Events

CaniX

CaniX (Cani-cross) is a take on cross country running in Silk Wood with your dog.

04 & 05 Mar

Price: £20 for 1 day or £36 for both

Nordic walk with the Nordic Nomad

Join the Nordic Nomad as she teaches you how to nordic walk.

Every Wed 19 Apr–21 Jun, 12 Jul–30 Aug

Price: Apr £80, Jul £64

Westonbirt 10K

Our annual 10K run through the arboretum in all its spring glory.

Thu 18 May, 7pm

Price: £19.10

SOLD OUT



Credit: Johnny Hathaway

Relish Running

Half Marathon, 10K, 5K and 2K! Fun for all the family to join in and try out.

02 Jul, from 8am

Price: Half: £35, 10km: £25, 5km: £20, 2km: £7.50

Workshops and courses

Hand-tied Bouquet Workshop

Relax as you learn a simple florist technique to make a hand-tied bouquet.

Sat 18 Mar, Wed 05 Jul, 10.30–1pm

Price: £85

Willow Sculpture Workshop

Spend a relaxing day crafting and weaving your own willow design.

Sat 25 Mar, Sat 20 May, Sat 24 Jun, Sat 29 Jul, 10am–4pm

Price: £95

Beginners Digital Landscape Course

Spend a day at this fabulous location developing your skills in camera technique and digital technology.

Mon 03 Apr, 10.30–3.30pm

Price: £65

Failsafe Garden Plants

Gain a good understanding of how to select the right plants for your garden plus top tips to help them flourish.

Wed 05 Apr, Wed 17 May, 10am–1pm

Price: £85

Windsor Chair Making Course

Create your very own Windsor chair using traditional skills.

Various dates, check website

Price: £535

Planning Garden Borders

A workshop to provide you everything you need, including your own drawing kit, to make your own borders bright and beautiful.

Wed 12 Apr, Wed 31 May, 10am–4pm

Price: £135

Intermediate Digital Photography Course

Enhance your confidence and understanding to capture great landscape photos.

Mon 17 Apr, 10.30am–3.30pm

Price: £120

Spoon Carving

Learn to make a spoon out of a branch from a tree.

Sat 22 Apr, Sat 01 Jul, Sat 23 Sep, 10am–4.30pm

Price: £75

Grow Your Own Cut Flowers

Learn how to have a steady supply of flowers for months on end.

Wed 26 Apr, 10.30am–1pm

Price: £95



Find out more

Visit forestryengland.uk/westonbirt/events or call Westonbirt Arboretum on 0300 067 4890 to find out more about any of our events.



Two Day Willow Workshop

Enjoy a two-day escape creating something special from willow.

Sat 29 & Sun 30 Apr, 10am-4pm

Price: £160

Thinking Differently about Diversity Exhibition

A creative art exhibition celebrating the strength diversity brings to society, as well as to the environment.

01-10 May Great Oak Hall

Price: Free after entry

Creating Garden Plans Workshop

Find out how professional garden designers create a well thought out garden.

Wed 03 May, Wed 19 Jul, 10am-4pm

Price: £135

Woodland Sculpture Wednesdays

A day fully immersed in the woods to create a willow sculpture of your choice.

Wed 10 May, Wed 14 Jun, Wed 12 Jul, 10am-3.30pm

Price: £95

Plant based photography with turmeric

Make photographs using turmeric and the action of light.

Fri 12 May, Sat 13 May, 10am-12.30pm, 1.30pm-4pm

Price: £30

Eco Vase Arrangement Workshop

Learn how to make an arrangement directly into a vase.

Wed 24 May, 10.30am-1pm

Price: £85

Painting flowers at Westonbirt Arboretum

Basics of botanical illustration, watercolours and observational drawing.

Sat 03 Jun, 10am-4.30pm

Price: £90

Pinhole photography and solargraphy

Make and use a pinhole camera out of discarded materials.

Fri 09 Jun, 10am-12.30pm, 1.30pm-4pm

Price: £30



Beekeeping for Beginners

One day course to introduce the important basics of beekeeping.

Sat 17 Jun, Sun 18 Jun, Sat 05 Aug, Sun 06 Aug,

9.30am-4pm

Price: £80

For children and families

Tots & Twigs Forest School

Forest School for Preschool aged children (2-4 year olds).

Term time, Mon, Thu & Fri, 10.15-11.45 & 12.30-2pm

Saplings Home Educators Forest School

Forest School for home schooled children, KS1 and EYFS (4-7 year olds).

Term time, Mon, 12.30-2.30pm

Perfect Partners

Explore Westonbirt's amazing spring flowers and discover their secret buzzy admirers!

Mon 03 Apr - Thu 06 Apr, 10:30am-3.30pm

Price: Free after entry

Feathered Friends

Discover our native birds first hand then give them a helping hand by making your own bird feeder.

Tue 11 Apr - Fri 14 Apr, 10.30am-4pm

Price: Free after entry

Discovery Days

Drop in activities for all ages on a different theme each month, see website for more details.

15 Apr, 20 May, 17 Jun, 15 Jul, 19 Aug, 10.30am-3.30pm

Price: Free after entry

Seasonal Scent-sations

Drop in at Silk Wood Barn to make your own scented crafts and try our discovery challenge.

Tue 30 May - Thu 01 Jun, 10.30am-3.30pm

Price: Free after entry

Towering Trees

Discover why trees grow so tall and try our tower building challenge.

Sat 29 & Sun 30 Jul, Tue 01 - Thu 03 Aug,

10.30am - 3.30pm

Price: Free after entry



Luna Cinema

The UK's No1 open air cinema returns this summer! Film announcements coming soon.

Thu 03 - Sun 06 Aug

Westonbirt Wellbeing

Put the daily grind aside and refresh your mind and body with our wellbeing weekend.

Sat 15 & Sun 16 Jul

On sale soon



Sensory Summertime

Come on a sensory adventure with texture, sound and taste activities.

Sat 05 & Sun 06 Aug, Tue 08 - Thu 10, 10.30am-3.30pm

Price: Free after entry

Magical Creations

Drop in and use your creativity to make mythical creatures and magic wands.

Sat 12 & Sun 13 Aug, Tue 15 - Thu 17 Aug, 10.30am-3.30pm

Price: Free after entry

Green Games

Drop in to play a range of traditional wooden and tree themed games.

Sat 19 & Sun 20 Aug, Tue 22 - Thu 24, 10.30am-3.30pm

Price: Free after entry



Wild Wonder at Westonbirt

Save the date! Our children's book festival will be returning in September with a host of exciting authors and illustrators.

Fri 15 - Sun 17 Sep



New plant arrivals at Westonbirt Arboretum

An important date in an arboretum's annual calendar is the intake day for new plants, helping to conserve rare species and introducing new plants of interest into the collection.

How are plants chosen?

At Westonbirt, The National Arboretum plants are selected for the internal propagation list in two ways: they may be chosen because there is only one specimen in the collection or because a species is in poor health and a more resilient species is needed.

The plant intake at the end of October 2022 included two types of plants. Plants grown from tree material sourced from the arboretum and propagated using grafting, and then plants that were sourced from very select growers, providing plant species of 'landscape interest' to enhance the existing collection at Westonbirt.

Which species were chosen for autumn 2022 plant intake?

***Abies chengii* – Cheng fir**

Thought to be an original George Forrest introduction F30663, collected as seed in 1930.

***Abies pindrow* var. *pindrow* – West Himalayan fir**

Grown from wild seed collected in 1993 in Himachal Pradesh, India.

***Abies recurvata* var. *recurvata* – Min fir**

Three very young plants in the collection have been struggling. This is a globally threatened tree appearing on Red List IUCN, Status Vulnerable.

***Abies squamata* – Flaky fir**

There are two young trees in the collection, planted in 2015, but not doing so well. They were grown from wild seed collected in Sichuan, China at 3,750m. Also, a threatened species, the IUCN Status for this species is vulnerable. It is hoped that new 'grafted' plants will be more resilient.

***Picea martinezii* – Martinez spruce**

This is a rare spruce, and there is just one young plant in the Westonbirt collection, IUCN status Endangered. This comes from the Sierra Madre Oriental, Mexico, where it is threatened by over logging.

***Picea spinulosa* – Sikkim spruce**

There is just one plant in the collection. An attractive spruce from Sikkim and Assam in the Eastern Himalayas that has a pendulous habit and female cones that are purple-red in spring.

***Pinus x holfordiana* – Holford pine**

There are only seven mature trees left and this is an important tree historically for the arboretum, named after Sir George Holford. There is a regime of planting new young specimens every few years to ensure that this tree species is not lost to the collection. The species seems resistant to red band needle blight (*Dothistroma septosporum*).



Will the plants be isolated?

The delivery marked an auspicious occasion, being the first plants to start their new life in the arboretum's new Quarantine House, installed in 2022 and generously funded by members, individual donors and legacy gifts.

The capacity for intake very much depends on the size of the plants received and some of last autumn's plants are much larger than normally selected, e.g. the *Pinus x holfordiana*. Due to delays caused by the pandemic this plant was received a year later than normal, arriving after a year's substantial growth!

The plants stayed in the Quarantine House within bay one, for the first 12 weeks. More plants were selected for the arboretum's spring intake from some of the UK's botanic gardens and arboreta surplus lists produced earlier in the year. The spring intake will grow separately in bay two for 12 weeks.

Any plants that come into the nursery are thoroughly checked for pests and diseases, the pots are disinfected and if necessary, any weeds are removed. There is no heating in the Quarantine House as all the plants and seeds are grown in cold greenhouses for resilience. The exception to this is the Cuttings House which does have heated benches as increased humidity is required. The plants are irrigated as and when required, using the purified and UV treated water from the recently installed rainwater collection tanks; read more at fowa.org.uk/blog/rainwater-harvesting. All of this ensures the best bio-security and care for this precious and rare plant intake.

What happens to the plants after isolation?

Once the plants come out of isolation, they will join the rest of the nursery stock. If they are large enough they will be put forward for planting but if not, they will travel through the nursery tunnels until they are large enough to be planted.

Where and when they will be planted has yet to be decided. The arboretum's Propagator and Curator will go out and consider suitable sites, after all the tree inspection, pruning and removal work has been completed. The plants brought in for 'landscape interest' will be planted in prominent places.

This new planting is another exciting phase in the arboretum's life!

Membership benefits

As a Friend of Westonbirt Arboretum, you can enjoy these great benefits whilst supporting tree conservation, educating the next generation of tree lovers and widening access and participation at The National Arboretum!



Kids go free! Bring up to 4 of your own children or grandchildren free of charge (age 18 and under)



Free, fun, seasonal, educational activities



10% off at the Westonbirt Arboretum Shop
Simply show your valid membership card when making your purchase



Behind the scenes Westonbirt Magazine and regular Friends' eNews



Earlybird presale for Enchanted Christmas illuminated light trail and Forest Live concerts

Please pre-book your free time slot to guarantee your entry on these key dates:

Autumn – Saturday 30 September – Sunday 12 November

Christmas – Sunday 24 December – Monday 01 January

Time slots are released 7 days in advance and can be booked online at fowa.org.uk/prebook or by phone on **0300 068 0400** between Monday–Friday, 09.00–17.00. Pre-booking is also available year-round.



Partner gardens

As a member, you can also benefit from discounted entry into selected partner gardens.

Visit for free:

Batsford Arboretum
Moreton-in-Marsh, Glos batsarb.co.uk

Birmingham Botanical Gardens and Glasshouse, Edgbaston, Birmingham
birminghambotanicalgardens.org.uk

The Yorkshire Arboretum, Castle Howard, York yorkshirearboretum.org

National Botanic Garden of Wales, Llanarthne, Carmarthenshire
botanicgarden.wales

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (including Dawyck, Benmore and Logan), Edinburgh rbge.org.uk

Receive 2 for 1 entry into:

Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Richmond, Surrey kew.org

Royal Botanic Gardens Wakehurst Place Ardingly, Nr Haywards Heath, West Sussex kew.org/wakehurst

Please check the partner garden's website ahead of visiting, as you might be required to pre-book a time slot to gain entry.

15% off Runners Need

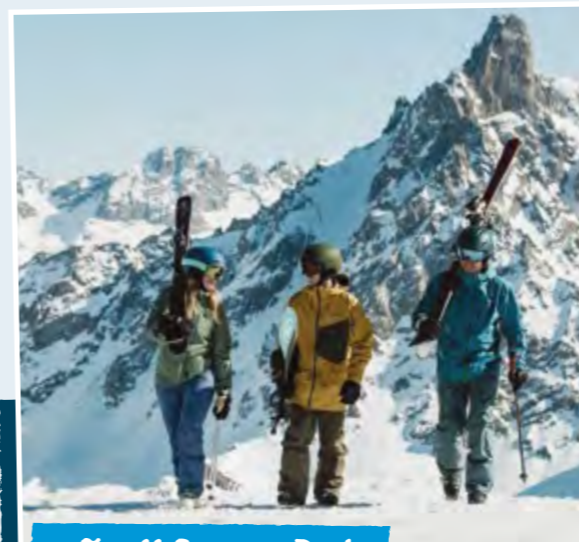


Local partner discounts

Visit the running specialists and present your membership card in-store, or shop online at runnersneed.com with discount code **AF-FOWA-22**. Valid until 31 December 2023 (T&Cs Apply).

15% off at Cotswold Outdoor

Get expert advice and the best brands in-store with your membership card, or shop online at cotswoldoutdoor.com with discount code **AF-FOWA-22**. Valid until 31 December 2023 (T&Cs Apply).



15% off Snow + Rock

Huge range of ski, snow and climbing clothing and equipment from the world's best brands. Shop in-store with your membership card, or online at snowandrock.com with discount code **AF-FOWA-22**. Valid until 31 December 2023 (T&Cs Apply).



10% off Go Ape Tree Tops Challenge and Forest Segway in the Forest of Dean

Book online at goape.co.uk using the discount code **GAARB23** until 31 December 2023. Excludes Saturdays.

Please check the website for up-to-date membership benefit offers at fowa.org.uk/membership-benefits



Agenda for 37th Annual General Meeting

Join us online on Thursday 20 July 2023 at 4pm

This virtual event gives you the opportunity to understand how your donations are helping Westonbirt Arboretum achieve its 10-Year Vision. You will gain exclusive insight into what's happening behind the scenes and hear from our trustees.



1. **Apologies**
2. **Minutes** of the 36th Annual General Meeting to be received and adopted
3. **Matters Arising** from the Minutes
4. **2022 Review of the Charity and Future Plans**
5. **2022 Report and Accounts**
Receive report and accounts
6. **Election to the Board**
New trustees elected to the Board in accordance with the Articles of Association
7. **Invite Continuation in Office**
8. **2022 Review of the Arboretum**
9. **Closing Statements**

Joining the AGM online is a good way to catch up on all the news and progress to date as well as our vision and plans for the future. Details for attending are given below.

Entry to the AGM

Due to the success of our last three virtual AGMs, we have decided to hold the 2023 AGM virtually again.

Member Vote and Proxy voting

Members of the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum are invited to vote at our AGM in line with our Charity Articles of Association. The vote is for approval of the minutes of the previous AGM and approval of the appointment of the auditors for the coming financial year. Any member who is unable to attend the AGM virtually and wishes to submit a vote will be able to do so at fowa.org.uk

Minutes and accounts

Agenda, papers and minutes of the 36th Annual General Meeting will be available at fowa.org.uk/agm 14 days prior to the AGM date.

Issued by the trustees of the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum.

Full joining details will be available in The Friends July 2023 eNews and at fowa.org.uk/agm

Conor and Cheryl
IN-STORE EXPERTS



In pursuit of LASTING ADVENTURE

COTSWOLD
outdoor

We're here to help you make the right choice, so you can keep on exploring the places you love, this season and beyond. Buy right, buy better and buy to last with our expert advice, unrivalled services and the best brands looking to make a difference. Because for us, lasting adventure means just that.

15% discount in-store and online for members of Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum with code AF-FOWA-22
Expires: 31.12.2023. T&Cs online.

Make the right choice with our experts.





Caring for our Downland landscape



▲ Credit: Rosie Anderson



Westonbirt is famed for its valuable and world-renowned tree collection, but at the heart of the site lie two other significant habitats: Limestone Grassland and Lowland Meadow.

Rosie Anderson
Dendrologist, Forestry England

This 40ha grassland area, known as the 'Downs', pre-dates the establishment of the arboretum. It was left open as a key component to the picturesque design principles applied at Westonbirt, playing on the contrast between light and shade, open and enclosed spaces, variety and intrigue, that invites the visitor to explore the landscape.

These special habitats are home to a rich mix of biodiversity and team with life throughout the year. Sadly, changes in farming practices and development within the UK, have caused severe declines in these habitats, making our care and conservation of the Downs even more vital.

Bee orchids (*Ophrys apifera*). The sneaky bee orchid has evolved to look just like a specific species of bee. They lure the bee into unsuccessfully mating with the flower whilst inadvertently pollinating them. Unfortunately, the species of bee which it mimics is not found in the UK, hence at Westonbirt they are entirely self-pollinated.



This year is an important anniversary for our valued Downlands. It has been 10 years since the ambitious first phase of the 'Westonbirt Project' (supported by National Lottery Heritage Fund and Garfield Weston Foundation) initiated the relocation of the visitor carpark, creating the 'Garfield Weston Meadow' within the Downs. An army of volunteers assisted in this effort, using site-local seed to kick-off the restoration of 15,000sqm of Grade 1 Listed Landscape.

Regular monitoring of the area's continuous development is crucial. In addition to annual surveys, our Flora Volunteers spent many weeks last summer out on the Downs, busily conducting a second round of intensive five-yearly quadrat surveys. Botanising in the summer heat, they collected data which has shown that parts of the restored area are now well on their way to being considered precious lowland meadow. They even found a new plant species for Westonbirt – the southern marsh orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*).

Our Fauna Volunteers have also been busy surveying and have recorded an astonishing **25 different butterfly species**, including the iconic small blue butterfly (*Cupido minimus*). Last year saw Westonbirt buck the negative national trend, observing a **fantastic 163% increase in butterfly numbers**.

Small blue butterfly (*Cupido minimus*). The small blue is the smallest UK resident butterfly species. It is rare and only feeds on kidney vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*), which can be found here on the Downs.



Moving forward, it is imperative that we use these results to inform the future management of the Downs. While the survey work has shown our current regime is having many positive impacts, it also identified patches of tor-grass (*Brachypodium pinnatum*), which are increasing in size, and which over time would lower the diversity of flora within our sloped limestone grassland areas. Knowing this, we can plan targeted management and hopefully reverse its spread.

Looking forward to the next 10 years, our grasslands can help play an important role in achieving the three key themes of our 10-Year Vision: **conservation, education, and participation**. They provide an invaluable opportunity to learn about and protect the special plants and animals that call the Downs home. Like our beautiful trees, they are a vital component that helps to make Westonbirt such a wonderful place to visit and be a part of.



A year of management

Early Spring

Grazing by the cattle stops, and the grassland is left to flower and set seed through spring and summer.

Late Summer

An annual hay cut is taken. Removing the season's growth helps to keep vigorous species like grasses in check, allowing more delicate wildflowers to establish.

Late Summer to Early Spring

Cows are brought back to graze in late summer and stay until early spring. Grazing by cows helps to lower nutrient levels and opens up patches of soil and light that helps wildflowers to germinate.

Read our blog *Grazing on the Downs*' at fowa.org.uk/blog/grazing-on-the-downs



Meet Chrissie: Westonbirt Arboretum's Trainee Arborist

Thanks to your ongoing support, The Friends sponsor a Trainee Arborist at Westonbirt Arboretum each year.

What is a typical day for a trainee arborist?

No day is ever the same. Every morning at 8am we discuss the day's plan with our Team Leader, Rich, and share jobs for the morning. We usually start with any jobs that may obstruct paths or could be a danger to members of the public before the arboretum opens. These jobs can include leaf blowing the paths, felling dangerous trees near paths or eliminating dead wood.

Sometimes we might spend the entire day working in one section, (the arboretum is divided into 60 sections and we work through each section on a five-year rotation). Section work usually includes felling, chipping, removing dead or dying trees, fencing unestablished trees to prevent animals eating them, repairing old fences and laying mulch around the base of the trees.

Sometimes my day is filled with smaller jobs such as turning the mulch with the tractor at the mulch plant, dealing with dead trees or branches, mowing, tool maintenance and strimming.

What's your favourite memory of the placement so far?

I enjoy days when we are felling trees, it is challenging and exciting. There was a day when Rich felled a massive Abies on Holford Ride, it was very impressive, the sound it made when it fell was like a gunshot.

How does the placement make a difference?

I started my career in conservation contracting and soon realised that my passion was in arborist work. Finding a placement that would train me to be an arborist as opposed to a conservation contractor was very difficult. I had a lot of the skills needed but not the experience required. When the opportunity came up for the Trainee Arborist placement at Westonbirt, I applied immediately.



Why do you want to be an arborist?

I have always had a passion for the outdoors and nature. I love the fact that no tree is the same and you have to approach each tree completely differently. I find it fascinating that some trees have lived for centuries and to work surrounded by trees that have outlived most people is amazing to me. I also love the challenges, both mental and physical, that working as an arborist provides.

What do you most enjoy about the experience?

I enjoy learning from the Tree Team, they all have so much knowledge and are very skilled arborists. It is interesting to know how much work and effort goes into managing the arboretum collection.

Do you have a favourite part of the arboretum?

I really enjoy the Ash Collection; it is a little bit more of a wild woodland and it's definitely possible to get lost up there. I also really like Acer Glade in the autumn.

Do you have a favourite tree here?

Beech trees are my favourite trees. I just think they look great in all seasons, from the bright green leaves in spring, to their burnt orange leaves at the end of autumn.

What is next for you after your placement?

One day I would like to be a Technical Arborist with the Westonbirt Tree Team. I hope to gain as much experience as I can and grow my skills and knowledge.

Since Chrissie's interview, she has successfully gained a permanent position as a Technical Arborist with Westonbirt Arboretum's Tree Team. Well done, Chrissie!

For Trainee Arborist opportunities, visit fowa.org.uk



Creative and healthy benefits of the great outdoors



There are lots of reasons to spend time outdoors enjoying nature.

It gives us some important space to breathe if we are feeling overwhelmed or a little bit tired, and it helps to energise us and enhance our wellbeing. It's also a place to spend time with friends and family having fun and learning new things.

Rachel Barnett
Learning Assistant, Forestry England

Credit: Johnny Hathaway



When we spend time outdoors, positive emotions such as awe and wonder are boosted, and this can help us to feel more creative.

Being creative can prove difficult sometimes. When we've been stuck inside all day it can be hard to think or come up with fresh ideas. So here are some ways that might help you to unlock your creativity when visiting Westonbirt this year.



Bring your camera or use a phone to take some photographs of all the wonderful colours, features and wildlife.



Create a mandala or a natural sculpture using fallen leaves, petals and twigs.



Sit under a tree with a notebook and pencils to do some drawing or colouring.



Use the trees or natural objects to make sounds and music.



Write a story based on things you can see around you, or using the history of the arboretum.

The arboretum is a wonderful arena in which to relax, reinvigorate and enjoy a little creativity. We hope you find time to come and enjoy it soon!



The Cotswold Silver Tree

Arboretum inspired botanical jewellery



Pauline is the creator, designer and owner of Cotswold Silver Tree, a local business. Despite a love of art at school she took a path into science and business. Two children and a challenging career later, the pandemic prompted her to take a break.

Westonbirt was a lifeline during lockdown. Walking in a beautiful landscape helped Pauline to rediscover a connection with nature and enjoy a sense of calm that being amongst the trees often brings. Around the same time, she began teaching herself how to work with silver clay. She made imprints of leaves and bark from some of the trees in the arboretum, giving her a wonderfully creative outlet at this stressful time.



Firing using a clay kiln

Pauline couldn't get over the fact that a lump of silver or bronze clay could capture the trees and plants so wonderfully. But to continue exploring her passion, she really needed to sell some of her work; and so in the run-up to Christmas 2021, Cotswold Silver Tree was born.

In creating the jewellery designs, Pauline looks at the trees in close detail, learning about the background of each one and noting where they are located in the arboretum. She forages for leaves and bark from the ground whilst always respecting the tree and its environment. Her work has become about more than just the jewellery; she is forging a close relationship with the trees.

Conscious that each piece of jewellery is capturing part of the tree forever, Pauline hopes that the recipients of her work might visit Westonbirt to find the species that their jewellery was created from.

She often uses rare trees in her work to highlight the issues discussed in *the Little Book of Disappearing Trees*, available from the Westonbirt Shop.

The process Pauline follows is fascinating. Having collected the leaf or bark, she mixes silicone to make a mould. But she has to work quickly as she has only a few minutes to roll it out and create an impression from the scavenged foliage! Once the mould has set it can be re-used many times. The soft silver or bronze clay is then worked into the mould and shaped using cutters. The piece is worked up and completed before going into the kiln. The firing process in the kiln burns off all the binder leaving 99.9% pure metal. Pauline works hard to be as ecological as possible – the clays are made of recycled materials from industries such as photography and dentistry. Once fired, the piece is polished and set on recycled silver chains or ear wires.

Not all leaves make a good imprint – they need to have a pronounced texture for the mould. Trial and error is the way forward, and helps inform and shape her work. Whilst ash trees have been a particular research focus at Westonbirt to better understand chalara ash dieback, the ash leaves and wood offcuts provide excellent imprints creating beautiful pendants and earrings! One of Pauline's additional joys is creating pieces from a memorial tree as a special keepsake.



Each piece of jewellery is moulded from leaves and bark from the arboretum



Purchase this incredible botanical jewellery from the Westonbirt Shop

You will receive a 10% discount when you present your valid membership card!



Spring & summer seasonal highlights

Westonbirt's best kept secret

The arboretum is coming into its full glory as spring arrives and the trees put on new growth to prepare for the warmer weather ahead. For many people this is a favourite time of year to walk through the trees and marvel at the beauty and majesty of this magnificent landscape. With the woodland's wildlife emerging from the long winter months, the landscape is alive with colour, sounds and the music of new life.

Seasonal map

You can use this pull-out map to identify and locate where each of the trees in the highlights article can be found in the arboretum.

Each tree has a coloured dot next to it. You will find the same coloured dot placed on the map to show its location. You may wish to take the full article on your next visit.

The map is a simplified version of our main map. We've done this to make finding the tree easier. If you would like a copy of the full map, pick one up on your next visit from the Welcome Building.

The coloured dots mark some of the spectacular trees worth seeking on your next visit...



Use our Arboretum Explorer

Arboretum Explorer is a web based search tool that enables you to locate specific trees at Westonbirt. You can use as much or as little information as you choose and the website will show you a map with the location of the tree.

To use the Arboretum Explorer facility visit westonbirt.arboretumexplorer.org

Tree guide

Spring

- Mulberry-leaf maple: *Acer morifolium*
- ★ *Rhododendron augustinii*
- Bladdernut: *Staphylea*
- Snowdrop tree: *Halesia carolina*
- ★ Sunrise horse chestnut: *Aesculus x neglecta* 'Erythroblastos'
- Cherry: *Prunus hirtipes*

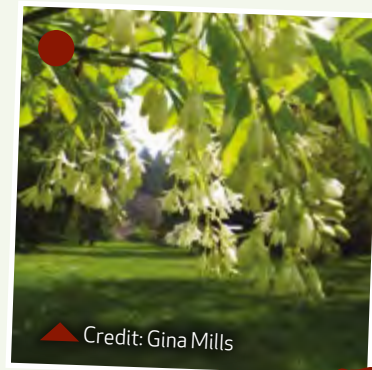
Summer

- Calico bush: *Kalmia latifolia*
- Japanese strawberry tree: *Cornus kousa*
- ★ Mock orange: *Philadelphus* 'Purpureomaculatus'
- ★ Chinese money maple: *Dipteronia sinensis*
- Cucumber tree: *Magnolia acuminata*
- Californian allspice: *Calycanthus occidentalis*



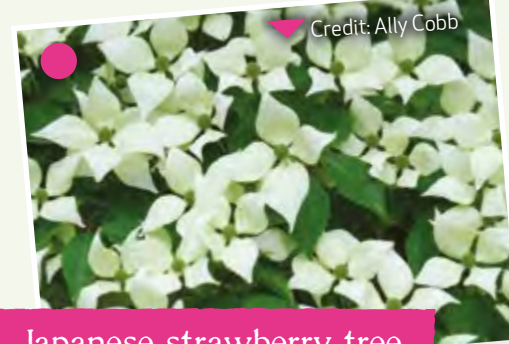
Mulberry-leaf maple

Credit: Dan Crowley



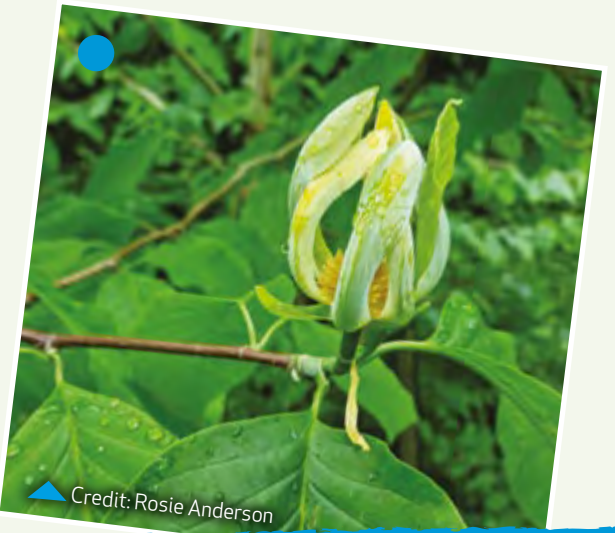
Bladdernut: *Staphylea*
Fossils have been found that suggest the bladdernut family (*Staphyleaceae*) has a very ancient origin, explaining the scattered nature of populations found in the wild.

Credit: Gina Mills



Japanese strawberry tree

Credit: Ally Cobb



Cucumber tree: *Magnolia acuminata*
The common name cucumber tree comes from the lumpy green, cucumber-like fruits that follow the flowers, which later turn red.

Credit: Rosie Anderson



Rhododendron augustinii

Credit: Gina Mills



Mock orange

Credit: Rosie Anderson



Credit: Graham Dennis

Snowdrop tree



Credit: Gina Mills

Cherry



Credit: Susanna Bayliss

Californian allspice



Credit: Gina Mills



Credit: Gina Mills

Chinese money maple

Calico bush: *Kalmia latifolia*

This clever species uses a catapult mechanism to fling its pollen at pollinators – up to 15cm!

Spring highlights

● Mulberry-leaf maple:
Acer morifolium

Here at Westonbirt, spring is about so much more than our spectacular flowers: and the mulberry-leaf maple proves that!

Emerging a deep rich red, its leaves turn a glorious shade of bronze, which look particularly special against the yellow-green flowers, before they mature to dark green through the season. The stripey young bark on this elegant Japanese species looks great too, sporting red and white streaks over green.

★ *Rhododendron augustinii*

Rhododendron augustinii lights up spring with its abundance of luminous flowers. In its native habitat in central and western China, it can vary from pink to purple, sometimes appearing almost blue.

● Bladdernut:
Staphylea

The charming white and pink flowers have a shape said to be reminiscent of tiny daffodils. Their bladder-like seed capsules stay on the tree into the autumn, providing a long season of interest.

● Snowdrop tree:
Halesia carolina

The dainty bell-shaped white flowers resemble snowdrops, inspiring its common name as the snowdrop tree.

Found in the wild in the eastern United States, it was given its latin name in honour of the English Reverend Stephen Hales (1677–1761), who was a physiologist, chemist, and inventor.

★ Sunrise horse chestnut:
Aesculus x neglecta 'Erythroblastos'

Towards the end of April, the new vivid coral-pink leaves start to unfurl. During this time the tree is best viewed when the sun is low, illuminating the fresh leaves from behind. A real showstopper!

● Cherry:
Prunus hirtipes

With its delightfully early flush of delicate pink fragrant flowers, *Prunus hirtipes*, is a welcome sign of spring on its way.

It was introduced from its native China by the plant hunter Ernest Wilson in 1907.

Summer highlights

● Calico bush:
Kalmia latifolia

This native of the eastern United States is in the same family as *Rhododendron*. Before the pale pink flower clusters open, the buds look a bit like iced gems, but do not eat, as all parts of the plant are toxic!

● Japanese strawberry tree:
Cornus kousa

In early summer, our Japanese strawberry trees put on a show-stopping sight as the white-bracted flowerheads tumble in waves across the tree. The common name comes from the edible, though not very palatable, red fruits which can be made into jams.

★ Mock orange:
Philadelphus 'Purpureomaculatus'

The light summery fragrance of mock orange are something to really celebrate.

Philadelphus 'Purpureomaculatus' is a cultivar bred by the French plant-breeder Victor Lemoine of Nancy (1823–1912).

The pure white flowers have a delicate purple-pink marking near their centre. The latin name of the cultivar derives from this beautiful feature, 'Purpureomaculatus' literally translates to 'purple spotted'.

★ Chinese money maple:
Dipteronia sinensis

This small tree is native to Central China. The inconspicuous greenish white flowers are followed by striking pink, winged fruit in late summer which are as showy as some of our most dramatic flowers.

● Cucumber tree:
Magnolia acuminata

The cucumber tree may not have the most eye-catching yellow-green flowers but look out for the unusual almost blue flower buds as they open in early summer. The strange blue tinge found on the outer tepals is caused by surface waxes.

● Californian allspice:
Calycanthus occidentalis

The red waterlily-like blooms are said to smell like a combination of strawberry, banana and pineapple! The leaves and wood are also fragrant and have a strong spicy aroma when bruised. In its native California, it typically grows near the banks of streams.

Don't forget to pull out the map and bring it with you to discover our seasonal picks on your next visit!



A poem by Pam Ayres

We are delighted to share a poem about Westonbirt by Pam Ayres. Pam joined Westonbirt's Curator, Mark Ballard for a stroll around the arboretum and met Propagator, Penny Jones in September for a Channel 5 programme 'The Cotswolds & Beyond with Pam Ayres'. Featured in the programme, Pam left us this lovely poem as a tribute to the arboretum.

Westonbirt

They can keep their concrete cities,
The racket, and the fumes,
The overcrowded thoroughfares,
And overheated rooms,
I love the silent forest,
The peacefulness complete,
Its seasons ever turning,
And its breathing, ever sweet.

I love the shifting canopy,
The life that it supports,
From crow to caterpillar,
The thousand different sorts,
The flowers in their beauty,
The summer's cavalcade,
They can keep their concrete cities,
I'll just sit here.
In the shade.

© Pam Ayres 2022

Conservation:
Protecting our trees for the future



Education:
Sharing knowledge to create change



Participation:
Connecting people with nature



You're a part of the Westonbirt story

Are you new to The Friends? Or have you been a member for years? The Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum is a charity that directly supports Westonbirt, The National Arboretum.

Our vision is to support Westonbirt Arboretum to be a world leader in trees, inspiring people by:

- **Conserving our natural heritage**
Protecting against the threat of climate change
- **Educating the next generation of conservationists**
Inspiring future scientists and advocates
- **Widening access and participation at the arboretum**

By being a member or making a donation, you support all these things and more. Your support ensures that our beautiful Grade One Registered Landscape is preserved as a home for scientific inquiry, education and recreation for generations to come.

What will your Westonbirt Story be?

- Saving trees from the brink of extinction
- Inspiring a young person to a career in conservation
- Helping families access safe, green spaces

Together we can protect trees and enrich lives.

Check out the different ways you can support the arboretum fowa.org.uk/support-dedicate



Propagating tree species from around the world

Credit: Jan Bayley



A young person meeting the machines, we're all about inspiring the next generation of tree lovers!



Run for the Trees 2023

The Westonbirt annual 10k is back in May this year! We opened applications to join the Run for the Trees fundraising team in October 2022 and selected ten enthusiastic runners who are passionate about Westonbirt Arboretum. Our runners will each raise £250 in support of the amazing work taking place at the arboretum!



Credit: Brian Martin



Credit: Johnny Hathaway

Meet some of the team

Marc Alexander

I have been running for the trees for a few years and this is now the only 10K race that I do. If you've ever been to Westonbirt Arboretum, you'll not only be blown away by its striking beauty, but you'll understand the scale and complexity of the work that's involved to keep it looking like that. Not only is it a haven for so much wildlife, but it's a mental health booster for humans and their fluffy companions. I look forward to taking my spaniels Peanut and Jelly training with me at Westonbirt.



Louise Tayler

I have always been a lover of trees since I was a child. When I moved to Bristol and discovered the arboretum I knew I'd found my happy place. I have been there for all my highs and lows. Including when I found out I was pregnant after IVF and when life was hard, and I needed an escape. I later enjoyed days out there with my children and wider family. My running journey also started at Westonbirt; my first race being a 10K Run for the Trees. Securing the future of Westonbirt Arboretum is essential for the lives of many. I am honoured to be part of the team.



Paul Jones

My wife and I got married in the Great Oak Hall in 2013. Since then, we have regularly brought our children to Westonbirt, and have been members of The Friends since getting married. I am running the 10K as a means of honouring what will be our 10th wedding anniversary in 2023 whilst raising funds for the charity to aid Westonbirt Arboretum. In turn, allowing current and future generations access to such a beautiful place of tranquility and enjoyment.



Credit: Brian Martin

We'll be supporting our Run for the Trees Team every step of the way and providing them with Westonbirt running kit kindly provided by our sponsor, Runners Need who give members 15% discount! See page 15 for details.

If you're interested in how you can fundraise for the arboretum, you can check out our guides for training and fundraising on our website fowa.org.uk/runforthetrees

Fancy joining the Run for the Trees Team 2024? Please contact us at fundraising@fowa.org.uk to be notified when applications open later this year.



Life in the forest

As well as being a wonderful tree collection, Westonbirt provides a vital home to wildlife of all shapes and sizes. It is a habitat that is rich in diversity with some fascinating inhabitants.

The hazel dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) is a lovely but endangered species.

Growing up to 9cm long, this shy animal is hard to spot. They feed on nuts and fruits, tree flowers and small insects like caterpillars in the warmer months. During hibernation the hazel dormouse moves down from the trees to ground level, building a well concealed nest. They give birth to four or five young that are blind for the first 18 days of their lives.



Hazel dormouse

The southern wood ant (*Formica rufa*), also known as red wood ant or horse ant, plays an important role in our woodlands.

An aggressive predator, they feed on invertebrates, helping with pest control. They build their nest in sunny spots on the ground, often using pine needles as part of the structure. In spring the new generation fly up into the air to mate. The females then fly off to start new colonies.



Southern wood ant

Credit: Forestry Commission

The adder (*Vipera berus*) is Britain's only venomous snake.

It is shy by nature and most likely to be spotted in early spring basking in the sunshine in glades or on open heathland. With a lifespan of 15 years, the adder can grow up to 80cm. They predominantly feed on small mammals and ground nesting birds. During mating in early spring, the males perform a dance or duel to fend off the competition. The female incubates the eggs in her body, giving birth to live young.



Adder

Credit: Isobel Cameron

Hawfinch



The hawfinch (*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*) is the largest finch in Britain and is twice the weight of a chaffinch.

Sadly their numbers are in decline and it is currently a red-listed species. The hawfinch has a very powerful beak, exerting a pressure of over 150 lbs per square inch, that they use for cracking nuts and seeds including cherry stones! Shy and hard to spot, they take cover in the tree canopies.

The noctule bat (*Nyctalus noctula*) is the UK's largest bat.

Roosting mainly in trees, the noctule bat hibernates during the winter months. Nocturnal by nature, they emit high frequency sound waves (echolocation) to hunt insects around the woodland canopy. During the warmer months females form maternity groups, raising a single pup each. Unlike many bats, the noctule bats call can be heard by some people.

Noctule bat



If you would like to contribute to our woodland seasonal update we would love to hear from you. Contact us by emailing magazine@fowa.org.uk



Renovating our Bird Hide for a John Muir Award

Westonbirt's Estate Volunteers and Brian (Westonbirt's Coppice Manager)

The project

In the early part of 2021, nine Estates Volunteers decided to take part in a John Muir Award scheme, with full support from Westonbirt Arboretum. The project was to renovate the well-loved and used Bird Hide situated in the Old Arboretum. The team needed to remove the old fencing and replace it with new hazel panels whilst updating the hide and surrounding area.

Who was John Muir?

John Muir was born in 1838 in Dunbar, Scotland. He had a great sense of adventure and a love for the natural world. When John was young, the family emigrated to Wisconsin, USA and it was here that he developed his love for botany and geology. He travelled extensively across America spending six years in Yosemite Valley studying the wildlife and geology. Through John Muir's enthusiasm and work, the Yosemite Valley became a National Park in 1864. He is widely regarded as the founder of the National Park movement worldwide.

The John Muir Award was set up in his name by the John Muir Trust. It requires participants to cover four challenges; Discover the Wildlife, Explore It, Conserve It and Share Your Experiences. These four challenges help promote a holistic approach to outdoor experiences. Our Estate Volunteers decided that the renovation of Westonbirt Arboretum's Bird Hide and feeding area was ideal for the award.



John Muir, conservationist American stamp

The Bird Hide

Situated in the Old Arboretum the Bird Hide is a large oak framed wooden clad building approximately 25ft x10ft. The fencing either side of the hide is made of woven hazel panels. Along the back of the hide are various trees and shrubs and an old stone wall forming a boundary onto a field. The birds are fed from feeders suspended across the feeding area and holes in a dead tree trunk. There is also a bird bath. Inside the hide is a bird identification chart and two benches for visitors to sit on. The floor inside is covered with wood chip and at either end of the hide are entrances covered with black material. The hide is well visited by the public, both young and old alike.



Completed panels laid out for mounting

The Four Challenges

Discover the wildlife

Within the feeding area a wide range of wildlife have been observed including greater spotted woodpeckers, sparrows, tree creepers, nut hatches, blue and great tits, black caps, pigeons, pheasants, grey squirrels, badgers and mice. Visiting birds and animals often arrive in the hedgerow before briefly visiting the feeders, or the ground beneath the feeders. Each feeder contains a different food source including peanuts, fat balls, mixed seed and sunflower seeds.

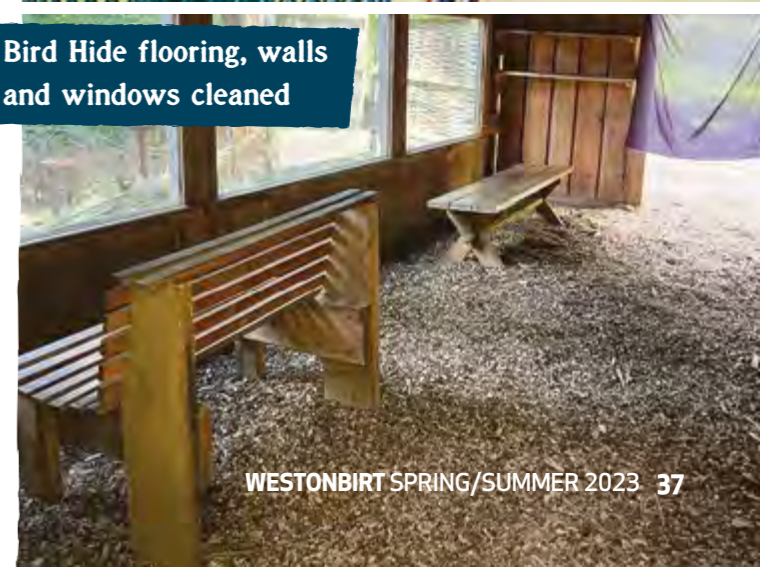


Keep your peckers up!

Explore it

The Bird Hide is located on the edge of the Old Arboretum not far from the Tree Management Centre. The feeders and water supply are checked and filled up every other day by staff or volunteers. The Bird Hide is made from oak with a shingle roof, the fencing panels either side of the hide are made of split woven hazel. Like all timber it has a finite life. The hide itself is approximately 15 years old and in good condition but needed a good clean. The wood chip flooring and entrance curtains needed replacing as well as the fence panels either side of the feeding area.

Bird Hide flooring, walls and windows cleaned



Conserving it

At the beginning of 2022 we teamed up with Brian Williamson, the Coppice Manager, to teach us the art of making split hazel fencing panels. Our first task was to learn how to split hazel rods, that Brian had coppiced on site, down the centre. This required the use of a very sharp bill hook, a form of axe. This is a technique that takes years of experience to perfect, so Brian very kindly offered to split them for us to enable us to focus on weaving the panels.

Brian taught us how to weave panels. We started by preparing the uprights called sails. These were placed upright into holes equally spaced around a slight curve in a plank of wood. You then weave in the split hazel, twisting in the bottom rows and ensuring the split face stayed on one side. Having woven up to a certain height using a marker pole, came the difficult part of locking in the top weave. This is finished off using a hazel rod, not split, and having a double twist on one of the end sails and finally locking it off.

Having gained some experience with slow progress, we managed to make two panels a day. It was a great experience learning an ancient skill. To get the best results the hazel had to be freshly coppiced, split and then woven. If allowed to dry, the hazel becomes very difficult to use and it tends to break. A total of 12 panels were made over two and a half months.

Moving to the Bird Hide, we removed the old wood chip floor down to the soil level. The inside walls and roof of the hide were swept clean and finally a wood chip flooring was laid. New dark green heavy-duty entrance curtains were installed using a material more in keeping with the surrounding environment. The exterior walls of the Bird Hide were given a light brush, not to remove the patina but just to look cleaner.

Two new feeding stations were fitted in the form of flat bird tables. Other feeding stations containing fat balls, peanuts and a mixture of seeds were hung from a wire across the feeding area. On the ground the bird bath and a fallen tree trunk also provide natural feeding stations.



Final Instruments made to measure



A task well done!



Opening ceremony in memory of the late Eric Thacker

Sharing our experiences

As Westonbirt is open to the public, all our tasks were carried out in public view with a great deal of an interest shown and lots of questions asked. It was a real privilege to explain and discuss what we were doing now and in the long term. Some people had not realised there was a Bird Hide on site and were interested to know where it was with a view to visiting it when the project was completed.

Our experience of the whole process of renovating the site was shared with other volunteers and staff members with a presentation and site visit.

Estates Volunteers: from left to right: David, Ken, Marion, Jack, Jim and Peter as well as Keith and Michael who are not featured in this photo



Find out how you can join Westonbirt's Volunteering Team at forestryengland.uk/westonbirt/volunteering

Working towards our sustainable future

In 2022 Visit Gloucestershire invited Westonbirt's Green Team to be involved in its newly launched Sustainability Champions programme. Local businesses came together to discuss tough environmental and social topics, to share ideas and challenges and come up with ways in which the visitor economy can become more sustainable.

Being involved in this case study was an opportunity for the Green Team to review the progress and achievements made at Westonbirt so far and look ahead to our future aspirations:



Westonbirt's Green Team with staff and volunteers from both Forestry England and the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum

Our achievements



Energy

We conducted a site-wide audit to create a baseline and subsequent action plan.

Highlights:

- **LED lights** with sensors installed in offices.
- **Lagging of the pipes to reduce energy inefficiency** – a small improvement to make but still makes a difference!
- **Air source heat pumps in the Welcome Building** providing renewable heating.
- **The Welcome Building has achieved BREEAM 'Excellent' status** – BREEAM is the world's leading science-based suite of validation and certification systems for sustainable built environments.

Waste



We conducted a site-wide audit to assess waste streams and develop an action plan to achieve Zero Waste.

Highlights:

- **We retendered for waste collectors** that better reflect our sustainability objectives.
- Picked out and resold our **surplus furniture**.
- Introduced a **terracycle recycling** scheme for staff offices.
- **Sourced a hard hat recycling company** to recycle hats at the end of their safe usable life into pellets.
- Sourced **reusable black plastic tree netting**.
- **Our HubBUB trash converter initiative engaged with visitors** about where rubbish goes and what the impact is when recycling is contaminated.
- **Introduced a single-use cup and pizza box charge** for takeaway food onsite to encourage visitors to opt for reusable options.
- **Introduced a bag charge in the Westonbirt Shop** to reduce the number of bags used.
- **Coffee grounds are given away** to staff and visitors.



Water

Reducing consumption and providing a secure supply for our Propagation Unit.

Highlight

- **Rainwater harvesting was installed in 2022 to recycle and treat water without the use of chemicals.** This water is used for the young trees in the Propagation Unit. With the equivalent of 160 bathtubs of water, the saplings were well watered despite the drought conditions last year.



Travel

- **Forestry England has an electric staff car** with an EV charging point located at Westonbirt.



Health, Wellbeing & Inclusion

- **Being an inclusive, welcoming site** so everyone can enjoy the benefits of the outdoors and the tree collection.



Behaviour Change

- **Westonbirt's Green Team continues to grow** with staff and volunteers from Forestry England and the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum.



The HubBUB trash converter was set up on The Downs to engage with visitors



Forestry England's electric staff car and EV charging point

What's in progress

Waste

- Trialled the **removal of Christmas tree netting**.
- **Event banners are being switched** to either fabric or recyclable material.

Travel

- Understanding **visitor travel patterns**.
- Developing infrastructure for **visitor EV charging points**.
- Staff travel is a big carbon emission, so we are encouraging **blended working, use of staff EV car and carpooling**.

Procurement

- **Understanding our supply chains** for all businesses onsite.
- Trialling **sustainable signage**.

Behaviour Change

- Working with staff, volunteers, visitors and contractors to **empower sustainable actions**.

Our aspirations

Energy

- All business to **move to renewable energy tariffs**.
- **Net Zero by 2030**.

Waste

- Develop a **consistent and clear bin system** for visitors.
- **Reducing disposable packaging** across the site.
- **Achieve Zero Waste** (zero to landfill).

Travel

- **Install EV chargers** for visitors.

Procurement

- Create a **site-wide procurement policy** for all business.

Behaviour Change

- **Engage with staff, volunteers, visitors and contractors** more effectively, inspiring sustainability advocates.

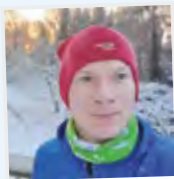


Storytime with The Gruffalo

Mike Walker

Wild Wonder at Westonbirt

An inspiring literature festival for kids!



Over the August bank holiday last year Westonbirt held the inaugural Wild Wonder at Westonbirt Children's Literature Festival, and the event was a great success!

Martyn Reeves
Event Manager, Forestry England



Cressida Cowell inspiring the next generation



Waterstones and Blue Peter Children's Book Award winner, Hannah Gold

Credit: Johnny Hathaway



Storyteller Liz Fost with Big Nutbrown Hare



Michael Morpurgo championing the natural world

Credit: Doug Lodge

Nature art in the arboretum



Credit: Johnny Hathaway



Learning to draw with Martin Brown

Credit: Johnny Hathaway

“The staff and volunteers at Wild Wonder were so enthusiastic and friendly, and we thoroughly enjoyed the talk by Michael Morpurgo!”

The festival was a chance for young bookworms to come and meet their favourite authors and illustrators in themed events based on stories set in and around nature.

There were some very well known names who attended, including authors Michael Morpurgo, Emma Carroll and Michelle Paver, Waterstones Children's Laureate Cressida Cowell and TV presenter Jess French. Alongside the authors there were several bestselling illustrators including Martin Brown, Rachel Bright, Yuval Zommer and William Grill.

Our visiting authors and illustrators led a range of masterclasses, workshops and talks across different venues at the arboretum. Jess French led a bug hunt in Silk Wood starting out from our brand-new Community Shelter. Illustrators such as Martin Brown, Yuval Zommer and Rachel Bright led drawing masterclasses

from our Learning Centre and the Great Oak Hall. Then we had talks from Michael Morpurgo and Cressida Cowell in our Tree Management Centre. All really inspiring events as the pictures attest to!

As well as the authors and illustrators we were delighted to host some story time sessions with special guest appearances by The Gruffalo and Little Nutbrown Hare from Guess How Much I Love You, alongside many more events over the three days.

Having had the chance to learn from and meet these amazing authors and illustrators, we hope that we have inspired those who attended to write and draw about their own passion for nature.

Wild Wonder at Westonbirt will be returning this year on the 15-17 September



Volunteering – The Big Picture

Westonbirt Volunteers at the heart of HRH The Former Prince of Wales's visit in March 2022

Westonbirt has about 280 volunteers who support the arboretum in many ways, from helping our visitors to get the best from their trip to keeping the arboretum in pristine condition. We would like to share with you some of the incredible tasks our volunteers undertake and hopefully encourage more of our supporters to take the plunge.



Claire Bradley
Volunteer
Coordinator,
Forestry
England

Volunteers in the public eye

You will have undoubtedly encountered our volunteers at the Welcome Building, helping visitors with queries such as which trees are looking good, things to see and do, and what's on.

We encourage all our visitors to try one of our free guided walks. There is so much more to Westonbirt than many visitors realise, and our guides are knowledgeable and passionate about all of it.



One of our knowledgeable guides showing visitors the best of the arboretum

The WOW board (Window on Westonbirt) at the Welcome Building and printed map is produced weekly by volunteers who scour the site and create a visual guide as to the best things to see that week.

You might also have encountered our shuttle bus that runs around the Downs through spring, summer and autumn. Our volunteer drivers are also extremely knowledgeable about the arboretum, offering a running commentary and advice on the best areas of the arboretum to visit.

Behind the scenes

We have various volunteer teams that get stuck into those time-consuming jobs that add to the overall beauty of the arboretum. Path clearing, weeding, bramble pulling, woodchip laying, signage maintenance and much more. There is also a team that helps with the mammoth task of tree labelling and some that assist with tasks in the propagation unit, contributing to the future of Westonbirt.

Science

Westonbirt has a variety of excellent wildlife habitats that we manage with the help of volunteers who monitor the wildflowers, butterflies and bumblebees, and also contribute to the maintenance of these habitats. They also monitor the signs of seasonal change, known as 'phenology'.

Learning and educating

Many schools visit Westonbirt and we have a busy family events calendar that our wonderful volunteers support with engaging crafts, helping with large school groups and preparing for family events. They also collect loads of pine cones every year for Enchanted Christmas crafts.

Our volunteers also support visiting local community groups, enabling everyone to experience and enjoy the arboretum. These volunteers help host the groups, running activities such as fire lighting, woodworking and coppicing.

Special events

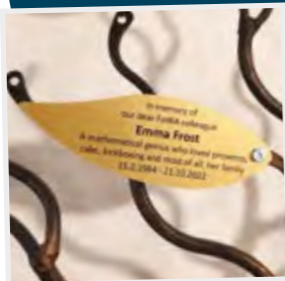
Forest Live, Enchanted Christmas and more! We couldn't run these events without the help of our volunteers. They are crucial in meeting and greeting our visitors, answering questions and providing a friendly face!

Throughout the year we hold volunteer social gatherings, coffee mornings, talks, team updates and get togethers, learning sessions and updates to name but a few of the ways we work together. At Westonbirt we're all a family, and we value and celebrate our connection between volunteers, staff, members and day visitors alike.

If you would like to find out about volunteering at Westonbirt contact volunteer.westonbirt@forestryengland.uk or visit forestryengland.uk/westonbirt/volunteering



Emma



Sadly, our dear colleague Emma lost her fight to cancer last year at the young age of 38.

For the last few years, Emma has been our Charity Finance Manager. She was kind, extremely bright, a whizz with numbers and we loved bouncing ideas around with her. Among other things she loved cake, kickboxing and the odd sausage roll from the Bake House at Westonbirt. We have placed a Leaf of Life in memory of Emma in the Great Oak Hall. We miss her terribly and our sympathies go out to all her family and friends.

Supporting a PhD placement at Westonbirt

Thanks to your support, we have been able to partner with the University of West England to part-fund a PhD student placement over the next four years at Westonbirt Arboretum.

The study will be an evaluation of the risks to *Tilia*, commonly known as lime or linden. This will involve the monitoring of health, detection and microbiome analysis with the aim of determining current and future threats to this species, developing an effective detection protocol for symptomatic *Tilia* and determining the pathogenicity and incidence of *Brenneria* and *Phytophthora* species on *Tilia*.

Read our blog at fowa.org.uk/blog/a-new-partnership-with-the-university-of-the-west-of-england



Community Shelter is an award finalist

We are proud to announce that the Community Shelter was shortlisted for the 'Education Project of the Year' award at the Structural Timber Awards 2022 held last October.

Sophie Nash, Programme Manager, and Neil Seegobin, Project Manager for Forestry England at Westonbirt, attended alongside the Xylotek Team who managed the design and build of the shelter. It was a great achievement to be shortlisted as a finalist!

Sophie said:

“Our team is so proud that the Community Shelter was shortlisted for a Structural Timber Award. Alongside Xylotek, we were proud to represent so many individuals who made this project a reality including the project team, funders, community groups, volunteers and all those that helped make the project happen.”



Connecting even more people with trees!

With your ongoing membership support, you've helped fund two more mobility scooters at the arboretum. We're very proud to be able to offer scooters free of charge to visitors, all thanks to you!



Rebuilding the Community Shelter pizza oven

With the help of cob oven building experts RedKite Design, we ran a two day workshop with volunteers, staff and community participants to rebuild the pizza oven at the Community Shelter.

During the workshop we removed the old oven and formed a new one using wet sand, placing a clay layer over the top of the sand. The clay provides thermal mass to keep in heat in. The group then made the cob by stamping on a mixture of sand, clay and straw, which was spread over the initial clay layer. Finally, clay slip was smoothed over the oven to form the outer surface. After a two week drying period, a community school group returned to empty the sand from inside the oven, decorate the outer surface with earth paints and help with its first firing!

Supporter story



“Rose loves staring at trees, especially in the wind, and is fascinated with the bark when we sit her on the low branches. We think she's going to be a climber like her dad! She's been to visit Westonbirt a few times with her Granny, Grandpa and cousins Poppy and Max. Recently we arranged a trip with our NCT friends so all the babies could sit together under the trees (while the adults ate ice cream), which was a great success!”



New Coppice Shelter

We have recently completed the design and build of a new green oak framed timber barn in Silk Wood.

Built by Perchard Structural Timber Works Ltd, the new shelter will help our onsite coppicers to continue their programme of woodland management, securing the future of coppicing at Westonbirt. The new shelter will help the coppicers undertake tasks in all weather and allow them to store materials and products associated with the coppice. Your membership donations have helped to fund the shelter – thank you for your support!

Our crossword genius remembered

It is with great sadness that we share the news that our wonderful crossword creator and supporter Roger Gorst passed away last August.

His crosswords and his in-depth knowledge of the arborical world will be missed dearly by our team and our members. He would have been pleased to know that Pat Parsons, Anne Farrington, Linda and Rodney Tillotson, Darren Galpin, Lesley Champion, and Ruth Burnett, all successfully completed his final crossword. Well done – it was a tricky one!

With the help of a group of volunteers you'll find a quiz for all abilities on the next page

The Friends' Quiz

As a tribute to Roger, a group of expert volunteers recently got together to compile a quiz about the arboretum's trees, history, and activities. We hope it will test your knowledge and inspire you to discover more about this wonderful place!

The group hope to make The Friends' Quiz a regular feature. One way of getting a fast track to the answers is to join a Westonbirt guided walk or take part in other activities offered at the arboretum. More details can be found on pages 8–11.

Please email your answers to magazine@fowa.org.uk and if correct, your name will be featured in the next edition!

We will publish the correct answers in the May edition of The Friends' eNews

Be aware that there may be more than one correct answer and the odd 'spoof option' could have been slipped in!

Easy

You may want to find these trees in the Old Arboretum and check their labels

- 1. The three Giant Redwoods near Down Gate are known as 'The Three Sisters'. When were the trees planted?**
 - a. 1854
 - b. 1861
 - c. 1863
- 2. Which of these trees at Westonbirt has the largest cone?**
 - a. Grand fir
 - b. Holford pine
 - c. Giant redwood
- 3. The oldest tree at Westonbirt belongs to which species?**
 - a. Common yew
 - b. English oak
 - c. Small-leaved lime
- 4. Westonbirt Hope is a?**
 - a. Magnolia
 - b. Rhododendron
 - c. Bookies favourite

Tricky

A bit more research may be needed

- 5. On marrying, Robert Holford's son George acquired a stepson, Stewart. What did he become?**
 - a. Equerry to the King
 - b. Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
 - c. Head of MI6
- 6. The Paperbark Maple just inside Down Gate was planted on this spot by?**
 - a. Robert Holford, mid 1800s
 - b. George Holford, early 1900s
 - c. Forestry Commission, 1950's
- 7. There are three 'Royal' hollies along Mitchell Drive. Which of these is female?**
 - a. Golden King
 - b. Golden Queen
 - c. Blue Prince
- 8. Which one of these is the odd one out?**
 - a. The celery topped pine
 - b. Holford pine
 - c. Norfolk pine

Trickier

Even more reading... you might find some answers in previous magazines!

- 9. In 2017, a shelter was built using Westonbirt wood, to celebrate the first four years of its Community Programme. How many shingles were made?**
 - a. 150
 - b. 373
 - c. 400
- 10. In winter, we have cattle grazing on the Downs at Westonbirt. Why?**
 - a. They reduce the mowing workload
 - b. They provide a natural fertiliser
 - c. Grazing encourages biodiversity.
- 11. In 2016 the Tree Team collected seed from southern Italy. Which of these species did they gather?**
 - a. Common yew
 - b. Fusilli birch
 - c. Small-leaved lime
- 12. Which Plant Hunter heard a story of hunting grizzly bears, only to discover the Giant Redwood?**
 - a. William Lobb
 - b. David Douglas
 - c. Ernest Wilson

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Twitter:

[@WestonbirtFOWA](https://twitter.com/WestonbirtFOWA)

LinkedIn:

[@friends-of-westonbirt-arboretum](https://www.linkedin.com/company/friends-of-westonbirt-arboretum)

Arboretum opening times

9am–5pm (last paid entry March – Nov 4.30pm;
Dec – Feb 4pm) closed Christmas Day

Please pre-book your visit for key dates in
Autumn (Sat 30 Sep – Sun 12 Nov)
Christmas (Sun 24 Dec – Mon 01 Jan)
at fowa.org.uk/pre-book

General Enquiries Monday–Friday

Tel: 0300 067 4890

westonbirt@forestryengland.uk

Learning Centre

The Learning and Participation Team offers a wide range of fun, hands-on programmes
Tel: 0300 067 4856

Mobility Scooter Reservations

Book in advance, collect from Welcome Building
forestryengland.uk/westonbirt

Volunteering

Tel: 0300 067 4853

volunteer.westonbirt@forestryengland.uk

Westonbirt Shop

Open every day, except Christmas Day and
Boxing Day

Tel: 01666 880 787

retail@fowa.org.uk

Restaurant & Pantry

Open 9.30am – 4pm

Smokehouse

Open 12pm – 3pm during weekends, bank
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Tel: 01666 880064

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