

Britain's tallest tree is 209ft Douglas fir

11 March 2009 Last Updated on 13 June 2009 Adam Owen

Telegraph

Britain's tallest tree has been named as a Douglas fir which stands at a dizzying 209ft in Argyll, Scotland. Arboriculturists measured the tree, known as the Stronardron Douglas fir, on 19 February as part of the Tall Trees Project 2009. They found it dwarfed Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square, which stands at 169ft (51.6m), climbing as high as 209.2ft (63.79m).

Chris Hunter, lead climber for Urban Forestry, who took part in measuring the tree, said: "I've been climbing trees for 17 years and have never tackled anything so tall, challenging and rewarding. "They were truly breathtaking trees set in breathtaking locations. Every one was worth the visit on its own."

The project involved measuring four of Britain's tallest trees. The Stronardron Douglas fir was closely followed by the Diana's Grove Grand Fir at Blair Castle, Fife, which was measured at 205.7ft (62.7m). Both trees beat the previous UK's tallest tree, the Dughall Mor Douglas fir at Inverness, which the team measured at 203.4ft (62.02m). Standing at 201.1ft (61.3m) the Hermitage Douglas fir at Dunkeld, Perthshire, came a close fourth.

Mark Tansley, from Sparsholt College in Hampshire, led the team of five. He said: "You need a huge amount of equipment. "You need a lot longer ropes than we would normally use in arboriculture. We've got ropes ranging from 100m to 200m. To get a line in we use a giant catapult to fire a bean bag with a thin line attached to it into the canopy of the tree, that we will then tie our climbing ropes to. That can be quite a challenge sometime – it took us about three hours to get the line into the tree yesterday but it's good fun. It's a great career path, it's quite an office to have – being 100ft up a tree."

He added: "Our work is about looking at the tree as a species and really trying to find the tree's limit – how tall will they grow and the volume of the trees – they're just absolutely incredible plants. When you're stood at the base of one of these trees it's absolutely mind-bogglingly large and there are loads of trees out there like this. It's great for people to get out and enjoy them even if it's just from ground level. They're fantastic resources and I don't think we appreciate them enough, I think we take them for granted sometimes."

Ancient tree topples over in the night

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One of Exmouth's oldest trees, a Lucombe Oak believed to be around 240 years old, is no more.

The 100 tonne tree, the centrepiece of Phear Park, which celebrates its own centenary this summer, toppled over in the night when there were only light winds blowing.

The so-called Champion Oak had been failing for some time and is thought to have died from the tree equivalent of old age. The trunk snapped off with most of the roots left in the ground.

EDDC's gardeners now have the task of deciding what to do with the massive trunk. The oak has a taller brother in Phear Park which is of a similar age, but is still healthy.

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PHEAR PARK LUCOMBE - A brief history

The worlds thickest Lucombe Oak with a diameter measuring 8'4"

Lucombe Oak is actually an accidental hybrid which was first grown in the 1760s by William Lucombe when he planted acorns of both the Turkey Oak and the Cork Oak in his nursery. He noticed one of his new trees kept its leaves in the winter and arose only where parents of both trees were found to grow.

Originally he called his newly discovered hybrid "Evergreen Turkey Oak", because it had inherited evergreen qualities from the Cork Oak. Mr Lucombe created thousands of hybrid trees by grafting shoots of the original naturally occurring tree onto Turkey Oaks.

Strictly speaking only offspring of the original Exeter hybrid should be called a Lucombe Oak, but in practice the name is often used for all hybrids between the Turkey Oak and the Cork Oak.

Mr. Lucombe is also famous for the fact that he felled the original hybrid in 1785. He decided to keep some of the timber to make planks for his own future coffin. The boards were stored under his bed for this purpose. However, he lived an exceptionally long life and became 102 years old, which meant that the coffin-planks decayed before Mr Lucombe did!

The champion Lucombe Oak with the largest diameter is in Phear Park, Exmouth and is one of several mature Lucombe Oaks to be found in this parkland which was donated to the people of Exmouth by the Phear family after the war. Its age is not known but it can't be more than 250 years old. It has a fungus, ganoderma resinaceum, which feeds on the heartwood of the tree. This means it has been gradually hollowing out. Hollow trees can survive for hundreds of years and often survive better than other trees because they are more flexible in high winds.

Crouch Oak

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Recently fungi has appeared on the Crouch Oak, Addlestone following the fire of 14 September 2007. The fungi has been identified, from the above photograph as *Stereum gausapatum* (Bleeding oak crust), a resupinate fungi that usually forms on the upper surface of the branch. It can be ochre brown to greyish in colour, is tough and leathery, thin fleshed and finely haired. The give away is when fresh it bleeds red when cut.



Commonly associated with oak it can be found on stumps, logs and fallen branches i.e. it is a saprophytic fungi that feeds on dead wood. However, the properties of wood can be changed by fire. One hypothesis is whilst the Crouch Oak is far from dead perhaps the outer surface of the bark has been dessicated by heat and thus enabled this fungi to colonise.

If you have any thoughts or comments it would be great to hear them.

Something to Think About ...

09 February 2009 Last Updated on 20 February 2009 Adam Owen

I would not normal post something like this under 'Latest news' but I think it serves to make a relevant point (editor)

GOD: St Francis, you know all about gardens and nature. What in the world is going on down there? What happened to the dandelions, violets, thistle and stuff I started eons ago? I had a perfect, no-maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long lasting blossoms attracts butterflies, honeybees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colours by now, but all I see are these green rectangles.

ST. FRANCIS: It's the tribes that settled there, Lord. The Suburbanites. They started calling your flowers weeds and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass.

GOD: Grass? But it's so boring - it's not colourful, it doesn't attract butterflies, birds or bees, only grubs and sod worms, and it's temperamental with temperature. Do these Suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently so, Lord. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They begin each spring by fertilizing grass and poisoning any other plant that crops up in the lawn.

GOD: The spring rains and warm weather probably makes the grass grow really fast. That must make the Suburbanites happy.

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently not, Lord. As soon as it grows a little, they cut it, sometimes twice a week.

GOD: They cut it? Do they bale it like hay?

ST. FRANCIS: Not exactly, Lord. Most of them rake it up and put it in bags.

GOD: They bag it? Why? Is it a cash crop? Do they sell it?

ST. FRANCIS: No, Sir, just the opposite. They pay to throw it away.

GOD: Now let me get this straight. They fertilize grass so it grow. When it does, they cut it off and to throw it away?

ST. FRANCIS: Yes, Sir.

GOD: These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we cut back on the rain and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work.

ST. FRANCIS: You aren't going to believe this, Lord. When the grass stops growing so fast, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it.

GOD: What nonsense. At least they kept some of the trees. That was a sheer stroke of genius, if I do say so myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in the summer. In the autumn they fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. Plus, as they rot, the leaves

form compost to enhance the soil. It's a natural circle of life.

ST. FRANCIS: You'd better sit down, Lord. The Suburbanites have drawn a new circle. As soon as the leaves fall, they rake them into great piles and pay to have them hauled away.

GOD: No. What do they do to protect the shrub and tree roots in the winter and to keep the soil moist and loose?

ST. FRANCIS: After throwing away the leaves, they go out and buy something they call mulch. They haul it home and spread it around in place of the leaves.

GOD: And where do they get this mulch?

ST. FRANCIS: They cut down trees and grind them up to make mulch.

GOD: Enough! I don't want to think about this any more. St. Catherine, you're in charge of the arts. What movie have you scheduled for us tonight?

ST. CATHERINE: "Dumb and Dumber", Lord. It's a real stupid movie about.....

GOD: Never mind, I think I just heard the whole story from St. Francis.

Green future for England's trees, woods and forests

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A landmark was reached on 15 December 2008 in securing a green future for England's trees, woods and forests. The Forestry Commission and Natural England have joined forces with more than 100 organisations, representing woodland owners, forestry businesses, conservation and local communities to create a new 5-year action plan for trees and woodlands in England. Read more about it here: [News release](#) (this page opens in a new window).

[England's trees, woods and forests delivery plan](#) (this page opens in a new window).

What Is Killing The Bees?

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The article below was submitted by a Tree Warden, Sally Fletcher, who is very interested in keeping bees. It makes interesting reading, especially as the honey bee and many species of bumble bee are endangered in this country as well as in other continents. A number of bee species are included in the UK Biodiversity Action Plans.

As we plant trees often we think of planting native trees such as oak, beech, hornbeam, ash, etc but we must consider the needs of nectar loving insects too. We have lost hundreds of acres of fruit orchards in this country and now we are seeing the impact this has had on certain insect species.

Please think about this when planting trees. Planting fruit trees such as Hawthorn, Blackthorn and the old fruits such as damson, greengage, apple and pear in woodlands, orchards, gardens and hedgerows can increase local interest and help to re-establish important food sources for nectar loving insects in the town and countryside.

Also I can think of nothing better than whilst taking a stroll through my local park, or across the farmers field, picking seasonal fruit to nibble as I pass by. Read on...

[NewsWithViews.com - November 24, 2008](#)

by [Dr. James Howenstine, MD.](#)

For several years I have been curious and concerned about reports from many parts of the world that bee colonies were vanishing or dying. Because of their ability to pollinate fruit and vegetables bees are of enormous importance to mankind. . Finally a breakthrough in understanding this problem has appeared on the scene. Whether this solves the whole bee problem or is simply one part of a more complex issue remains to be seen.

An article in Natural News by David Gutierrez on September 30, 2008 has linked the bee die-off in the Baden-Wurttemberg state of Germany to direct contact with the insecticide clothianidin found on corn seeds(German Research Center for Cultivated Plants). This pesticide had been applied to rapeseed and sweet cornseeds in the Rhine River Valley. Piles of dead bees were discovered at the entrance of hives in early=2 0May 2008. Clothianidin was found in the tissues of 99% of the dead bees. This is the time when corn seeding takes place

according to Walter Haefeker, president of the European Professional Beekeeping Association. The Julius Huehn Institute (federal agricultural research agency) stated "it can be unequivocally be concluded that a poisoning of the bees is due to a rub-off of the pesticide ingredient clothianidin from cornseeds." This chemical is estimated to have killed two-thirds of the bees in this state.

Clothianidin is widely used insecticide marketed in Europe under the brand name Poncho. This insecticide is a derivative of nicotine which acts systemically as a neurotoxin which poisons the nervous system of insects. After application to the seeds of plants clothianidin spreads throughout all plant tissues.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has classified clothianidin as "highly toxic" to honeybees. This chemical was approved for U.S. use in 2003 and German use in 2004.

A subsidiary of the chemical giant Bayer, Bayer Crop Science which manufactures clothianidin, blamed the honeybee deaths on incorrect application of the insecticide. They claimed that application of a fixative prior to spraying with clothianidin would have prevented the poison from spreading to the environment. They related that the fixative was not applied so the poison spread into the air.

Beekeepers and pesticide critics rejected this explanation and called for Germany to join France in banning this chemical and other nicotine based insecticides. Philipp Mimkes, spokesman for the Coalition Against Bayer Dangers, stated "We have been pointing out the risk of neonicotinoids for almost 10 years now. This proves without a doubt that that the chemicals can come into contact with bees and kill them. These pesticides shouldn't be on the market."

The German Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety placed a provisional ban on the seven neonicotinoid pesticides (Poncho, Elado, Antarc, Chinook, Faibell, Mesurol, Cruiser). until the manufactures had sufficient data to convince the government regulators they were safe. Six of these substances are made by Bayer while Mesurol is made by Syngenta.

The same charges that neonicotinoids from Bayer were killing bees were raised in France in 1999. In that nation Bayer's best selling pesticide imidacloprid was banned from use in sunflower seeds after being blamed for killing one third of the country's honeybees. In 2004 France extended the ban to sweet corn seeds. A new application for clothianidin was banned in France a few months ago.

In North Dakota beekeepers sued Bayer, alleging that imidacloprid caused the Colony Collapse Disorder CCD in that state in 1995. Within 12 months of use one third of that state's honeybees were dead.

Around the world honeybee stocks are declining. Obviously this could have an enormous impact on global food supplies. Approximately 80 % of world food crops are pollinated by honeybees. In the USA alone this accounts for 130 crops and \$15 billion of food each year.

Two million honeybee colonies have been lost in the USA in recent years. Massive dieoffs of bees have been reported from Europe. Taiwan discovered the disappearance of 10,000,000 bees in a two week period. U.K. Farming Minister Lord Rooker has advised that British honeybee population could disappear within the next 10 years.

Beekeepers have become quite alarmed by Colony Collapse Disorder CCD where bees simply disappear leaving empty hives. The neonicotinoid pesticides have been implicated as the possible cause for CCD. Because the pesticide spreads through all plant tissues bees could be getting exposed through the pollen of treated plants. One study actually concluded that neonicotinoids are likely to become concentrated in bee hives in high levels by the mechanism of transported pollen.

In low dosage research studies have shown that neonicotinoids produce symptoms that could explain CCD. Termites exposed to these doses of imidacloprid experience disorientation and immune system failure, while bees exposed to low doses of this chemical develop impairment of communication, homing, foraging, flight, olfactory discrimination, and learning.