

took us through the ancient park where 10-12 foot trees had been planted in 2011 to add younger growing stock to the ancient trees, which include oak, ash, lime and chestnut. The drought required a major watering exercise last year, so most of the trees are doing well. We passed the impressive new swimming pool and passing out of the park entered a compartment where planting of game covers was diverse. We entered Broadmeadow Wood, which has not been subject to management in recent years and where there is a varied and dense mix of both hard and softwood trees, including some old-oaks.

Discussion focussed on the potential and options for the future management of the wood, though currently constrained by the requirements of the shoot.

We moved into the Home Covert, a rather different type of woodland with some fine trees, especially oak and ash, and a less dense under and over-storey. In one compartment a heavy thin has been carried out in the expectation that a thicker under-storey will result, of value to the shoot. There is much forest potential in this wood, although again constrained by the needs of the shoot. Nevertheless, there is an obvious need to consider options for

management of some dense, closely planted conifers.

After lunch back at the estate headquarters, the final visit of the day was to Bratch Copse, which has several different compartments including some almost mature conifers, some sycamore coppice and two newly planted hardwood stands that were doing well despite tree shelters that were in tatters and the rather wide planting intervals. There is a major population of deer on the estate and vigorous culling is required to keep the population at an acceptable level.

At the end of the visit the view of a number of RFS members was that some additional interventions to enhance the growing timber could be carried out without detriment to the shoot and, indeed, if carefully managed could enhance the attractiveness of the woods to game birds. However this is a delicate matter requiring careful planning and coordination with the other interests involved.

John Docker

**Notts & Lincs
Revesby Estate**

1 June 2012

On Friday 1 June the Notts and Lincs Division attended the Revesby Estate in East Lincolnshire owned by the Wiggins-Davis family. This is a 3100ha estate with 200ha of woodland. Approximately 38 members and ten guests attended, and we were escorted by our host Peter Wiggins-Davis and Divisional Chairman Andy Reynolds – Forestry Consultant to the Revesby Estate.

We were shown a number of

compartments, but in an unusual style for our meetings, concentrating on small areas and specific questions rather than overviews of single compartments.

Firstly, we were shown an area of Scots pine that had been thinned five years previously at 30 years old, having had their thinning delayed. It was noted that the stems were rather tall and thin and there was an improvement of the crowns as a response to the thinning, and the intention was to develop large mature Scots pines. Sycamore and ash regeneration was evident where light level permitted, and the latter was enabled by leaving bramble in place, as a protection against fallow deer damage. Although the sporting elements of the estate were evident, there was no particular restriction of the forestry manoeuvres within the estate.

Fallow deer and muntjac were noted to be present. We were told that muntjac enjoyed eating bramble, which might be to the advantage to the woodland floor and some comments on the deer management by Malcolm Armstrong of the Lincolnshire Deer Group were made. There was encouragement for the establishment of a Nottinghamshire Deer Group.

The second area of interest was a new plantation of oak and ash of approx 2ha on the southern side of the woodland. A 2m high deer fence had recently been erected, the lower part being galvanised 1" netting and the top being a plastic net.

It was thought that the costs were approximately £3.31 per



Malcolm Armstrong of the Lincs Deer Group addressing Notts & Lincs members at Revesby.

linear metre for the netting with an 8-10 years expected life. Fine views over the fenland to Boston and The Wash were admired.

The plants had been inserted at 3m spacing to enable access by narrow machinery. Some discussion here about spacing, but it was put forward that healthy consistent growth of young trees can to some extent mediate the spacing issues.

We were reminded that spraying to keep the boundary fence bramble down was important to reduce unwanted access and dragging down. A varied weeding programme was undertaken, with alternate inter rows mowed annually and two weed control applications each year following bandwidth along each row. Short 600mm tubes were being used to facilitate weed control and vole protection, as the fence did the rest. The intention was to formative prune, depending on the vigour of the plants and their habit. It was noted that badgers were not a problem

with the fenced area, however other members had problems with fences and badgers on their planting areas.

The next stop was at a roadside felling where a minor but busy road took a dogleg through the woodland. 600 trees had been identified as offering potential risk to the road along a 1km stretch, and a clearance had been undertaken that had taken the tree line back to the original plantation edge giving a view of fine oaks.

In discussion with the local Forestry Commission agent, David White, a warning that a reasonable period for a felling licence should be undertaken and the Forestry Commission were now issuing minimum five year terms, which enabled a graduated felling programme rather than trying to achieve too much in three years. At this point it was made clear, counter to recent advice, that grant and felling licences could still be sent direct to the FC Market Rasen office, where the excellent rapid service



Hearing all about the Williamstrip Estate. (Photo: Anna Jones)

continues.

An area of previous wind damage was viewed next within a mature oak plantation. A large glade had been formed by the clearance and re-planted on similar lines to the re-planting identified in the second area viewed. However, this was within the woodland and the planting had been undertaken from the edge of the drip line from the crowns in even spacing. It was evident that light levels affected the first two or three rows of seedlings and much reduced growth in the tubes was seen there. However, those in the centre of the glade were becoming whips in good order. This was highlighted and pointed out that even within a restocking area 10% open ground is acceptable. It was noted that a wider boundary area would have been acceptable, and natural regeneration within that boundary would be counted as part of the stocking. The same issue had been covered during the Babworth visit a few years earlier.

Once again there was an alternative row programme for using a small flail mower.

A discussion regarding the provenance of the stock was made at that point and the importance of exploiting local provenance was stressed. Aveland trees, a local nursery provided the local provenance stock in this case.

We then moved on to the reservoir area of the woodland; this reservoir was set up in the early 1800s (and hand dug!). This was in the first rising land from The Fens eastward and its intention was as a water supply to Boston some 15 miles distant. The reservoir had been organised for



One of the large oaks at Revesby

carp fishing and had an active club and day-fishing facility provided. The reservoir covers an area of 14ha and is about 3m deep.

A 10 year-old planting of oak was viewed that had formed well and the tree shelters removed. Late bramble control, selective formative pruning and brushing were being undertaken.

Next a small coup of felled oak was seen, of approximately 120 years. The timber was of good quality with no shake. Some *Armillaria* (honey fungus) was evident underneath the bark but this did not detract from the quality of the timber.

Whilst standing on the dam, we were able to observe some fine mature Scots pine, *Arvicola* (monkey puzzle), and some large yew and it was agreed that these should generally be displayed as mature trees with the understorey and other less exotic items being

cleaned out to make a better display.

The meeting then retreated for the AGM to one of the yard barns. Notice was given of the two county firewood auctions in the autumn. During the AGM the Sir Joseph Nickerson Memorial Award for the best student in the area was presented to Andy Sharman qualifying from Riseholme College, University of Lincoln.

After the meeting we then ventured out again to observe large specimen oaks that were growing well with serious girths and crookedness. There had been a first thinning close by, of which the evidence was a large cord of 2-8" diameter timber intended for firewood.

One of the difficulties in this area was sooty bark disease (*Cryptosporium corticale*) in sycamore and this resulted in early felling of dead trees to provide a firewood source as well as the live specimens. No remedies were offered. It was noted that the black spores and dust from these dead trees can give nasty respiratory problems when felling and converting, so appropriate PPE would be required.

Finally, we were shown a first thinning at 25 years of a mixed deciduous wood on previously agricultural land. The stacked cordwood had been viewed earlier. The ash was of a very poor form due, it was thought, to exposure, late frost or bad moth. The brush from the thinnings was windrowed to facilitate access for the shoot and to help build up a woodland floor, which was elegant with drifts of *Silene*

(campions) along the woodland floor and the hope was expressed of further woodland floor species being established in the future.

It was accepted that there would be difficulties with the first rotation on previously agricultural land where the organic matter and soil life levels can be alarmingly low. Discussions were held about advancing this process, the use of treated sewage was mentioned but the practicalities of application at this stage seemed unattractive. There was reasonable hope for the future as there were some good form stems helped by previous pruning works.

At this point the meeting ended. Simon Roughton gave a vote of thanks to Peter Wiggins-Davis and Andy Reynolds and the party dispersed.

Edward Compton

NW Midlands Rudge Estate

14 June 2012

Less than 10 miles to the west of Wolverhampton, the south-eastern corner of Shropshire is marked by an eight-mile long sandstone ridge running south from Albrighton above the River Worle. The Rudge Estate overlooks a tributary, the Nun Brook, and The Walls camp at Chesterton, and consists basically of enclosed fields of around 8ha, predominantly arable but with a scattering of dedicated woods, most planted just before or during World War II, on the western flank 200 feet above the brook. The seventh series OS map, surveyed in 1949, names much of this area Rudge Heath, but this has been dropped from more recent editions.



Richard Wills (right) outlining the history of Coronation Plantation.

A couple of dozen members visited the estate at the invitation of the owner, Mr Ian Dick, who was engaged elsewhere on Olympics preparations. Committee member Richard Wills from the neighbouring Grange Farm led the visit, accompanied by his wife Pam and their son Ian, who transported us by tractor and covered trailer between five of the woods.

The 7ha Coronation Plantation was planted 1936/7 on farmland with oak, European larch and Scots pine, surrounded by rabbit-proof fencing. It now consists almost entirely of oak, which was last thinned five years ago. It was

agreed to have great potential but tightness in the crown could be ameliorated by thinning away from marked best trees, aiming for a final crop at 60-70 trees to the acre. Thinning would also improve the cover for pheasants. Some 25 years ago crosscut staves from the woodyard were delivered by pony and trap to Albrighton station, but today the most likely market for thinnings is firewood, boosted by the increasing popularity of wood-burning stoves. There was no evidence of squirrel damage, many hundreds having been shot until a few years ago.

Gravel Pit (Sha) was the sole