



REFLECTIONS ON THE

CENTENARY NATIONAL STUDY TOUR

FEATURE

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Recently, somebody told me that they didn't consider Study Tours to be as worthwhile, in terms of acquiring professional knowledge, as conferences. If ever there was an occasion to challenge that point of view, it was the Institute's Centenary National Study Tour, the host and venue for which was The Crown Estate at Windsor.



King Offa's Oak, the oldest oak tree in Windsor Great Park (c.710)



Group shot in front of The Long Walk at Windsor Castle



Species selection for resilience and climate change

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Held over two days in October, and blessed with the sort of weather I'm not sure whether be grateful for or worry about, the tour took in such a wide range of topics that on reflection felt a bit like a UKFS primer – landscape, tick, people, tick, water, tick. Which perhaps is only right, this being the Institute's Centenary Study Tour, with the many that have come before it being based in all four corners of the UK and focused on a huge variety of topics.

The first tour I attended was in 1988, based in the Chilterns, in the days when the Institute's 'Part II' exam consisted of a management plan for a woodland in the Study Tour area. I suppose it guaranteed a good audience of aspiring Chartered Foresters, even if it was held over a weekend. Since then, I've been fortunate enough to attend tours from Aberdeenshire to The National Forest – indeed, I've been involved in organising a few and can confidently say that I have learnt a huge amount at each one.

Windsor was no different, kicking off at The York Club in the Great Park, where our Vice President Dr Gary Kerr FICFor welcomed us and introduced our lead host, the Crown Estate's Chief Forester Richard Everett and his colleagues, and the event sponsors, Cheviot Trees. Richard gave us an overview of The Crown Estate and its land holdings at Windsor (all 6,600 ha of it), before we all got on the coach and spent the first day looking at various sites around the park. Our first stop was enlivened by Ted Green MBE, who has done so much to raise awareness of the importance of ancient trees, and where better to do that at Windsor, which contains one of the largest collections in Northern Europe. Offa's Oak, at more than 1,300 years old, may be the oldest oak in the UK. What was fascinating was to turn from



Richard Everett, Chief Forester at The Crown Estate, welcomes delegates at the York Club

these historic landscapes to some of the more open parts of the park where the discussion about woodland creation prompted talk of soil nutrients, mycorrhizal associations and choice of provenance in a changing climate.

Day two saw a change of scene, to the primarily conifer woodland of Swinley Forest, a few miles to the south-west of Windsor Great Park. Here the talk focused on managing a productive woodland whilst balancing that with wetland habitat restoration, the increasing threat of wildfire, and the paucity of softwood timber markets in this part of the UK, amongst other issues. A presentation by Forestry Commission staff about the threat from *Ips typographus*, and a visit to a species trial led by Chris Reynolds of Forest Research, wrapped up a fascinating day.

Who said you don't learn much on a National Study Tour?



Jack Coombes speaking at Swinley Forest on Day Two



Ted Green MBE imparting his wisdom



The delegates gather for another informative talk