

Third Oak Open Day in the Netherlands and Belgium

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On September 27 and 28, 1997, some 25 International Oak Society members and guests attended the Third Annual Oak Open Day held this time in the Netherlands and Belgium.

These two fascinating days started with a meeting at Arboretum Trompenburg, Rotterdam, where the three organizers, J.R.P. van Hoey Smith, Jo Bömer, and Geerts Fortgens, welcomed the guests with tea and coffee. Members came from England, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg and, of course, from the Netherlands. This was the right time to get in touch with old friends and make new ones.

Dick van Hoey Smith led the tour through Arboretum

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Jo and Maarten Bömer with Quercus cerris 'Variegata' (left) and some other oaks in propagation at their nursery in Zundert, Netherlands

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Trompenburg, which was fascinating. Dick served as President for the International Dendrology Society until spring 1997, and we already knew about his immense knowledge of trees and their stories. We had the opportunity to see not only this splendid collection in the arboretum, but also the collection of the nearby gardens. Around 200 different oaks are growing here, some of them planted by Dick back in 1939! It is always astonishing to see some "known-to-be-tender" oaks here in the Netherlands. Besides *Quercus coccifera*, there are several others like *Q. semecarpifolia*, *Q. glauca* and *Q. rysophylla* which do well here, but are a rare sight elsewhere in central Europe. (For more information about Arboretum Trompenburg see Journal #1: 4-10.)

During a break with coffee and cakes, a meeting was held to discuss problems with oak cultivars. Piers Trehane is preparing a checklist with all valid oak cultivar names. He pointed out that there will be problems with these names if there is no

written record in botanical or horticultural journals, or if they are not mentioned in catalogues with descriptions.

The tour of the Arboretum took several hours, but if one thinks the "Quercologists" had enough, one would have been mistaken. In the evening there was a superb dinner at Hotel Tivoli in Oudenbosch, a small town some 50 km south of Rotterdam. However, before dinner, the Oudenbosch Park had to be inspected. The city council planted an arboretum with different sections, includ-



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Quercus coccifera foliage detail

Guy Sternberg viewing the great *Quercus coccifera* planted on the stone wall at Arboretum Trompenburg, Rotterdam, Netherlands.

ing a fine oak section. And finally, nearly in the dark, we were able to find a real treasure: a variegated *Quercus glandulifera*!

The next day started with a tour around M.M. Bömer Nurseries in Zundert, near the Belgian border. Thick mist was replaced by bright sunshine and after a welcome coffee, Jo, Maarten, Chantel and David led us through the nursery. All of us were deeply impressed by the huge collection of oaks and other fine trees. Besides *Quercus* species, a huge assortment of *Fagus*, *Castanea* and *Aesculus* are being propagated. We couldn't see all the oaks here, but did get an impression of what these oak-loving nurserymen had created.

You will need at least two days to see the entire nursery. New oak cultivars, such as the deeply lobed *Quercus robur* 'Irtha', and some dwarf forms of *Quercus robur*, *Quercus palustris* and *Quercus rubra* were particularly interesting. Tender oaks are cultivated inside the greenhouse. We visited the propagation house as well, where the Bömers have already started to graft oaks. Especially beautiful is *Quercus dentata* 'Pinnatifida', which they have in large quantities.

From Zindert we continued to Hemelrijk, the country house and park of the De Belder family. Hemelrijk (which means "Kingdom of Heaven") is located in Belgium, and some of the members didn't even notice that we crossed the boundary of the two countries. We were welcomed by the De Belder family at this beautiful setting with home-cooked quiche and wine, whose special flavor

came from added Calamintha leaves. After lunch we toured the beautiful estate. A good collection of oaks is planted here. The oaks are of special interest because they germinated from seed collected in the wild by the De Belders, and also from the original trees of several oak cultivars, such as *Quercus dentata* 'Carl Ferris Miller' and 'Sir Harold Hillier'. Both have bright autumn color and good hardiness and were collected in South Korea in 1976.

Again, this afternoon was brilliant. When the members came together to say goodbye, sitting in the afternoon sun in front of the old barn at Hemelrijk, it was a pity to have to leave the party that early. Thanks to the organizers of this Third Oak Open Day, Jo Bömer, Dick van Hoey Smith, and Geert Fortgens, and to the De Belder family for their warm welcome.

The Fourth Annual Oak Open Day will be held in Germany on September 26-27, 1998. Plans are to visit Kassel with the famous parks, "Karlsaue" and "Wilhelmshöhe," where many of the old cultivars of *Quercus robur* and *Quercus petraea* have been growing together for more than one hundred years, and to visit the nursery of D. Döring, which has an assortment of more than 130 different oaks, including his own selections. European members received invitations from Eike Jablonski, but all International Oak Society members are welcome. If you live outside Europe and would like to attend the meeting, please contact Mr. E. Jablonski directly at 71, route de Gilsdorf, L-9234 Diekirch, Luxembourg or e-mail to: eike.jablonski@ci.educ.lu