

TRAVELS IN CHINA

Roy Lancaster, OBE VMH

Roy Lancaster is a well-known freelance writer, lecturer, broadcaster and author of at least eight books. He has travelled extensively in China and his beautifully illustrated talk, "*Plants of China*", was, without doubt, one of the highlights of the Conference, once again demonstrating both his comprehensive knowledge of the subject and the many benefits of his work as a collector over the years.

One of his most breathtaking slides was that of the *Quercus monimotricha*, flowering in his own garden just as it does on the scree outside Jermyn's House, with an explosion of soft golden yellow catkins in June. Roy introduced this oak in 1986, having collected it above Lijiang in the north western province of Yunnan. In October 1981, Roy collected the evergreen *Quercus longispica* from the Pi Valley, a river in Western Sichuan. Like the former, this is an evergreen.

On the Monday following the Conference Roy helped conduct a group of delegates around some of the national collection of oaks in the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens and Arboretum, including the champion *Q.*

rysophylla introduced by Sir Harold Hillier from Mexico in 1978, at which time Roy had already been the Curator for some eight years. Also seen were more recent introductions from Mexico collected by Allen Coombes.

As Roy reached *Quercus balloot*, he asked who had collected it, and Shaun Haddock was on hand to own up!

There could have been no better illustration of the generosity with which Roy always shares with those around him, both his love of plants and the credit for ensuring that they are conserved for all of us to enjoy.

