

The Clinton Baker Pinetum at Bayfordbury

Open day 9th May in aid of Red Cross

It's a bit of a mouthful and a lot of people don't even know what a Pinetum is. I had the same problem until I got involved. A Pinetum is a collection of conifers as opposed to an Arboretum, which include deciduous trees, such as oaks and ash and sycamore. To begin with, you have to remember that all pines are conifers, but that not all conifers are pines. Conifers include Pines, Firs and Larches and Junipers amongst others.

This Pinetum is at the University's Bayfordbury Campus near Hertford. The whole estate was bought by the Baker family in 1767 and they gave their name to the Bakers Arms in Bayford, a village nearby.



From the start, they were particularly interested in conifers and planted a group of 'Firs' as soon as they arrived. Being a seafaring family, there were many opportunities to collect exotic species. The major planting took place in 1837, the year Queen Victoria came to the throne. This was a more formal project and they had the help of a famous landscape gardener of the day, one John Claudius Loudon. A further sixty species were added in 1903.

The estate was sold after the War to the John Innes Horticulture Institute. The next owners were Herts. County Council and then the University of Hertfordshire took it over. In 1996, Dr. Edward Eastwood volunteered to restore the Pinetum to its former glory – with a little help from his friends. When he started, it was a wilderness, but we have made excellent progress. By

that time, there were only forty-two different species left. There are now one hundred and sixty species. All the work has been done almost entirely by volunteers.

The site is just over 10 acres and is on a sloping site facing South West. When there is enough rain, there is a stream at the foot of the slope. As you come in you will see a Dawn Redwood. This a 'new' species, discovered in China in the Forties. The great advantage is that although it loses its leaves in the winter, the needles just disappear within days. We liked it so much, we bought one for ourselves and in fifty or sixty years, it will be seventy feet high!



There is an Information hut on your right, but if you walk forward, you will see a huge Giant Redwood. This used to be the tallest tree in the Pinetum but, alas! a lightning strike took off the top thirty feet leaving a stark spike pointing to the sky. Happily we have more Redwoods a bit further along the lower Path.

Sometimes as we clear the bramble and bracken, we make a delightful discovery. In February whatever the weather, we have "living snow" for about four weeks as drifts of snowdrops appear and nod gently in the breeze.

Everybody knows what "Pine Trees" look like. They are like a child's drawing of a Christmas tree, but as you stroll through the Pinetum, you can see what a diverse lot these Conifers are. There are funny little things that look a bit like green cushions and never get any higher than a foot or so. There are various types of cedar and the mighty Ponderosa Pines tower above you and their pine needles are arranged in bundles that look like large bottlebrushes. Walk a little further and you come to the

larches – that is a group of deciduous conifers not related to the Dawn Redwoods. There are pines and spruces and firs. There are conifers that do not even have cones. These are yews. It's all in the embryology.

And then just when you think you have seen them all, you spot a Monkey Puzzle, which is different again with hard spiky leaves.

But you do not have to believe me; you can come and see for yourself. We are having an Open Day in conjunction with the Red Cross on Sunday 9th. May 2010 in the afternoon from 2 until 5pm. Not only will you be able to have an interesting walk and go on a guided tour of the Pinetum, you will be able to visit the University's Observatory.

For more details contact the Red Cross in Hertford on 0844 412830 or me, Tom Davidson on 01438 718672.

May

We celebrate the 'Merrie Month of May' as the old jingle has it.

Robert Browning wrote "*God's in his heaven, and all's right with the world*". He wrote that for April but it could just as well apply to May:

*The tall maypole shakes its coloured ribbons
Morris men dance and jingle their bells
Lambs gambol, foals kick up their heels
England's green and pleasant land
How blessed we are.*

Easter came and we received new life. What can we give in return?

Christina Rossetti wrote "*If I were a shepherd, I would give a lamb*". The wise men, travellers from afar gave their gold, frankincense and myrrh.

We are poor in spirit, abject in generosity, what indeed can we give?

On the lake of Gennesserat fishermen gave their catch; the disciples, blessed by the Holy Spirit, poured out their thanks.

The great harvest hymn tells us "*All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above, then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord, for all his love*".

And here lies the answer – we give our love.

Norah Anderson

Genesis and politicians

A surgeon, an architect and a politician were arguing as to whose profession was the oldest.

Said the surgeon: "Eve was made from Adam's rib, and that surely was a surgical operation."

"Maybe," said the architect, "but prior to that, order was created out of chaos, and that was an architectural job."

"But you forget," interrupted the politician, "somebody had created the chaos first!"



"It was the best we could do whilst the churchbells are being replaced – and O Sole Mio is quite a nice tune."