

Diary of Richard Jinks, 23rd March 2006

Visit to Brechfa Forest Garden with Owen Thurgate and Ed Sanders (Llanymddyfri FD); Nick Fielding, and Steve Howells (TSU Talybont); and David Rice (Woodland Heritage).

1. The objective of this visit was to discuss the recently prepared strategic plan and proposals for work by Llanymddyfri FD in the Forest Garden at Brechfa. This was an opportune time to visit as FR are already engaged in discussions with local FE on the future development of the other two major forest gardens at Kilmun and Bedgebury.
2. Detailed plans have been prepared for each plot, and the site visit confirmed that proposed actions are appropriate and in some cases urgently need to be acted on. The detailed summary of each plot's history will be particularly useful in helping assess the value of the collection (see below).
3. Species growing well include firs (*Abies* sp.), spruces, (*Picea* sp.), and coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*). Pines generally are poor, though *Pinus peuce* is the exception; also some surprisingly good Bishop pine (*P. muricata*) growing in a sheltered valley. The Wellingtonia plot seems to be in terminal decline for inexplicable reasons. There is an interesting plot of *Picea koyamae* that warrants further investigation in terms of origin and purity. Brechfa seems particularly suitable for growing species from the humid oceanic temperate forests of the world.
4. Recent work on paths, together with the installation of new signs and new plantings (both funded by Woodland Heritage), all help create a favourable image of active management.
5. The spread of stransvaesia (*Photinia davidiana*) is impressive, and somewhat alarming; plans are underway for its elimination.
6. Brechfa is an important collection of trees which fits well with the other significant collections for which the FC is custodian. There are many opportunities for planting new species, particularly ones that are endangered in the wild, and also opportunities for education, interpretation, as well as public display.

Agreed action points

1. RJ will assess and report on the overall scientific value of the collection at Brechfa in terms of its composition (focus, representation and numbers of genera and species), conservation significance (numbers of rare and endangered species), and accuracy of identification (verification).
2. RJ will revisit in the summer to verify botanical identification.
3. NF will arrange to have plot locations mapped using GPS for inclusion on GIS.
4. Although only three mensuration plots remain at Brechfa, FR wishes where possible to maintain continuity of assessment in former sample plots. NF will coordinate appropriate action between FR and FE.
5. RJ will produce a desire-list of species for future planting that will be based on both reinforcing strengths of the existing collection, and on opportunities to widen its composition with species from under represented genera or regions of the world, or with potential as timber species. FR could help with sourcing and propagating suitable species in the future.
6. NF will liaise with Bill Mason about planting stock available for immediate planting.