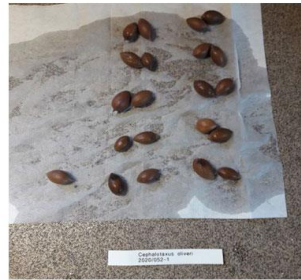


December 2020

..... Our second month of the apprenticeship and, again, another brilliantly diverse month. Ella and I were lucky to have another morning working with Emma in the nursery, sowing seeds of *Cephalotaxus oliveri*. This was a particular privilege as this is one of Bedgebury's very rare specimens, the only one in the UK, if not the world, outside of its native habitat.

Using seeds from our plant we removed the fleshy outer shell to expose the seed which we then washed. Filling air pots with a peat mixture up to about an inch from the rim, we placed the seeds on top in a way some of us thought resembled a Dundee cake! The seeds were covered in a fine bark and the pots were placed in the nursery's warm poly tunnel. We also put some in stratification; this is where we try to simulate the natural conditions that the seed would experience before germination can occur. In the case of the *oliveri* we had to simulate the seed going through a cold winter. To do this the seeds were placed in a special temperature-controlled fridge. We look forward to updating you with their progress!



This month I had a couple of days shadowing Julian. The week started supporting some contractors 'banking'. They were felling and 'making safe' various trees in a section of forest near Park Lane. A beautiful giant oak had to be climbed to remove a few dangerous limbs with a chainsaw. This will not only enable the tree to survive longer but will also keep the public safe from any falling branches.



Julian felled some chestnut which he cut into logs to teach me various forestry skills, including peeling (stripping the bark off) and cleaving (splitting the log length-ways). These logs will be used for various works around the Pinetum and Julian and I used some to edge a bridge at the top of Hill's Avenue.



We then went on to repair a gap in the hedge on Keepers' Track. We planted a mix of young hedge plants to continue the already established hedge. Using stock fencing we created a barrier to discourage animals from disrupting the growth of the new plants.

We also added a new hook post to the gate at the end of Lady Mildred's Carriageway with some repositioned directional signage which is hopefully more visible now.

Cat, Dan and Harry, armed with their chainsaws, clear felled some willow and birch near the bridge at the main entrance. This was to create a new site for planting. This was a good opportunity for me to consolidate my knowledge and experience of using the chipper and tractor. As the terrain was uneven, we had to use our tracked woodchipper to enable us to move about the site safely and efficiently.

Christmas week arrived and for the first two days Ella and I were 'banksmen' for an outside contractor (who had a very impressive tractor and chipper!) who was clearing a harvested site in the forest close to Hill's Avenue. This included getting the site safe for the public and ensuring all access points were clearly signed to warn the public of the forestry work



being undertaken. Diversion signs were put out where routes had to be closed and we placed ourselves at the main access points to ensure no one entered the area into harm's way.

Although the weather was quite horrible it was interesting to watch this machine do its work and to appreciate the care the contractor took, leaving the site beautifully tidy. My photo doesn't do the work justice but if you had walked past the area you would have seen the horizontal stripes he finished off with.

There will be some larger trees to fell in this area in the New Year with the long-term aim to extend Hill's Avenue.

Our last day before the Christmas break was used to give the yard a good tidy, making sure all the vehicles had their PUWER (Provision & Use of Work Equipment Regulations) checks completed and ready for our return in the New Year.

I am looking forward to seeing what new and exciting experiences 2021 will bring us. Thank you for taking the time to read our blogs; we look forward to sharing our next adventures with you.

Sarah