October 2017 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Great Storm of 1987. That act of nature changed Bedgebury’s landscape forever and still influences our planning today. Follow this trail to discover how.

Where to start the trail
1. As you enter the Pinetum from the car park, turn left at the lake and walk away from the Visitor Centre. Follow the road round to the gate. Go through the gate. From the bench look across the lake to the Visitor Centre.

Why are most of the trees behind the Visitor Centre the same height?
They are all 30 years old! The Great Storm blew over nearly all the trees on that slope. There is a silver lining though: the chestnut regrowth is now the right age for the Visitor Centre’s woodchip boiler.

2. Look at the little spruce to the left of the path after the zig zag and about 40 metres before the crossroads. This is a Farrer’s spruce *Picea farreri* and it has wonderful purple cones in spring.

The 1987 storm blew over the only Farrer’s spruce in the UK. Why was this a blessing?
It made people produce new specimens of this endangered species, by grafting material from the fallen tree. Bedgebury nurtured the youngster in front of you and reared the replacement for the original tree at Exbury Gardens.

3. In Dallimore Valley, head towards the first ‘room’ of young trees in cages, on the left-hand side of the path just past the ‘Conifers in crisis’ board.

The 1987 storm made us mix our trees up.
Our planting schemes used to place trees of the same type together. However, this increased the risk of losing all the trees in one big blow or to a disease outbreak. Now we plant trees from the same geographical areas together, not the same species.

4. Look to the left of the path just before you turn right into the path that runs between the two lakes.

The storm also taught us where best to plant some trees.
We learnt lessons from the Great Storm when we planted the slope between the path and Reflection Lake. We knew from 1987 that this area gets battered by south westerly winds. When we planted this ex-agricultural land we included big Norway spruces (more commonly used as Christmas trees) to act as a windbreak to protect the rest of the trees.

5. Follow the path to the right between the two lakes and then carry on to cross the Pointy Bridge. After the bridge turn right and follow the path. Pause at the bottom of the Sunken Track.

High winds are one of the biggest hazards in tree collections.
Falling trees and debris kill people, although fortunately ‘87’s Great Storm was mostly overnight. We shut Bedgebury if the wind reaches a certain speed. It’s a big decision to make, but it keeps visitors and staff safe.

6. Go up the Sunken Track and turn left into Dove Ridge. Find the fallen tree along Dove Ridge near the Gruffalo.

The well-loved feature in front of you was a victim of the 1987 storm.
Generations of children have played on this fallen tree since it crashed to the ground, thirty years ago. Sometimes, where it’s safe, we leave fallen timber as a play feature and as a habitat for wildlife.

7. Find the multi-stemmed sequoia on the left-hand side of Dove Ridge, 100m after the Gruffalo, opposite a row of conifers perpendicular to the path. One of the three trunks has been reduced so you can only see two clearly now.

Can you spot the original stump from which these three trunks are growing?
These redwoods re-grew after the original tree fell in very high wind speeds along this ridge in 1987. Oddly, not all the redwoods along this path suffered similar fates – the ones behind you somehow survived the storm. We don’t know why!

8. Turn right at the Gruffalo’s Child crossroads to head back towards the Visitor Centre. Turn right at the end and walk towards the Boardwalk.

The US Forest Service took pity on us after the Great Storm.
We’d lost so many redwoods at Bedgebury that they sent us some young replacements. You can see these in front of you, planted on either side of the Boardwalk. In time, these kind gifts will grow to form an impressive ‘tunnel’ of trees similar to the established trees further into the Boardwalk.

We hope you enjoyed our “Great Storm” walking trail. Why not return to the Visitor Centre now and enjoy a hot drink and a slice of cake in the Bedgebury Cafe!