

## **Edington Gardening Club talk by Graham Anstey on the “Wonders of Westonbirt”**

Graham gave us a very informative talk about National Arboretum at Westonbirt covering everything from its origins to the future plans for the site.

The origins of the arboretum can be attributed to the needs of affluent Victorian Londoners having a need for fresh water and one of the providers of this resource, Robert Holford, having the desire to establish one of the largest mansions in the country at the time. The history of the arboretum has been shaped from a legacy of Victorian fashions, a wealthy family, globe-trotting and death-defying plant hunters and landscape design. What started as an arboretum in which to house specimens collected from around the world is now a world class tree collection of over 2500 different types which receives more than 350,000 visits a year.

In the following years the land was passed to the government in lieu of death duties and the estate is now technically looked after by the Environment Secretary but this responsibility has been passed to the Forestry Commission who employ an army of 260 volunteers to assist their staff in maintaining the estate.

Recently there have been major improvements to the car parking areas to allow more of the grounds to become natural grassland again and the future plans include a tree top walkway to provide visitors with a new experience at height.

Our next talk will be on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November at 7.30pm in Edington Parish Hall when Mike Burgess will be giving a talk entitled “Find room for fruit”, visitors always welcome.