



Westgate Woods: RFS members explore an interesting wooded archway.



Westgate Woods: felling of trees affected by ash dieback.

The day's final stop, Westgate Wood, was the first of the town's woodlands to fall under the management of the Trust, after being planted by the Woodland Trust in 1999, and now leased to the Boston Woods Trust for a peppercorn rent. It comprises mixed native broadleaves, including oak, ash and birch, though the ash is suffering from ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) and is being felled and sold as firewood. Other species include aspen, alder and willow; the last of which performs poorly on drained fen, as well as field maple, which has suffered particularly from the attentions of grey squirrels. Grey squirrels have also affected the Trust's oaks. The day's delegates suggested that coppicing might be a management option for the woods' understoreys, where hazel is present, and if interested community coppice groups could be established and maintained.

Westgate Woods complement the Sir Joseph Banks Country Park, named after the eminent Lincolnshire-raised naturalist, which comprises wood pasture and semi-natural garden. The aim for this area is to encourage a greater variety of wildlife and plant species, with owls encouraged to occupy a purpose-built tower in the open land, and dormice a future coloniser of the woods.

Like all of the Trust's woods, Westgate features a variety of carved statues and benches. So it was appropriate that the Division's gift, like all of its gifts to its hosts, was a wooden vase specially commissioned from, and carved by Joey Richardson, a high profile Lincolnshire-based wood turner.

### Wednesday 15 May, Welbeck Estate, Nottinghamshire

In forestry terms, Welbeck has always been a name to conjure with. It is one of Britain's great historic country estates and the RFS has been lucky enough to visit it on every occasion that the AST has been held within the Notts & Lincs Division. Historically the home of the Dukes of Portland (who, together with three neighbouring ducal estates gave the name 'The Dukeries' to this corner of Nottinghamshire), the estate is now managed by the Welbeck Estates Company Ltd.

We were welcomed on an overcast morning by the Welbeck team, led by the Property and Rural Estates Director, Nigel Porter and the Estate Manager, Jack Healy. They gave us a fascinating insight into the workings of this extensive and very forward-thinking business and introduced the Head of Grounds and Forestry, Duncan Scroggs and Richard Seale the Forestry Foreman, before giving a more specific overview of the forestry operations on the estate.