



Chairman's Comments

Dear Members,

At last spring is here- for the moment- anyway. We look forward to **Andrew Allott's lecture at St Peter's Church Hall, Monkmoor**, in April. To find this, go past our current lecture hall along Abbey Foregate and turn left at the traffic lights onto Monkmoor Road, go up this for nearly a mile, pass over the bridge over the Inner Bypass, and just past it on the left is the white church of St Peter's. There is parking there for 10 cars but otherwise please park respectfully in the road opposite and walk over the road- careful here!! Details of Andrew's talk are below.

Secondly we look forward to the Pitchford visit on **Saturday 12th May**- Two things here; firstly it is a morning visit at **10.30 am**. Secondly due to a restriction on numbers we are going to have to make a list of those attending- I don't like doing this but we have no choice at this time- **Please contact Andy Gordon (01743 357252) or email andyg.gordon@me.com to sign up for the visit. There are only 20 places, so it will be first come first served.** The visit is half price for members at £10, we are subsidising the visit from funds. This email is being posted to those members not receiving it by email two days early to give all members an equal chance!

Finally we welcome Mr & Mrs Hughes from Shrewsbury as new members and look forward to meeting them at one of our talks or visits.

Our last talk by Simon Lloyd, Chief Executive of the Royal Forestry Society (Tuesday, 13th March 2018)

Simon came from Oxford for the evening especially for us. Then we found out that his family had long-standing connections with Shrewsbury and that he, himself, was actually a Freeman of the Borough ! What a surprise. When I contacted the RFS to find a speaker for us, no wonder Simon jumped at the opportunity to return to his roots.

Simon talked to us about the work done by his organisation, the Royal Forestry Society, and he had prepared a fascinating talk covering a whole range of tree and woodland related topics, again, especially for us.

He showed us many excellent slides to illustrate what he had to say and we were amazed to learn that 42% of the woodlands in England are either unmanaged or undermanaged. This represents 60 – 100 million tonnes of timber ready to be marketed yet not being felled for use. Britain is the 2nd largest net importer of wood, China being the first, and if our woodlands were better managed, much of these imports could be reduced by using our own timber supplies.

So this is why the RFS exists: to encourage the “wise management of woods and trees” and to “foster an understanding of the value of sound and sustainable woodland management”. In effect, it is an educational charity, the first such charity to be founded and was established in 1882 as the English Arboriculture Association.

In 1905 the charity gained royal patronage but its present title, the Royal Forestry Society, came much more recently.

As an educational charity, it owns three woodlands: the Charles Ackers Redwood Grove near Welshpool; Battram Wood, a part of the National Forest in Leicestershire; and Hockeridge and Pancake Wood in the Chilterns, and it manages these woods according to its aims to promote and display good woodland management.

Intervention to improve a wood's condition may be through the better selection of species, through knowing what to do if species are attacked by pests and pathogens and by changing the age structure of the woodland. Through these means, a healthier and more resilient wood may be created. Broadleaved woodlands in Britain mainly consists of five species: Oak (32%), Ash (14%), Beech (14%), Sycamore (11%) and Birch (6%). There are many more native species that could be used and Simon also suggested that we introduce a number of non-natives into our woodlands. In conifer woodlands, six species seem to dominate: Scots Pine (22%), Corsican Pine (12%), Sitka Spruce (21%), Norway Spruce (10%), Larch (15%) and Douglas Fir (9%). Again, there are many more species that could be used and Simon suggested that woodland owners attempt to diversify much more in their woodlands. "Think of alternative species to avoid risk", he said and he added that we should consider the provenance more of the species we plant. This is something we do in the Severn Tree Trust but it is not always easy to obtain trees of local provenance. When I bought a thousand hazels for a hedge we planted a couple of years ago, I was told that they came from Hungary ! I asked for trees of local provenance and was told that the demand for hazel was so high that they just couldn't grow enough. I won't say which nursery it was that I spoke to.

Simon told us that the RFS is doing what it can to educate tree growers in planting to avoid all the current pests and diseases that are coming into the country. He said that there is very strong evidence that pathogens are carried on people's boots and on tools that have not been disinfected between jobs. Increasing resilience is also, he told us, a means of combating climate change and he referred to a Forestry Commission website (www.forestry.gov.uk/esc) that gives a list of species able to survive an increase in temperature by 2 degrees Centigrade. "Genomics" he said was being used in an attempt to tackle the current scourge of ash die-back. By discovering which part of the genetic make-up of an ash species was responsible for creating a susceptibility to the disease, geneticists have found that the American Ash and the Manna Ash appear to be disease tolerant. In fact, if I read this correctly, the responsible strands of DNA in *Fraxinus excelsior* could be changed so that seed of this common ash species did not contain the DNA susceptible to ash die-back.

It seems that the market for timber is very strong at the moment and high prices are being quoted for timber from different parts of a tree. We were told that the base of a tree just above the roots (known as the "hurling") would currently fetch £220 per cubic metre and the mid-trunk, £250 per cubic metre. Encouraging better maintenance of woods can also help a rural economy and provide more jobs but all this depends upon nurturing the skills required and the sharing of knowledge. The RFS recently produced a list of skills required in the woodland and timber industry to see where the gaps were. They found gaps in such as things even as how to plant a tree and how to fell a large tree without it splitting. To this end, the RFS has, for many years, run nationally provided Certificate in Arboriculture courses. It organises study tours and mentors new woodland managers. It offers career guidance, work experience, bursaries and awards, all fulfilling its role as an education charity.

This was a fascinating talk and appeared to be enjoyed and/or be useful to many who attended. We thank Simon enormously for his work on our behalf and for coming all the way from Oxford to give us this talk. He did not even charge for his talk. He merely asked for travel expenses and these he asked to be made out to the RFS. How generous can that be ?

Tree-planting at The Hurst Friday 16th March.

A big 'thank you' to those members who came along to plant trees at The Hurst. We have now completed the hedge alongside the ancient trackway and have started planting along the main drive. We shall continue this next season. If you haven't helped us at this site already, please consider helping when we're at The Hurst next year.

John Tuer



Next Talk Tuesday 10th April at 7.30pm at St.Peter's Church Hall Shrewsbury SY2 5BE

Our Chairman has given details above of how to find the Hall and we look forward to seeing as many of you as possible for this meeting in a new venue. If it proves suitable we will probably book it for our meetings from November through to April 2019. Please let us know your thoughts.

Our speaker **Andrew Allott** is a member of the Committee and was formerly a master at Shrewsbury School. He will be speaking on **The History of Woodlands in the Marches**. Andrew has written a book on The Marches in Collins New Naturalist Series (Book 118) and from what he has told me it will be a fascinating talk illustrated by some of the thousands of slides he has taken there!

Tea and Coffee will be available after the meeting on payment of a small fee and as a result of the notice recently in the Shropshire Star we hope non-members will also flock to listen to Andrew.