



Chairman's Comments

Dear Members

It was great to see those of you who were able to come to Pitchford and an interesting morning was had by all. I wish to point out that this was a visit by list and that next month's visit is also confined to those applying to Andy Gordon only. To compensate for this and especially for those who missed out we are arranging a visit on Saturday 30th June at 2pm to Richard and Anne Mayall's arboretum at Brownhill, Ruyton XI Towns SY4 1LR Grid Reference SJ405215 (coming from Shrewsbury turn left immediately after crossing the river in Brownhill). This Arboretum only 22 years old has a National collection of *Betula* spp plus many other interesting trees.

Those who were unable to visit Peter Aspin's Agroforestry project near Wem two years ago have a chance to visit there on the evening of the same day (30th June) when Peter is showing a small group round. If you are interested in joining this group please phone Peter on 01948 840073.

May I remind those few who have not yet confirmed that you are still happy to receive Newsletters and other correspondence by email to do so as soon as possible. This Newsletter is being sent out before the effective date of the new legislation (25th May) but confirmation sent to the email address from which this Newsletter has been sent can still be sent up till the end of June. Those who have not confirmed by that date will be sent the July Newsletter by post.

All the best
David (chairman)

Our last visit to Pitchford Hall 12th May 18

Our visit to Pitchford Hall had a number of highlights. For myself I was very keen as I had never visited before and I was not disappointed by the grandeur of the place. An early medieval hall gave way to the present Hall in 1539, when no doubt a huge number of trees were felled for what was a large construction, which makes one recognise that Shropshire must have swarmed with carpenters with the amount of timber framed building going on. Our three groups all went on slightly different tours with our knowledgeable guides. My group started in the Great Hall making us realise that Tudor England was based on communities built around rooms like this. We moved on to the horrible man trap, a recognition that private land was important and very severe penalties for poaching were enforced. A deer park, like that outside, was the private hunting realm of the Lord of the manor. The main road to Shrewsbury, which used to pass the hall, was moved in the 18th Century, to allow a private estate to form.

We then entered the family rooms which were used by Princess Victoria? and now by the Nason family. In one the Priest hole was entered through a trapdoor upstairs, and had a window which must have had some cover to allow a priest to shelter there unseen. The Attic was atmospheric although not providing a very comfortable

room for the servants who had to sleep there and signs of their superstitions were evident in the candle marks on the pillars. Some timbers from the medieval hall were to be seen in the roof space, somehow they were incorporated in the new building which seems a bit strange as it was a 'kit build' with all parts identical.

Descending to the Georgian servants wing we saw the old kitchens and servants quarters which are quite dilapidated and will be last to be repaired in the renovation. The west wing was not visited as this is holiday accommodation to help pay for the restoration. The stairs of the servants wing were heavily worn and we can imagine the ceaseless comings and goings of the servants carrying wood and coal and going about their business.

We moved on to the stable yard and saw the smithy, still in working order, and moved on to the Tree house. This is said to be the oldest tree house in the world with constant use since 1660. Princess Victoria stayed in the hall and visited the tree house for lunch. The tree which holds the house is a large leafed Lime (*Tilia platyphyllos*), the second largest in the UK. We then moved onto the Orangery which was actually lived in by a member of the household, an eccentric woman, who hated the sound of running water and which hopefully will become an events hub in the future. We returned to the hall via the arboretum which was planted in yjr 1970's and 1980's to supplement the few older trees that had been there for centuries. One massive Pedunculate oak dates from about 1660. Other interesting trees were a mulberry (no leaves out to help specify), a *Cryptomeria japonica*, a *Sequoiia gigantea*, *Pyrus salicifolia* 'pendula' and two *Cedrus libani*. It is planned to label the more interesting trees for educational purposes and to bring it back into proper management after 25 years of total neglect while the Hall was owned by a Kuwaiti princess!

Our next visit Saturday 9th June BIFOR, Norbury junction near Market Drayton

Directions: From Newport (Shropshire) take the A519 northeast for about 3 km and then turn right to Norbury. Drive through the village and on to Norbury Junction. Drive past the Junction Inn (postcode ST20 0PN), over the canal bridge and on along a minor road. The BiFOR FACE experiment is in woodland on the left after about 400 metres beyond the canal. Parking will be as directed, either in the entrance to the wood or in the corner of an adjacent field. Grid reference SJ 795 226

The visit will start at 10.30. Please don't arrive before 10.00. Please wear mud-free footwear. You will be asked to walk over disinfectant pads on entry to the woodland.

We are limited to 20 members for this visit. Photography is encouraged.

You may wish to visit the BiFOR FACE website

beforehand: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/activity/bifor/face/index.aspx>

Here is some more general information about FACE experiments:

The first generation of forest free-air CO₂ enrichment (FACE) experiments has successfully provided deeper understanding about how forests respond to an increasing CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere. Now, a new generation of FACE experiments in mature forests in different biomes and over a wide range of climate space and biodiversity will significantly expand the inference space. These new experiments are: EucFACE in a mature Eucalyptus stand on highly weathered soil in subtropical Australia; AmazonFACE in a highly diverse, primary rainforest in Brazil; BiFOR-FACE in a 150-yr-old deciduous woodland stand in central England; and SwedFACE proposed in a hemiboreal, *Pinus sylvestris* stand in Sweden. We now have a unique opportunity to initiate a model-data interaction as an integral part of experimental design and to address a set of cross-site science questions on topics including responses of mature forests; interactions with temperature, water stress, and phosphorus limitation; and the influence of biodiversity.

The woodland where the BiFOR FACE experiment is being conducted is part of the Norbury Estate, owned by Professor Jo Bradwell of Birmingham University. About 380 acres of new woodland has been planted on the estate in recent years, with a very wide diversity of tree species. For those interested, there will be a circular walk to look at some of the new plantations, probably after either a picnic or pub lunch at Norbury Junction.

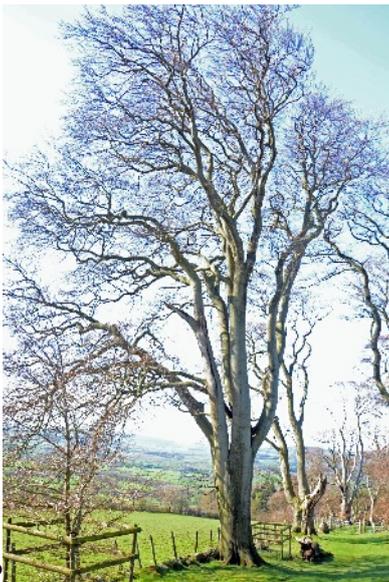
Andrew Allott

Future Plans.

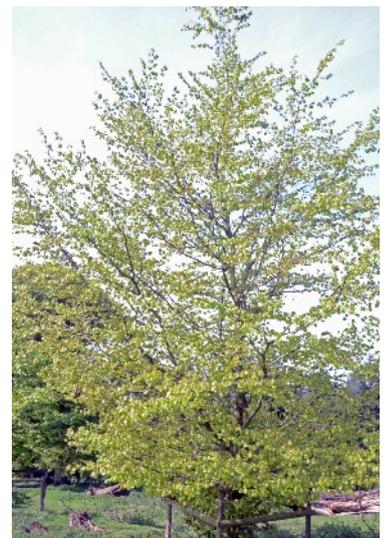
Many of you will be aware of the famous line of beech trees running for nearly two kilometres up the ridge of Linley Hill, near Norbury not far from Bishop's Castle. The earliest were planted there in 1740 and according to legend soldiers returning from the Napoleonic Wars also planted trees there. In fact the majority of trees have a girth which would support this planting era. It is surprising just how many of these trees have survived over the years but the past winter's snow caused many to blow over or lose branches.



In the 1970's under a scheme organised by the Shropshire Wildlife Trust all gaps at that time were planted with replacement trees which were all given a very sturdy wooden cage for protection. No thought appears to have been given at that time about the way beech trees grow in nature when allowed to grow freely without competition. In fact it remains a mystery how the plantings in the 18th and 19th Century managed to produce trees with straight stems growing to over 30m in height. Many of the replacement trees planted in the 1970's and even later look more like Christmas trees than beech trees with side branches to ground level. Please see the photograph below right of a typical replacement tree. Clearly no formative pruning has been carried out for over 40 years.



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Your Committee is considering devoting one of our action days next winter to hand pruning these replacement trees instead of planting more trees. We are approaching the owners to see if they will agree to this proposal. If any member feels that this is not an appropriate task for STT please let me know.

Andy Gordon