



Chairman's Comments

Dear Members

Now that Autumn is here, the nights are drawing in and it is time to think about our winter series of lectures so we very much hope to see you at Graham Pearce's lecture on New Caledonia. No doubt warmer climes and high tales from our very own seed and tree hunter.

Regards David

Chair STT

Visit to Cherry Tree Arboretum, Woore, Saturday October 12th

With a weather forecast that looked daunting, a good number of members made the journey up to Woore, in the furthest north-eastern corner of Shropshire to see the arboretum and all its wonders. The arboretum started after the founder of `Bridgmere Garden World, John Ravenscroft sold it to Wyevale Garden Centres in 2006. By this time it was one of the largest Garden Centres in the world as well as being one of the very first, started in 1961. John has a passion for plants and to keep himself busy after the sale, he started propagating some of the rarest trees ever cpseen in the UK and in planting a 50 acre Arboretum overlooking the garden centre now owned by Blue Diamond. John was kind enough to show us round.

Driving up to the main house, we saw laid out shrub beds and established tree planting, many of which were the earliest plantings for the Arboretum. Upon talking with John Ravenscroft it was clear that his passion lay with Magnolias, many of which were in these areas. It was clear that up until recently Cherry Arboretum was also a very productive business, producing a significant number of trees for sale to the wholesale nursery market. This was primarily by grafting but more recently the shift has been towards production using cuttings. Currently the production has been scaled back and now there is a small misting unit for propagation of cuttings, and a couple of polytunnels that grow on the successes. We were able to have a peek inside the misting unit, but also saw some two year old rooted tree cuttings that were surprisingly large.

We were lucky in that John was able to describe all the trees in the polytunnel, and he mentioned in passing a small leaved Elm (*Ulmus minor var suberosa*) that he felt was resistant to Dutch Elm disease, although this is not certain. Hopefully the Elm's corky wings on the branches will make it an unfavourable host to the Dutch Elm beetle.

We headed out into the main arboretum, and whilst it was well laid out the heavens decided to test our resolve, but a few heavy showers were not enough to deter us from continuing on. We had glimpses of numerous Sweet Gums (*Liquidambar styracifula* 'Worplesdon') colouring up well, a few *Euonymus* species shrubs with their lovely showy orange and pink fruit, the deep red of some *Cornus* species and then occasional Magnolias with unknown but interesting fruit. One in particular caught the eye, this being

Magnolia cambellii 'Charles Raffill' which had particularly long twisted pink/red seed pods that really stood out. In spring it has pink fragrant flowers but we were there to see autumn colours.

We were able to see an interesting Birch tree (Betula 'Edinburgh') with its stunningly smooth clear white bark, except at the base there was a different bark, fissured and dark. Upon close inspection it was a graft union, with the cutting (or scion as it is known) growing well from about 10cm above ground, but the rootstock showing very different bark patterns, with very little white bark at all. This was mostly likely just good old fashioned Silver Birch as a rootstock. The union between scion and rootstock seemed to be compatible, but was an interesting reminder of how so many ornamental trees are produced by commercial nurseries.

Slowly working our way through the gentle contours of the site we were able to see a range of Rowans, some colouring up well, but also some large fruited varieties that must be a joy for a passing blackbird or thrush. We also got to see the site as it has been laid out with some quicker growing trees for quicker growth over the next 40 years or so and then the slower growing Oaks and Limes that will thrive long after the Birches, Alders and Cherries have faded.

As time got away from us, we had to finish the visit without being able to see all of the arboretum, so many trees, never enough time. The good news is that John Ravenscroft is so proud of what he has achieved that he has invited the Severn Tree Trust to visit again sometime during spring 2020 to see the Magnolias in flower. An actual date has yet to be arranged but it is most likely that a March or April visit will be arranged when you can get to see probably the widest collection of Magnolias, accompanied by a man who has a real passion for them, this will be an additional visit in the spring, so keep an eye on the newsletters for more information in the spring.

We send thanks to John Ravenscroft, who kindly also provided some refreshments for us on the day and was such an enthusiastic host.

See Pictures of the Arboretum in the following emails

David Woodhouse

Tree Planting by Don Mansell Sunday 13th October, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury



To recognise the many years of work for both the Severn Tree Trust or its earlier incarnations as well as the 15 years he volunteered for the National Trust at Attingham STT arranged for Don to plant an oak tree in a prominent position at Attingham. We could not have done this without the help of Bob Thurston, the Park and Gardens Manager who not only suggested the site to fill a missing gap in a line of 500 year old oaks but also provided a very solid metal hurdle to protect the tree from the browsing cattle almost permanently in the field. The above picture shows Don just after planting the tree (beginning to yellow) as well as members of the Trust and Bob Thurston (on the left).

Don's family were invited to attend as well and it was a pleasure to see all five daughters and their husbands as well as some of his grand-children; over 40 people were there on the day. We hope Don's tree will also survive for 500 years.

FIRST TALK OF THE WINTER SEASON.

Tuesday 12th November, University Centre Shrewsbury. **New Caledonia – A Dendrologist's Treasure Island.**

New Caledonia is an island group situated in the South Pacific Ocean between Australia and New Zealand just north of the Tropic of Capricorn. Its unique geological history and long period of isolation account for the richness and diversity of its flora and fauna, with many species, genera and some families of organisms found nowhere else on the planet. Overall, around 80% of the plant species are endemic. In particular, New Caledonia is a world centre of biodiversity for conifers, all 43 of the native species are endemic and of the 19 species of the iconic genus *Araucaria* (Monkey Puzzle) 13 exist naturally only there. A guided "Tree Lover's Tour" of New Caledonia was arranged by the International Dendrology Society in 2017 and Graham Pearce was an eager participant. His talk will show us something of the many rare and unusual botanical curiosities he encountered there.

PICTURES FROM CHERRY ORCHARD ARBORETUM WILL FOLLOW IN THE SAME EMAIL