



Chairman's Comments

Dear Members

I hope you have managed to keep up with our visits in what has been a very good summer of getting out in the countryside and looking at trees. The weather was never as bad as predicted by the weatherman ! We have two autumn visits to come, Bodenham gardens near Kidderminster and John Ravenscroft's arboretum near Woore, both great visits so we look forward to seeing you there!

David

Our visit to Winterburne Gardens (Saturday, 10th August 2019)

Thirteen members turned up for this visit, a lucky number as it happened because rain and winds were threatened but stayed away to allow us to view this superb garden and its many different trees.

Some of us turned up early to view the house first then have lunch there. The house is an "Art and Crafts House" built in 1903 by and for John and Margaret Nettlefold, he of the firm Guest, Keen and Nettlefolds (I'm sure you've heard of the screw manufacturing company GKN which, while in Telford, was known as GKN Sankey) and she, the niece of MP and Birmingham elder statesman, Joseph Chamberlain. The gardens were originally built in 1904 through Margaret's inspiration and design and the third family to live in the house, the Nicholsons, made changes in the 1920s. When the Nicholsons gave up the house they gave it to Birmingham University who is the present owner, the building and grounds being part of the Faculty of Botany. The University restored the gardens and opened them to the public in 2010.

So, as one would expect, from an academic institution, all the trees are labelled and the gardens are used for experimental purposes. Distinct areas of the garden are devoted to trees from different continents and their labelling links to the faculty's records that would show provenance and dates of planting.

There is a wide range of tree species here with some imaginative planting and some quite unexpected varieties and features. The *Eucryphia* was not the more usually seen "*nymansensis*" but *Eucryphia nymansensis* 'Nymansay', the columnar variety growing again the house wall and absolutely covered with white blossom. It was useful to be able to compare this later when we saw its more usual species. A Japanese Loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica*) was somewhat unexpected as this tree requires shelter and usually a higher temperature climate than we have here but this was growing against a wall, was sheltered by a greenhouse and so managed to survive.

We came across a pergola of, surprisingly, hazels but these were varieties of filberts and cobnuts, a "Nut Walk" along the lines of a Gertrude Jekyll planting elsewhere. The Wollemi Pine here (*Wollemi*

nobilis), only brought to Britain from Australia from 2004 onwards, was actually in fruit, the first fruits of this tree that most of us had ever seen.



A large Wellingtonia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), apparently only planted in 1985, already had a girth measured by Andy as 4 metres ! It was about 16 metres tall, and using the girth measurement, that would be a growth of about 12 centimetres of girth per year. Of course, we do not know how large the tree was when planted but it could not have been overly large so this is still an incredible growth rate.

There were plenty more surprises. A Persian Ironwood (*Parrotia persica*) which many of us know as a multistemmed tree branching out into a wide canopy, here had a single stem. Graham told us that single stemmed *Parrotia* were more likely to be found to the west of Britain in response to a wetter climate. There was a lime avenue but not of the commoner European Lime species but of *Tilia cordata* 'Greenspire'. A cherry showed two graftings so was a combination of three species. The rootstock was the Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*), the stem was Tibetan Cherry (*Prunus serrula*) and the crown was *Prunus* 'Kanzan'. Graham, who showed us round, had visited earlier in the year and showed us his photograph of this tree in full and spectacular flower. The leaves and flowers was all 'Kanzan'.

There were many memorial plantings in these gardens and, surprisingly, many were of varieties of the Dawn Redwood species (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) some, surely for many of us, our very first viewings of these cultivars. A more common one was 'Gold Rush' but there were also Golden Oji and 'National'. Then of the Swamp Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) there were 'Peve Minaret' and *T. distichum* 'imbricatum' 'Nutans', the former a fastigate version.

Naturally for a botanical institution, taxonomy was up to date. The new genetic names for *Nothofagus* (the Southern Beeches) and *Sophora* (the Scholar tree) were now both in use on the labelling being, respectively, *Lophozonia* and *Stiphnolobium*. Although Graham tells us that *Lophozonia* is a subgenus of *Nothofagus*, the 'split' having been created by the international body of plant nomenclature in 2014.

There were more surprises in store. The gardens have three *Cryptomeria* – the standard *Cryptomeria japonica* (the Japanese redwood), *C. japonica* 'Elegans' and *C. japonica* 'Cristata', the latter being quite rare. A rare willow was the *Salix alba* var. *vitellina* 'Britzensis'. What a mouthful ! My Hilliers tells me that the 'vitellina' is the Golden Willow and 'Britzensis' is the Scarlet Willow ? Quite a contradiction. So I turned to a copy of the monograph on Willows by Newsholme to find that annual pruning of the variety 'vitellina' encourages the production of rich egg yolk coloured stems in winter whilst the variety 'Britzensis' (named after Britz in Germany by the way – thought you might like to know that !) responds to coppicing by throwing young stems of a rich deep red colour. Confused ? So am I. Perhaps we'd

better return following its pruning in the autumn to view again the colour of the stems. But it really can't get more complex than that. Or can it ?

There were so many interesting trees here that I could go on....and on. But I'd better stop and thank Graham for showing us around. Many of you will know that Graham is our committee member who comes from Nottingham every time we have our visits. For this visit, however, he had come down to Winterbourne on more than one occasion to do a "recce" to arrange things for us. We are so grateful to him. I think I can truly say that everyone who attended this visit had a most interesting experience of some wonderful trees.

John Tuer

Next visit to the Bodenham Arboretum, at Wolverley, near Kidderminster Saturday 14th September

This Arboretum is just off the A 458, Bridgnorth to Kidderminster road to the east (left) on the B4189 less than a mile past the turning to Arley. It is very well sign-posted. **We meet at the Restaurant entrance at 2p.m having paid the entry fee of £6.50.** There is no STT guide to take us round but many members have been there before and visitors are all given a map to guide themselves round. On the day we will decide if we wish to stick together or each to do our own thing! Let's hope for a better turn-out than at Arley!

The additional September visit to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the Forestry Commission: Saturday, 28th September for STT members.

I mentioned this in the last Newsletter and you will recall that Keith Pybus and I have arranged a public walk in Mortimer Forest and one solely for the Severn Tree Trust. All members are invited at no charge.

We shall take a 3 mile walk along the Vinnalls Trail to look at the history of the Forestry Commission, the planting of the trees and their uses. I must warn you that the walking is very rough underfoot and there are two steepish hills to climb. So please wear boots, bring raingear, something to drink and edible refreshment for along the route. I suggest energy bars but that's entirely up to you. We shall make a number of stops along the walk to discuss what we see.

The walk should take 2 to 3 hours and will **start in the Mortimer Forest Vinnalls Car Park at 10.30am.**

How to get there: In Ludlow, cross the bridge over the River Teme with the Charlton Arms pub on your right. Immediately after the pub, turn right and set your trip recorder to zero. You will go via Whitcliffe and after 2.6 miles look on your left for the car park. The signpost "Vinnalls Car Park" is a little set back from the road and may easily be missed. Park anywhere and we shall meet by the notice board for a 10.30am start.

We look forward to seeing some of you there.....

.....John Tuer