



Dear Members,

Twelve members were tempted to make the journey to The Hurst near Clun and were rewarded with good weather and some interesting trees to look at. A full report of the visit is included in this Newsletter. During what seems like last century your Committee made a commitment to visit Ashwood Nurseries near Stourbridge on Saturday 8th August and that 25 members would attend. Since the pandemic we had the choice of pulling out of our commitment but having tried to get there for a number of years and failed we decided to go ahead with the visit. John Tuer has given a full explanation of the situation along with the directions and I do hope that many of you will make the visit. Social distancing will be possible so please sign up for the visit.

In a couple of Newsletters I pointed out that the Government's aim of planting tens of millions trees in the future was at risk because the forest nursery industry, after four catastrophes in the past 50 years when changes in Government policies resulted in mass burning of planting stock. I suggested that without Government support British nurseries just would not make the necessary investment. *Mirabile dictum!* After strong lobbying by the industry the UK Government has listened and has set up a £2 million fund, administered through the Scottish Government to help nurseries.

Amusingly in the same RFS E-newsletter where I first read about the fund (the wrong amount was mentioned) were references to two pieces of work which suggests that planting millions of extra trees could be detrimental to the environment and not beneficial!
Andy Gordon

Visit to The Hurst, near Clun Saturday 11th July 2020

Those members who came to The Hurst were blessed with the forecast of much better weather than earlier in the week which allowed us to see the trees and the views at their best. Members who made the journey included Tom Fulda who had cycled all the way from Pant, near Llanymynech (37 miles) but was not looking forward to the return journey after a change of wind direction! Some members picnicked on the table and chairs in the garden before and after the visit enjoying the views of the river Clun valley.

Jo Selman, the Hurst gardener, who was unable to attend due to family commitments but had met John and Angie Tuer on the previous Wednesday for a recce, gave a brief history of The Hurst in the July Newsletter, the details of which surprised me even though I have been to The Hurst on several previous occasions to plant trees. Planting hedgerow trees along the old lane to Clun and along the front drive gives one no idea at all about the

extent of the property and of the exotic trees that have been planted there over the last 80 years started by one of the owners Mr H.E. Harrison, who was a passionate forester. Originally of 1,800 acres, the estate is now 1,300 acres of some prize-winning forest plantations of exotic conifers but around the house itself there are 26 acres of mixed exotic conifers with mown grass pathways which have been made into a Tree Walk, compiled by John.

Our visit began in the old orchard which has six recently planted Shropshire plums and where a few years ago John and I had planted three Shropshire apple varieties. Passing into the Dovecote field we examined closely one of the six elm hybrids known to be highly resistant to Dutch elm disease which we planted for the Shropshire Wildlife Trust as the elm is host to the White Letter Hairstreak Butterfly once endemic but now extinct in this part of Shropshire. *Ulmus x Wingham* was bred in Florence and is a complex hybrid between two Asian and two European elm species.

Moving into the wooded area we arrived at the Pond beside The Foyle Studio where toilet facilities, after all, were available. We passed several species of exotic conifers including Western Hemlock (one of three conifers whose leading shoot bends over -the others being Lawson Cypress and Deodar Cedar) and discussed how the native Scots Pine, when it grows old in Britain...



...has a rounded crown unlike the other conifers we could see (Sitka spruce, Grand fir, Douglas Fir, European larch) where the crowns are spire-like allowing snow to shed from them in their natural environment. It was pointed out that in the far North East of Asia where Scots Pine is also native mature Scots Pine do have thin crowns almost like the above species.

Climbing gently up the forest track we entered the Coastal Redwood grove, mentioned by John in the June Newsletter. There are more than 50 trees on the slopes on either side of the track but the majority are on the eastern side of the track which is part of the 500 acres sold in 1976 to pay death duties. This 500 acres is now owned by the brother of Caroline Magnus, the owner of Stokesay Court. The trees for planting at The Hurst came from seedlings grown by the forester at Leighton Estate, near Welshpool, which S.T.T. visited in 2019. The trees are directly descended from some of the 33 first trees of the species planted in the UK in 1857.

By the time we had reached the end of the plantation and turned down the western edge we were at the same height as the tops of the trees by the Pond and could easily spot the Hemlock from the Douglas Fir due to the shape of the leading shoot.

Ahead of us was the greenhouse with a good crop of grapes growing inside. John pointed out that the rootstock of the vine was on the outside of the greenhouse to ensure that the vine inside was never short of water. Nearby were two recently planted Black Mulberries. Leaving the kitchen garden we were met with what John Osborne – a previous owner – called “the best view in England” down the river Clun valley with the Cleve Hills in the far distance.



Moving on past the disused grass tennis court with another fine view, we discussed the difference between Lawson Cypress and Western Red Cedar. Both are used for hedging, both grow quickly but the Red Cedar (*Thuja*) has a very pleasant smell when the leaves are crushed and when it rains. John says it smells of pineapples but those present were unconvinced! A very useful diagnostic tool is the shape of the small cones. The Lawson cones are globular whereas *Thuja* has ovoid cones which open trumpet-shaped.

The mown path descended gradually in a westerly direction and we noted two fir species, Grand fir (*Abies grandis*) and Spanish Fir (*Abies pinsapo*). These true firs differ from the Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga mensiesii*), - by their smooth bark compared with the deeply fissured bark of a Douglas Fir and of course the totally different shape of the cones. True fir cones sit upright on branches and disintegrate when ripe whereas the Douglas Fir cones are small up to 8cm in length and persist on the tree, often for nearly a year.

When we reached the bottom of the slope we met the old road into Clun and saw the fruits of our labour – the hedge S.T.T. has planted over the last three years. It has grown really well where there is no overhead shade from the trees in the wood. Under the tree cover it is still rather thin. On our way back to our cars we passed Sweet Chestnuts, Cherries, a small plantation of Western Red Cedar and a lone Wych elm showing no signs of Dutch Elm disease probably because of its isolation from other elms.

Back at the cars, we thanked John for guiding us round the trees and unanimously agreed that the visit had been well worth coming for, even Tom Fulda! *Andy Gordon*

Our next visit will be to the famous garden of John Massey at Ashwoods on Saturday, 8th August:

We have been trying to organise a visit to this very special garden for some time and, at last, have been successful. John Massey's private garden behinds Ashwoods Nursery at Kingswinford is a wonderful 3 acre garden which was heralded on television last year as

one of Britain's three best gardens when Carol Klein visited all three and hosted the programmes. It is often called "a garden for all seasons" with its abundance of rare plants and plenty of trees.

There will be no guided tour this time as the garden has suspended these for the time being because of Covid. But a guide will be on hand to answer our questions.

Following the tour, the well-known and well-stocked garden centre will be open as will be the tea room so please, for the shop, you will need to **bring your masks**.

The garden is large enough for social distancing but will have to take a limit of 30 visitors. The usual cost is £6.50 per person, funds which go to one of John's charities. But, but, but.....because of the variability of our visits this year in which some members have felt anxious about taking part, **your committee has agreed to run this visit at no charge to you**.

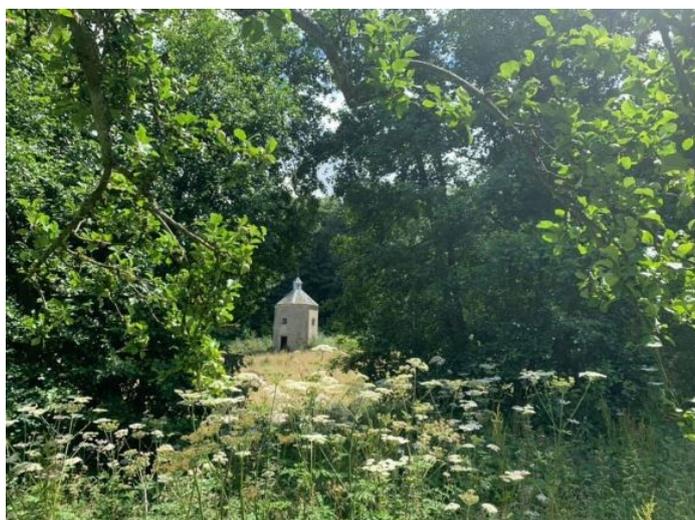
So we shall have to ask you to let us know if you wish to join the group on a first come first served basis. **Please can I ask that if you say you will be coming please keep to your commitment or you might be stopping someone else coming along when we reach the magic number of thirty!** Also, please let me know if you will be coming by either e-mailing me (john3tuer@gmail.com) or telephoning me (**01952 727642**). If you have to leave your call on our answer machine, please also give your own telephone number so that I can confirm your place or (sorry) deny you a place if we've reach our visit total.

We ask you to meet in the car park of Ashwoods' Nursery at 2.25pm please. Ashwoods is at DY6 0AE.

How to get there:

If you use SatNav, please use the postcode above. Otherwise, coming from Shrewsbury, go to Bridgnorth, then take the road to Stourbridge (A458). If you use the Bridgnorth bypass, this will lead you straight onto the Stourbridge road. Now continue through Six Ashes and Enville and you will eventually go over the canal bridge and arrive at traffic lights on the Wolverhampton to Kidderminster road (A449). Turn left at these lights heading in the Wolverhampton direction. Go along here and shortly you will see a road left signposted 'Ashwood'. The nursery is along here on the left.

Any queries, please don't hesitate to ring me....**John Tuer**



Thanks to Andy, Roger and Ivor for the photographs of the Hurst (ed)