



Dear Members,

It seems that it is only going to get more difficult for the Trust to operate anything like normally for some months to come. Your Committee is trying to think of ways of maintaining your interest. Without any suggestions from members our idea of proposing a self guided walk of some interesting trees each month is all that we have come up with!

In February of this year I was guided on a U3A walk through the middle of the Acton Scott estate during which I noted some really old trees. When I got home I checked on the Ancient Tree Inventory website ([ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk)) and discovered that many but not all the interesting trees were on the site but often without photos, with incomplete access information and sometimes quite obviously incorrect. I contacted the owners for permission to visit the estate, which of course is far more extensive than just the Working Farm area, to up-date the records. Then Covid 19 struck. Initially I was able to visit Acton Scott but when the 5 miles limit for travel came in I had to stop. By then I had been able to update almost all their records with photos, new girth measurements, access details and correct species of oak. It was not until the end of September that the Woodland Trust authorised such visits again when working on the ATI.

On my first return visit in late September Francis and Alison Acton, who inherited the property last year when Francis's parents both died in their 90s, first mentioned preparing a Tree Walk. Of course I offered to help and have since done just that. Immediately I saw this as a possible site for an STT visit this autumn. The Actons were more than happy to agree provided I could guarantee that we would socially distance!

I remembered how well the self guiding visit to Sansaw Park had gone with members spread out in small groups across the estate. So I gladly accepted and asked for STT to visit on 14th November. Then came our visit to Corbet Wood and Grinshill where within the first 500 m of the start all three of our groups had amalgamated into one large group of 19 people and almost no social distancing took place!

The Actons rent out the Heritage Farm to Shropshire Council and it will be open on 14th November also. They have specifically asked that when we pass in front of the Hall in full view of the Museum **we must be seen to be socially distancing**. For the same reason the walk I have prepared will start at the Car Park for the St Margaret's Church, Acton Scott. I have prepared a list of the trees that will feature in the formal Acton Scott Tree Walk plus a map of their location which I ask anyone planning to do the walk **to print out from the attachments**. For those who have no internet, I will take some hard copies with me.

The walk will be available from 2pm on 14th November but I ask that you do not all arrive at that time. The walk is 2.2 km long and with stops to look at trees will take no longer than 90 minutes. Some of the deciduous trees will have lost their leaves but it is surprising what one can learn by looking at them on the ground. Only yesterday when dotting the l's and crossing the t's I identified a tall spindly tree as an elm for the first time because of the very distinctive shape of the fallen leaves. I find it is often easier to specify oaks by their fallen leaves than by trying to look at the top of a tree through binoculars.

Francis and Alison Acton will be on hand in case you want to ask them anything about the property. I think they said it dates from the 1500's. They are planning to open it under the Historic Houses scheme and want to have this Tree Walk as an additional feature. You will be the first to try it out. I have not insulted your knowledge of trees by giving you the full text I have prepared for the paying visitors but I have included one or two pieces of information that I thought you would not know.

Details of how to get there are given below. *Andy Gordon*

### **Our visit to Grinshill. Saturday 10th October 2020**

Eleven members came along on this particular Saturday, the day published in our 2020 programme although not to the venue, as planned, to the Wyre Forest. I'm sure we'll take up that option on another occasion.

This was to be a pleasant two-mile walk to look at some very 'ordinary' trees. We often go to places with exotic species, most of which have arrived in the country from around the world at various times in the past. On this occasion, we thought it a good idea just to look a little more closely at some of our native species and what else there was to be found on our route.

So as we were making our way to our meeting point in the Corbett Wood car park near Grinshill, the rain poured down heavily and, perhaps like me, members would be saying to themselves: 'Was this a good idea?' But, astonishingly, it stopped as we left our cars and we only saw a couple of sprinklings of rain during the rest of the afternoon.

This was a very pleasant walk and, as all members received the details with the October Newsletter, perhaps those of you who didn't make it on this particular

Saturday, found time to do the walk yourselves on a more convenient date. You will have seen, then, the oaks and made attempts to say whether they were sessile or pendunculate (the Durmast Oak or the English Oak). We did see an occasional English Oak (*Quercus robur*) but most were hybrids of the two native species. The sex of the Yews was easy to determine with the arils (berries) showing clearly on the female specimens. We saw no ash suffering from the horrific die-back disease that is now rife in the country. And we saw plenty of Douglas Firs and Scots Pines. So, of our three native conifers we just saw two: Yew and Scots Pine. The third, the Common Juniper, we didn't see on this walk.

There were plenty of Rowans (the Mountain Ash) – no relation to the Ash, by the way, it's just that its leaves are pinnate so they look a bit ash-like – and we did see the non-native Sycamores in great profusion. They do tend to grow easily anywhere which, I think, is a good thing because they will grow where other trees can't.

A native oak – an English Oak – in Grinshill village was a commemorative oak planted in 1935. I tested out Alan Mitchell's rule for dating trees against this particular specimen. Some of you will know that Alan Mitchell is the author of 'A Field Guide to the Trees of Britain and Northern Europe', for long the authority for tree enthusiasts before other volumes such as the Collins guide came along. Mitchell's method only applies to open-grown trees, not those densely packed in woodlands or forests where they artificially stretch up for light at the expense of putting on girth. This Grinshill Oak was open-grown so we can apply Mitchell's method of measuring the circumference of the tree at breast height (not DBH note – diameter at breast height), the circumference in inches being roughly the age in years of the tree. When the tree was planted in 1935, it is likely to have been a few years old by then to make a significant enough planting. So it's quite possible that it was about 5 years old making its year of birth around 1930, that's ninety years ago. My measurement for the circumference was 7 feet 6 inches. Yes, that's 90 inches. What a coincidence. No, I haven't doctored the figures. But I have to say that it doesn't always work. I was at member Ivor Salter's house the other day and I measured his Black Mulberry. He told me he planted it 30 years ago. And what did I find when I measured its circumference – but 30 inches! Yes, truly. If you know the date of planting of a tree, perhaps in your garden or in a local park, try out this method and see if it works. 'Breast Height' by the way is considered to be 1.3m for arborists and 1.5m for foresters. I wish they'd get together and agree on the same height.

So what non-native trees did we find on our walk? The Douglas Fir has already been mentioned. The Lawson Cypress was very common as a hedging tree. We detoured a little to look at a Dawn Redwood, where there was also a Tamarisk. There was a Lilac, a Sumac, a Cotinus, a Tulip Tree and a Sweet Chestnut. Of the more unusual specimens, we found a Contorted Hazel (known by its nickname as Harry Lauder's Walking Stick). How many of you remember Harry Lauder? We also saw two English Elms, untouched by disease, at the entrance to Clive Church.

An interesting grave in Clive churchyard gave us all a puzzle. A plaque ask us to look for the mistake – a single mistake. But the eagle-eyed among us spotted two

on the same grave! If you haven't done this walk yet but intend to, I won't give anything away.

From the top of Grinshill rocks our September destination could be clearly seen – Hope Farm where we parked and Sansaw Hall. What a splendid view we had over much of north Shropshire and towards Wales.

I've done this walk three times now and a very lovely walk it is. If you haven't done it yet, you have a treat in store. *John Tuer*

### **Tree Planting in December**

For all you members who are waiting for our next tree planting session, our first of the new season, I now have a date. On **Saturday, 5th December** we shall be planting at New Invention, the other side of Clun. We have 100 assorted native transplants to put into what will eventually become a larger woodland. With the size of the plot and this number of trees, we can easily keep to the social distancing rule. I shall give you further details – exact time, location and parking – in the December Newsletter. For now, please just put the date in your diaries. *John Tuer*

### **VISIT TO ACTON SCOTT SATURDAY 14th NOVEMBER AVAILABLE FROM 2p.m.**

**Directions.** Take the A49 south from Shrewsbury as far as Marshbrook, where the B4370 goes off west to Bishop's Castle. 400m beyond the junction after a bend to the right take the sharp left turning behind a tall hedge marked for the Historic Farm. The road climbs steadily through woodland then fields and as it levels off just after a sign for Apedale there is a cross roads. Turn right, drive down the hill before climbing again. Pass the entrance to Acton Scott Hall on the left and at the top of the hill you will see St Margaret's Church on your right. 40m past the entrance to the churchyard is a sharp turning left into the Church Car Park where the first tree is located.

*Return journey. Turning right onto the A49 at Marshbrook is tricky as lorries can be hidden from view by the tall hedge on the right. A more scenic but slower route back to Church Stretton is to go straight over the cross roads in the village which after 3.7km takes you out onto the B4371 at the top of the hill above Church Stretton. Where you turn left for Shrewsbury*

## Self-guided Tree Walk of Acton Scott Gardens and Grounds

*This walk starts from the Acton Scott church Car Park which is located on the east side of Henley Lane, 40m past the entrance to the Churchyard on the right. The entrance to the Car Park is quite a sharp left turn if approaching from the north. In the Car Park look to the far corner and spot Tree No.1 in the opposite corner to the entrance.*

**Tree 1. Atlas, Algerian or Atlantic Cedar. *Cedrus atlantica*.** This tree is suffering from Tip Die-back (*Sirococcus tsugae*).

*Exit the car park at the top end up the ramp, turn right and walk up the road as far as the entrance to the churchyard. Pass through the church yard and stop at the very large yew by the corner of the church.*

**Tree 2. Yew. *Taxus baccata*.** The girth of this yew is 6.78m at 30cm from ground suggesting an age of >1400 years. Can any of you help to sex the tree? Do you see any red arils?

*Retrace your steps to the road, cross straight over and go through the gates and follow the drive for 15m.*

**Tree 3. *Quercus ilex*. Holm oak.** Not the best specimen is on left 15 m from gate.

*Carry on down the drive for 50m and on the right is a smooth barked conifer. This is Tree 4.*

**Tree 4. Grand Fir. *Abies grandis*.**

*Continue down the drive for 5m and on the right you will see a young tree about 10m tall with leaves turning yellow. This is Tree 5.*

**Tree 5. Ginkgo or Maidenhair Tree. *Ginkgo biloba*.**

*Almost opposite on the other side of the drive is a young specimen of one of the Redwoods.*

**Tree 6. Coastal Redwood. *Sequoia sempervirens*.**

*On the same side of the drive 15 metres further on is Tree 7.*

**Tree 7. Scots Pine. *Pinus sylvestris*.**

*Right opposite on the other side of the drive is another type of Redwood. Tree 8.*

**Tree 7. Wellingtonia or Sierra Redwood. *Sequoiadendron gigantea*.**

*A further 5m on the same side of the drive is Tree 8.*

**Tree 8. *Liriodendron tulipifera*. Tulip Tree.**

*10m further on on the same side half lying on the ground is Tree 9.*

**Tree 9. Black Mulberry. *Morus nigra*.**

*Somewhere in this area is a newly planted Tree in memory of a dear friend of the Acton family, Cloe Manon who spent many happy hours at Acton Scott.*

**Tree 10. Ornamental Japanese Cherry. *Prunus serrula***

*Pass down steps and go round the western side of the Lawn, follow the gravel path past the glass house to the left and through the gate; the variegated tree in front of you is Tree 11.*

**Tree 11. Variegated Lawson Cypress. *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana***  
Suggestions please as to cultivar

*Following the gravel path make your way round to the front of the Hall noting as you go on the left a horse operated cider apple press. **At this point please ensure that you are in groups of NO MORE THAN SIX MEMBERS and that groups are at least 10 metres apart.** Stop in front of the Hall and look over the lawn towards the Working Farm. Just over the fence between two pieces of farm machinery lying on its side is Tree 12.*

**Tree 12. Acton Scott Native Black Poplar. *Populus nigra var. betulifolia*.** Until a few years ago this tree was the pride and joy at Acton Scott. It was tree No 95 in the trees recorded for the Shropshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and was an example of the relatively few genuine native Black Poplars in the county. Recognising the susceptibility of native Black Poplars the Actons over the years have planted replacement trees, one of which will be seen shortly.

*Walk down to the conifer on the right front of the lawn. This is tree 13.*

**Tree 13. Deodar Cedar. *Cedrus deodara*.**

*Return to the drive and turn left. On the corner against the shrubbery is a fine example of the next tree.*

**Tree 14. Beech *Fagus sylvatica*.**

*Carry on along the drive and in 20m on the left is the young example of Tree 12, Native Black Poplar previously mentioned.*

*Cross the drive and walk along the raised level for 50m to Tree 15*

**Tree 15. Japanese Red Cedar. *Cryptomeria japonica*.**

*Between Tree 15 and the drive is tree 16 and across the drive another example of tree 4..*

**Tree 16. Norway Spruce. *Picea abies*.**

*Continue along the drive for 50m and climb the steps to the right to the next lawn. Facing you are two conifers both introduced from Western USA. Before approaching them look at the growing tip of the left hand tree. The right hand tree with the soft stringy bark you have already seen. (Tree7).*

**Tree 17. Western Hemlock. *Tsuga heterophylla*.** This is one of three types of conifers with a doopy leading shoot.

*Return to the drive and continue down the drive for 100m. There is a specimen of the next tree on either side of the drive.*

**Tree 18. False Acacia. *Robinia pseudoacacia*.**

*From near the Robinia trees go to the edge of the embankment and spot a large stemmed tree in the fence-line at the bottom of the grass field about 200m away. This is Tree 21.*

**Tree 19. Pedunculate or English Oak. *Quercus robur*.** By a margin of about one hundred years this Ancient Oak Tree (number 200826 in the Ancient Tree Inventory website [ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk)) is the oldest tree on the estate proper. It measures 8.15m in girth and is estimated by experts to be between 700 and 800 years old. Only the yew pre-dates it.

*Twenty metres from the Robinia trees is Tree 20.*

**Tree 20. Wild cherry. *Prunus avium*.**

*Carry on down the drive for 100m and stop at the small stone arch on the right. This is the entrance to a Rock Garden which is in the process of being restored. Pass through the arch and stop at the chest high wall 5m beyond. From here you can see Tree 21 and to the left a rather larger specimen of Tree No. 4 a Grand Fir. **This is a pinch point and please do keep 2m apart at all times.***

**Tree 21. Japanese Angelica Tree. *Aralia elata*.** It is the rather straggly tree on the right about 10m in front of you. It has lost its foliage and all that remains on the tree are the very expansive panicles.

*Leave the Rock garden and continue down the drive for 25 m. On the left is a tall spindly tree which it was only possible to identify once its leaves had started to fall.*

**Tree 22. Elm cultivar. *Ulmus sp.*** Look on the ground for leaves with oblique bases, one side about three veins higher than the other. This feature is very characteristic of elms. As it is showing no signs of Dutch Elm disease and is clearly not a Wych elm it is probably a

Dutch cultivar.

*Ten metres beyond the elm on the right is the entrance to the Hornbeam walk.*

**Tree 23. Hornbeam Walk. *Carpinus betulus*.** This is a very unusual feature; it is 70 m long and its position is marked on the 1882 first Ordnance Survey map of Shropshire although it is not clear that it was planted with hornbeam at this date.

*At the end of the Hornbeam Walk turn left and follow the line of the ancient track for 30m. You will pass a rather unusual mixture of species in this strip of wood, oak, beech and yew.*

**Tree 24. Beech. *Fagus sylvatica*.** This beech has a girth of 4.04m, the largest oak 3.32m and the largest yew 2.3m. This means that they were probably all planted at the same time and gives you an idea of their relative growth rates

*Retrace your steps past the entrance to the Hornbeam Walk and 40m further on through the gap in the trees drop down onto Henley Lane and turn right. 50m up the lane on the left is Tree 25.*

**Tree 25 Douglas Fir *Pseudotsuga menziesii*.**

*40m further up Henley Lane is the entrance to the Car Park and your car.*



Acton Scott Tree Walk (Map reproduced by permission of the Acton Scott Estate)

