



Chairman's comments

Dear Members,

It was an honour to be elected chair of the Severn Tree Trust at the A.G.M. and we must thank David for all his hard work over the last three years when our membership has swollen from the seventies to over one hundred. I certainly hope that these numbers are maintained during my stewardship. I would also like to pay tribute to Hilary Boardman who is retiring as Membership Secretary, a position she has held since S.T.T. was formed and prior to that as Treasurer of the Shrewsbury Branch of the International Tree Foundation for a number of years. A big Thank You Hilary! We welcome Johanne Brachi on to the Committee as her replacement.

I am writing these notes on my way back from a one day conference in Alton, Hants discussing the Resilience of Oak in which twelve papers were presented by researchers from eight different research institutes. Most of these were on their latest work on Acute oak decline (A.O.D.) but other oak diseases were described and the list of pests that could attack oaks in future was quite alarming. Maybe now that the UK is free to make its own decisions on plant health we will be more successful at keeping diseased and pest ridden plants out of the UK.

The paper that excited me most wearing my ancient tree hat described how it is possible to differentiate with certainty between pedunculate, sessile and hybrid oaks by plotting the genomes of Chloroplast D.N.A. Contrary to what one sees in some text books and scientific papers it has been shown that hybridisation first occurred in the Iberian peninsula shortly after the last ice age by Gabrielle Nocchi, an Italian Ph.D. student working at Kew Gardens.

On the day before the meeting I revisited the Seed Branch at Alice Holt Lodge for the first time since I left it in 1981 to start my own Tree Seed Business. The Extractory was built in 1964 at a time when broadleaves were a dirty word with the Forestry Commission and was built to process conifers. The kilning facilities have not changed at all but a few more modern processors have been crammed into the building but none to handle broadleaved

seed. Plans are in hand to up-grade the facilities which will include equipment to process broadleaved seed.

What pleased me was to see the foundations of a new plant health quarantine building to be operated by Forest Research. From 1st January 2021 this facility could become invaluable in our fight against new pests and diseases.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible to hear Dael Sassoon talk about his research on buried pollen grains. Full details are given below.

Andy Gordon

A.G.M.: Tuesday, 11th February 2020 (Our 11th A.G.M.)

The A.G.M. began with a short talk by Robin Mager from the Shropshire Wildlife Trust. Robin put the case against Shrewsbury having a northern relief road on the basis of its effects on wildlife and the natural environment. S.T.T. is at pains to point out that this is just one side of the argument and that there may be many of our members who are very much for such a road. We were unable to find someone who could talk on the opposite view so we will simply say that the proposed route is 4½ miles of mostly single carriageway.

This was followed by the A.G.M. during which our new committee was elected for 2020-2021. Committee members are as follows:

Chairman: Andy Gordon

Secretary: David Woodhouse

Treasurer: John Tuer

Membership Secretary: Joanne Brachi

Newsletter Editor: David Martin

Tree Planting Organiser: John Tuer

Other Committee Members: Hilary Boardman, Angela Hughes, Julie Kaye, Peter Aspin, Graham Pearce.

Our constitution allows for twelve members so, during the course of the year, should any other member wish to join the committee, would they please let it be known to one of the existing committee members.

The committee thanked David Martin for his past three years as chairman and Hilary Boardman for her last 10 years as membership secretary. As was mentioned in the last Newsletter, John Tuer had expressed a wish to stand down as Tree Planting Organiser but no one was willing to take on this role on this occasion. However, given the bad weather conditions of this evening, attendance was only 15 members. So if there is anyone who couldn't attend the A.G.M. and who would like to undertake this role, they should let us know please. John is prepared to continue for this year only until a new planting organiser is found but having done this for the past 17 years, he is now ready to pass it on.

We unveiled the new screen for the church hall which we went halves on with the Abbey, and which help all audiences in their understanding and enjoyment of this

venue and an added benefit is to tie us to the hall for a while yet for our talks (except when we are at UCS).

Next lecture @ St Peter's Church Hall, Monkmoor, on Tuesday 10th March 2020 at 7.30 pm by Dael Sassoon (Ph.D. student Manchester University)

"Scots Pine—Are they native to Shropshire?" This promises to be a very interesting lecture by Dael trying to sort out some of the myths and scientific facts about these much loved trees in our local landscape. Please do support us and come and listen.

Tree Planting: Friday, 6th March 2020

For reasons explained at the A.G.M., I have found it difficult to organise tree planting sessions so far this season. However, before the season ends, we shall be continuing to plant the hedge at "The Hurst", a hedge we started about 4 years ago. This session should complete it.

"The Hurst" is the writers' retreat run by the Arvon Foundation. Their Shropshire base is in the house once owned and lived in by the playwright, John Osborne, and is mid-way between Clunton and Clun. The house is built alongside an old medieval route that linked Clunton and Clun. We have been planting alongside here to emphasise this ancient route and have now turned to continue the hedge along the main drive.

We would like your help to complete this project please. We shall meet at "the Hurst" on **Friday, 6th March at 10.30am**. Please bring along a spade and some warm wet weather clothing. If you would like to bring along a flask of hot drink and, maybe, a snack, please do. The Hurst will provide some refreshment after our planting, usually tea/coffee and cake. I cross my fingers and hope they will do this again. Their cake is particularly tasty!

Everything else will be provided. We have 750 transplants to plant (hawthorns and hazels) with canes and rabbit spirals which should be relatively easy as the ground is quite soft here. If you haven't planted before, don't be shy, we shall help you.

How to get there: From Shrewsbury, head down the A49 to Craven Arms and turn right at the large roundabout towards Aston-on-Clun. Go through Aston-on-Clun and Clunton. Then look out for a sharp right-hand bend and you'll see a sign for "The Hurst" on your left. Go up this drive and turn right where the path splits. You'll see us along there.

We do hope that many of you will be able to turn out for this planting session. I anticipate, given over a dozen of us, that the planting should take between 2 and 3 hours and I look forward very much to seeing you there. John Tuer

Going to the Hurst. I would certainly recommend the A49 route as the way through Pontesbury and beyond Hope to Clun is riddled with deep potholes which the editor managed to avoid last week but doesn't recommend to members!! (ed.)