



Dear members,

I would like to welcome Martin and Margaret Locke of Astley as new members and hope to see them soon at one of our visits or lectures. As the next visit is less than 3km away what better opportunity?!

John Tuer has written a full account of our last visit to Ashwood Nursery (see below). Members managed to cope with Covid 19 but some of us were defeated by the heat. We pale skinned Celts are not good in heat and I for one did not get as much out of the visit as I should, judging from John's report! With the striking change in the weather our next visit to the Parkland at Sansaw is more likely to suffer from cold and wet than heat! Full details of rendezvous, location and timings can be found below.

I came across these interesting statistics recently

#### The landowner league table for woodland cover

Landowner	Acreage owned in England	Woodland, acres	Proportion of woodland
Forestry Commission	489,814	414,293	85%
National Trust	474,641	84,433	18%
MOD	397,098	60,311	15%
Crown Estate	264,233	40,558	15%
United Utilities	141,000	16,849	12%
Highways England	114,314	13,538	12%
Network Rail	100,525	10,693	11%
RSPB	127,032	12,133	10%
Duchy of Cornwall	130,639	7,361	6%
Church Commissioners	105,000	3,215	4%
England	32,000,000	3,240,000	10%

The report in The Guardian criticised the Duchy of Cornwall and the Church Commissioners in particular for not doing enough to tackle the climate crisis.

Another body not pulling its weight is the Welsh Government. It has allocated only £1.55 million per year to fund tree planting AND for purchase of timber harvesting machinery. This is a small fraction of what Scotland in particular and England are allocating.

**Forthcoming winter lectures.** It is becoming increasingly likely that George Peterken's key-note talk on 10th November will either not be allowed by the Government or if it is allowed can only go ahead with social distancing. This will not allow us to attract the size of audience it deserves. You will remember that the Aljos Farjon lecture on oaks was a sell-out and acted as a good recruiter of members. On the other hand it is possible that by hiring the lecture hall at the University Centre we would be able to house with full social distancing the number of members who usually turn up for 'ordinary' lectures whereas St Peters Church Hall would not. I am scheduled to speak on Tree Seed at the December Meeting and so am as keen as anybody to know what could or will happen!

**Visit to Sansaw Park, Saturday 12th September meeting at 2.00p.m.**

This meeting will definitely go ahead with or without social distancing. To facilitate this I have carried out a reconnaissance of the estate and plotted the position of some 40 of the more unusual trees, including the largest Wollemi Pine I have seen, Dawn Redwood, three species of Cedar, a Katsura Tree (will the burnt caramel smell have appeared), a large specimen for Shropshire Tulip Tree, a Cornus kousa with fruit, Japanese Maples in many varieties, several paper bark and snake bark maples, an unusual elm, plus two trees that stumped me. I am hoping that Graham and Lyn will be able to make this visit and he will identify the tree.

To get to Sansaw take the A49 north of Shrewsbury. 400m beyond the de-restriction sign to the north of Hadnall take the left turn marked to Sansaw Business Park. Then first right and right again in Sansaw Heath. At the T junction turn left and follow round the estate wall to the junction where the road splits with Yorton sign-posted to the left and Grinshill to the right. Turn sharp right and park on the concrete standing of Hope Farm with its black and white farmhouse. At this point I will give out a map and key of the notable trees in the Park. But FIRST we will visit the 1000 year old oak only 60m away before crossing in to the Park via the public right of way. Much of the Park doubles for a dairy farm and depending upon the height of the grass, walking boots would be advisable.

**A Shrewsbury Tree Walk Pamphlet @ £1-** I will bring a supply of these with me on 12th September. If you would like to have one please bring a £1 coin with you. Andy Gordon, Chair

**Visit to Johns Massey's Garden at Ashwoods Nursery. Saturday, 8th August 2020:**

It was a good turnout on a beautiful afternoon to see the exquisite garden at Ashwoods, planned and planted since 1998 by John Massey V.M.H. (denotes Victorian Medal of Honour), the owner of Ashwoods Nursery. He lives on the site and this is his own private garden, only opened to the public on a limited number of days in the year. It extends along the side of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal for three acres and was very much influenced by the French garden 'Le Vasterival' near Dieppe.

This French garden at Dieppe is a tree enthusiast's paradise if any of you should find yourselves in that part of Normandy. It was originally planted by a certain Princess Sturdza but, alas, she is no longer alive and her daughter-in-law now owns and manages the garden. John told a number of us who spoke to him that Princess Sturdza had taught him how to garden and, especially, how to prune trees. He had followed her teaching here at

Ashwoods in that most trees have been shaped according to the principles of 'transparency pruning'. Basically, this is crown raising so that the trunks extend up to a higher crown giving opportunities to see through the stems to the garden beyond and, of course, removing shade from the plants beneath.

Following the visit, I asked members to tell me what they thought to be the best parts of the garden for them and if they felt that there was a memorable fact that they took away with them. Obviously, I also asked them what they thought about the trees.



A number of members of our group commented on the transparency pruning, saying how much they liked the idea. One member thought it had the effect of drawing the eye in and high-lighting the flowers and shrubs beneath. Another simply told me that they really loved the well-pruned trees and shrubs and that each was displayed to show it off to its best advantage. Three members remarked on the species that had been transparency pruned – many white-stemmed birches and maples. The effect of this kind of pruning certainly enhances those trees with eye-catching bark. Other trees with more mundane bark patterns or colour would, obviously, not provide the same effect and trees with interesting leaves, flowers and seed, where their best attributes would be up in the air, were not necessarily good subjects for this type of pruning except that the pruning would enliven the planting beneath them.



Stretching alongside the canal, the garden was provided with different micro-climates. A member who mentioned this thought that having the canal as a backdrop really enhanced the feel of the place. He felt it surreal being in a garden 'watching folks walking along the opposite bank and boats floating by with crews agog at crowds in the garden'. He continued: 'It was just like a ha-ha, a barrier that pretends not to be a barrier'. Other members really noticed the difference between the cooler parts of the garden, nearer the canal, and the hotter parts further away.

Some members were very specific about the parts of the garden that they really liked. Two people mentioned their attraction to the bed of *Cornus kousa* with its white bracts interspersed with white roses. Others mentioned the impressive and imaginative pruning in the garden around John's bungalow whilst another, the pink-barked birches forming a tunnel to the wild-flower meadow. And another member was particularly taken by the Liquidambar which, instead of being transparency pruned, were kept quite small. Perhaps this is done to more easily enjoy their autumn leaf colour.

A number of people liked the range of ornaments placed strategically and interestingly around the garden.

But I haven't said much about the variety of tree species that John had chosen to plant. There were some tall trees that had been in existence before John started his own planting. He left these: a hornbeam near the canal and a wonderfully large and mature Black Poplar, to name just two.



Some members mentioned one or two species that caught their eye. There was a Scholar's Tree (*Sophora japonica* that some of you will now know to have been reclassified as *Styphnolobium japonicum*), but this was certainly not the usually-seen one. This was *S. japonicum* 'Dot' with much smaller pinnate leaves curled and twisted in a most unrecognisable way until one tried to straighten them out and, only then, could see something of the more familiar species. Another member mentioned the rare *Sorbus caloneura* and said they were particularly struck by it. This is not a species that I'm familiar with so I just had to look it up and it turns out that it really is an interesting tree. It's a rare, hardy, Chinese Sorbus with white flowers in dense clusters, their stamens being purple in colour. It has pear-shaped berries which, although a dull brown, can be set off in the autumn by the rather pleasant bronze leaf colour. A species I must certainly look out for again. Myself, I was particularly attracted to two trees – the Cut-Leaved Buckthorn (again very rare) and a Gleditzia (*Gleditzia triacanthos* 'Ruby Lace') with its deep bronze-red foliage which my copy of Hilliers tells me is an American variety and that it's the young leaves that are this colour, changing to a dark green later in the season.

Members were very struck by the amount of hard work undertaken by the gardeners (the head gardener Nigel and his team). One member referred to the immaculately weeded beds and the perfectly cut bed edges. 'How many metres must they have to cut and how long must it take them?' he asked. Other people also referred to the hard work that must go into keeping this garden as perfect as it is. 'How well groomed the garden is for its size and only four gardeners!' said one. Another said 'But there are no weeds!' Another told me that John pinches out the new 'candles' on the small pines each year to limit their size. However long must that take?

Two people mentioned the bees! A queen bee had settled on the lawn, so John covered it with a wheelbarrow. Someone else saw the start of a swarm...but did keep well away. This was a very bee-friendly garden with, as someone said, 'a huge number of bees on a wide range of plants'. Many others said, too, how much they liked the practically untouched wildlife area.



This really was a beautiful and impressive garden. No wonder that Carol Klein had picked it out as one of the three best private gardens in the country. One member said she 'loved the whole garden. It was perfect for me, a garden I would love to own'. Because of Covid-19, we did not have a guide as this would have meant keeping rather too close together (although John and Nigel were at hand to answer any questions we had) so one member said she would love another visit with John giving us a private tour, maybe some spring, and this from someone who had already been twice before. Now that is a real recommendation! *John Tuer (All photo credits Ivor)*

**Newsflash – Cherry Tree Arboretum open FRIDAY 9th October, Cherry Tree Lane. Woore, Crewe CW3 9SR Extended opening hours 11am-5pm Admission £6 proceeds to the Shropshire Historic Churches Trust. WC. Restricted car parking, so please if picnicking, find a leafy space elsewhere on site.**