



Chairman's Comments

Dear Members

I hope that you all had a good Christmas and that you managed to see your families in person or online even if, like my wife and me, you were unable to give them a physical hug. There is unlikely to be any change in restrictions before the New Year holiday but there might well be changes before our planned January visits. Attached to the January Newsletter you will find the provisional programme of talks and visits for 2021. All of the listed events are clearly subject to the Government's restrictions at the time. The events have been sent to you now to whet your appetites and even encourage our wonderful members to stay with us.

In the last Newsletter it was reported that Membership Fees for 2021 would not need to be paid and I would like to thank those members who have allowed their direct debits or standing orders to stand to the benefit of S.T.T. funds. Usually with the January Newsletter a renewal notice is sent out by post with a stamped addressed envelope. This will not happen this year nor, in order to conserve our funds, will a membership card and programme be printed and sent out. Please regard the attached Programme of events as proof of your membership. However please take this opportunity to advise the Membership Secretary through the Newsletter Editor of any change of address, email address or telephone number.

The visit to Acton Scott on 19th December went ahead with proper social distancing, and we are grateful to John Tuer for his report (see below). In it he mentions that the Hornbeam Avenue is carpeted with snow drops in season. The owners have kindly agreed that S.T.T. members can return to do the Acton Scott Tree Walk when the snow drops are out. As the flowering of snowdrops varies year to year as a result of the weather no definite date has been set. Those receiving the Newsletter by email will be informed of the date when the snowdrops are at their best. Some members were unable to make the walk on 19th December at the last minute, but have expressed an interest to do so. Again the owners, Alison and Francis Acton are happy for members to do the walk on any date provided they are informed. Please email me (andyg.gordon@me.com) or phone me on 01743 357252 so that I can tell the Actons. Many members have expressed an interest in repeating the walk when the trees are in leaf. This might also be fitted in to our summer visits programme.

At times in the past I have commented upon the forest nursery scene and plant availability. I recently heard from my main contact in the industry that as of the end of September 2019 his nursery was totally sold out of all projected stock. In 29 years in the industry, the earliest ever. By that date each year he has made an estimate of the yield of plants from his sowings and enters these figures onto the computer. These are the figures of which he is sold out. The diabolic weather conditions the nurseries have since suffered has meant that hand as opposed to machine lifting has had to be carried out, which not only increases his costs but from experience reduces the stock available. The situation is the same in most British forest nurseries and due to all governments responding to the demand for more tree planting is reported to be as bad on the continent. So even if some traders want to import stock, quite apart from Brexit, they will not be able to. My contact has enough European workers to handle his crop this year but is very fearful of what will happen in years to come. Another large British nursery with problems is located at Ashford just where the A20 and M20 meet!

I hope to see you all some time soon and wish you a more normal New Year!
Andy Gordon

Visit to Acton Scott Gardens December 2020

John Tuer writes: 'Like many of us I have visited the Farm Museum at Acton Scott several times over the years but never knew of Acton Scott Hall. What a splendid place it is: The hall is a gem of Elizabethan architecture hidden away behind the museum and, in fact, hidden away so that it is totally unnoticeable when going along the local road past the church. It was a pleasure and a privilege for the Severn Tree Trust to see not only the hall (obviously only from the outside) but to be able to wander through its extensive garden of wonderful trees. And to be welcomed, too, by our host Alison Acton herself. We want to thank Andy Gordon for setting up this visit.

Andy had spent a lot of time touring the gardens prior to our visit, discovering which trees to show us for our own tour. His map and directions worked exceptionally well. Should we ever have doubted it? He even worked his magic on the weather. A little rain at the start when some of us were in the churchyard under the large, very large, yew and then the rest of the time brightened up and was dry.

We did set off at slightly different times to keep the statutory two metres apart, so the group behind us just might have been a little bit wetter.

There really is no point in describing all the trees we saw as you all have the tour list and can see for yourselves that Andy had put twenty five trees on his sheet for us to find. There were other trees besides; a Monkey Puzzle tree and a Western Red Cedar among them, but perhaps twenty five was



Figure 1: Japanese Red Cedar with Acton Scott Hall behind (ed)

enough for us to take in. I thought I saw a Strawberry Tree too, but I may be mistaken. For me it needs the flowers or fruit for proper recognition.

The Rock Garden was approached through a stone arch and what a gem we discovered once through it. As with the rest of the garden, the Actons had only just inherited it and little work had been done on it for the past thirty years or so. They have various projects in hand with the re-establishment of the Rock Garden to its former glory being one of them.

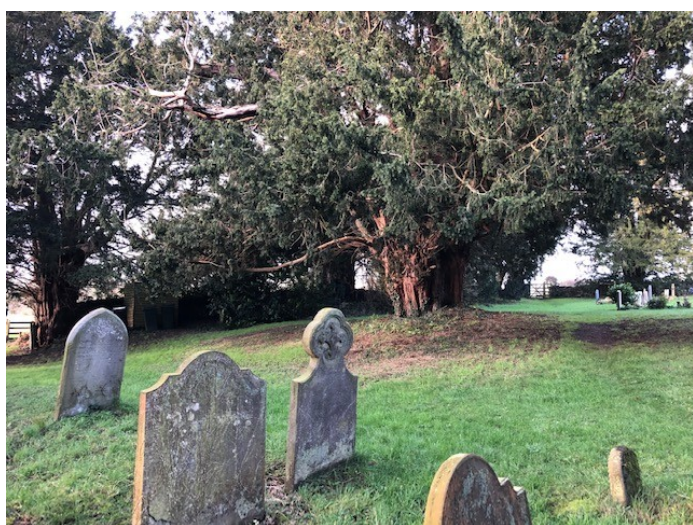
I think the highlight of the visit for me was the Hornbeam Walk and for this I shall repeat a little of what Andy had written. It was a very unusual feature and, at 70 metres in length, certainly could not be missed. Andy had told us that a linear feature was marked here on the first Ordnance Survey map of 1882 but wondered whether this was the avenue or simply a fence line, was it was originally a hornbeam avenue? This would be something to return to when the leaves are on the trees and it will be quite a sight.



Figure 2: The Hornbeam Walk (photo ed)

This is a garden to revisit in the spring or summer when the trees are in leaf and what we would see would be very different. Alison did say that we could do this and as only nine members came along this time, perhaps another visit in a few months time would interest a few more members and be an excellent experience even if those of us who had already been were to go again.

Thank you Andy for all your work in putting this together. You won't need to prepare your sheet again as your original will be appropriate for any time of the year. *John Tuer*



Just a reminder that should you be short of something to do our Shrewsbury Tree Trail is available and selling well through the Shrewsbury Tourist Office in the Square. (ed)

Figure 3: The 1400+ year old Yew in the Churchyard (photo ed)

SEVERN TREE TRUST ANNUAL EVENTS 2021

VENUE. Subject to being able to make reservations when this becomes possible, please note that from now on our indoor meetings will take place in one of the Meeting Rooms in the University Centre on Frankwell Quay.

PROVISIONAL Programme for 2021

ALL DATES ARE SUBJECT TO CANCELLATION DUE TO COVID REGULATIONS

Saturday 30th January: Tree walk round Much Wenlock

Saturday 13th February 2021: A visit to be announced*

Tuesday 9th March: AGM—New date for AGM instead of February.*

Saturday 10th April: Visit. A visit to be announced*

Saturday 8th May: Visit. The Dingle gardens.*

Saturday 12th June: A visit to a member's farm.*

Saturday 10th July: Visit: Dorothy Clive Garden*

Saturday 14th August: Visit: National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas*

Saturday 4th September: Visit: Bitterley Court garden. *

Tuesday, 12th October: If another visit cannot be arranged Andy Gordon will give a talk on "Unlocking some of the Secrets of Tree Seeds".*

Tuesday, 9th November: Big name talk. Ted Green has now been contacted successfully. His subject will be **'Europe's Ancient Trees'** and he is prepared to drop his fee! We shall have to accommodate him and possibly Jill Butler.*

Tuesday, 14th December: Talk. Bob Weston. Ex-lecturer in arboriculture at Newton Rigg College in Cumbria. **Bob is very happy to give us a talk. I spoke to him about something to do with the 'wood wide web' so he'll give his talk called 'Trees: Great Heights and Hidden Depths'**. He is prepared to give it for no fee. Needs screen/digital projector/compatible laptop. He will bring memory stick with slides. If we can't supply a projector he will see if he can borrow one and bring his own laptop if necessary.*

***PLEASE NOTE: All the above events are subject to final agreement which, of course, is dependent upon the Covid-19 situation.**