



Dear Members,

We really are living in strange times and I hope that none of you has caught the dreadful Covid 19. Your committee has been wracking its brains over our future programme so that you will at least get something for your annual membership!

### Next visit

The visit to Sansaw nearly exceeded the Government's limit of 30 meeting together in one place and on a sunny day proved very successful. So much so that at a hastily arranged Committee meeting afterwards your committee felt that a visit to the trees on Grinshill might prove just as successful. Should it be a self-guided walk or should it be a scheduled visit to replace the visit to Wyre Forest planned for 10th October? In the end we have decided to offer both!

John Tuer has put together a list of trees to look out for on the two mile walk, which is so full of detail that any member could self guide themselves round the walk from and back to the **Car Park at Corbet Wood at SJ 52468 23829**. This will allow members to choose good weather to do the walk as in the wet it can be slippery.

Alternatively members wishing to be guided round the walk should foregather at the same location in time for a 2p.m. start on 10th October. The Government's ruling is that no more than six people can group together. This will not be a walk for exercise when up to 30 people can meet together. Therefore as soon as the first five members arrive a guide will start the tour.

When the second five members have arrived the second group will set off with guide. A third guide is available but a fourth and fifth group will have to self guide.

I cannot stress enough how important it is to maintain the 2m spacing between members when walking in single file or 1m spacing when walking abreast. In previous visits we have NOT been very good at maintaining the stipulated isolation distances.

With this Newsletter you will all receive copies of the route and directions that John has put together as well as the various mainly native trees to look out for. I am sorry that it is not possible to send a map as well as this would be breaking

copyright. Some members might have the map along with the description of walk number 9 Grinshill, here, there and everywhere in the book of Shropshire walks.

### **Future plans.**

As we suspected the George Peterken lecture will not be taking place this November and sadly he was not prepared to commit himself to give his talk in November 2021. However John has managed to persuade the inimitable Ted Green to give our 2021 keynote lecture instead.

The University Centre is taking no bookings before March at the earliest and although St Peter's Church Hall has been booked for over a year, the chances of being able to hold meetings there before the start of our outdoor visits in 2021 are vanishingly small. So what can we do to keep our members happy? One suggestion was to provide members with monthly self-guided walks of interesting tree collections. Not very exciting but something to maintain contact. If any member has any bright ideas please please get in touch with a member of the Committee.

In the same way we will not be able to hold our Annual General Meeting in February when originally planned. Our ideas as to how this can take place will be announced in plenty of time.

We will be sending out a list of the visits and lectures we are trying to arrange or already have arranged in an effort to keep your interest alive.

### **The Reabrook Local Nature Reserve**

In the July newsletter I wrote a short piece about the Reabrook L.N.R. Following that I had an email from Matt Wilcoxon who manages the site for the Town Council. Apparently the cattle stay on the Reabrook for much longer than I had suggested, up to twenty weeks through the summer. Their purpose there is that of "conservation grazing" so rental income is of secondary importance.

Another point I was trying to make was about the inappropriate size of some of the trees that had been planted there with expensive protection. Living so close to the L.N.R. I walk there frequently and found that of the 15 standard or feathered trees that had been planted for this conservation grazing, all four native black poplars had been broken at the top of the iron mesh protection, three by human vandals and one by the August gales. It appears that although Matt Wilcoxon had ordered much smaller whips, when they arrived they were nearly 4m tall. Inevitably multi-stemmed trees will develop instead of nice maidens. I noticed that following the August gales a large branch from one of those I planted 20 years ago had fallen across the Reabrook and had had to be removed as it was blocking the flow. *Andy*

### **Visit to Sansaw Hall. Saturday 12th September 2020**

We've had visits to the garden and trees of Sansaw Hall in the past but I've never been able to join in on any of those occasions. So I was delighted to be able to get there this time and I was certainly not disappointed. From what I hear, too, none of the wonderful number of twenty nine members who came along was disappointed

either. This seems to have been the best attendance at any of our visits for a long time and we were blessed with an afternoon of excellent warm sunny weather.

Sansaw is certainly not easy to find being in the midst of a network of small lanes, but following Andy's instructions we made our way to Hope Farm which had perfectly good hard standing for cars and, fortunately, enough for this large number of visitors.

As we turned off the A49 to start our way through this maze of lanes we were met by the sight of huge nets spread around the bases of a number of English Oaks, our first arboricultural experience of the afternoon. Andy recognised these straight away and told us that they had been laid out by his old company, Forestart, to collect the acorns as they fell. He estimated that they would collect about one thousand kilograms of acorns from there by this method. Now that's a metric tonne, a considerable weight, just short of the imperial ton we all know and love! How on earth do they manage to carry them away? The answer to your question is that when almost all the acorns have fallen 3 or 4 people attack each net, lift them and encourage the acorns into the centre before sweeping them into c25 kg net sacks before taking them to Forestart and cleaning them over the large Body Wincrowing Cleaner. Hopefully I will get pictures of this to show in my talk when it eventually gets to give it!

When we eventually met at Hope Farm, Andy, who had done a thorough reconnaissance beforehand, took us to see a large English Oak in the adjacent field. This had a diameter at breast height of 8.91 metres, a huge ancient tree but, sadly, not large enough to have been included in Aljos Farjon's book on oaks in which he required a DBH (dimensions at breast height) of 9 metres to qualify.

From there we went into the Sansaw gardens proper past a number of old oaks many of which had been damaged by livestock. Such a pity this as some were over four hundred years old. Fortunately, the cattle were electric-fenced off from the fascinating tree collection which spread around the hall itself. Another pity was that this tree collection had not been recorded so no planting dates were known apart from the very occasional tree. I saw a beech, for example, with a plaque commemorating a family wedding dated 1990, but hardly any others. One could, I suppose, measure all the trees' DBHs and using known growth rates for different species, estimate planting dates. Now there's a job for the gardener, if he feels inclined.

As I said, Andy had visited beforehand and done a very thorough recce of the trees on the site and had provided us with a numbered map and list of trees. To avoid crowding around in these days of Covid, we were then able to pursue our own tour from tree to tree, although it was handy to have some members who were able to point out features of the trees and try to identify the two blanks in Andy's list. For those who have the incomplete list, tree number 24 was identified as a *Gleditsia* (the Honey Locust), *Gleditsia triacanthos* and, as this specimen had no spines, it might have been the form 'inermis'. Tree number 25, however, gave us something of a puzzle but the group opinion seemed to be that it was the Tupelo tree (*Nyssa*

*sylvatica*). Roger's wonderful mobile phone app helped us with this. Some of you will be well aware of the app which searches through its list of trees from a photograph taken of the tree, technically obvious to most of you but just magic to me! Looking very carefully at this tree, we did then spot the occasional leaf that had already turned to its wonderful autumn-red give-away sign.

Tree number 16 which Andy had tentatively suggested as being an elm also gave pause for thought. The leaves were very like those of elm but the sides about the central vein were not oblique. So we had to hunt for seed. Not very obvious, until Andrew found some to identify it as a Hornbeam.

Andy's very full list of twenty five trees gave us ample to look at on that afternoon. The more geekish of us, however, did find a very fine *Thujaopsis dolabrata* (the 'Hiba') with its striking white markings on the undersides of the leaves and a large *Chamaecyparis pisifera* that had actually layered with four 'new' limbs spread around the mother tree in the middle. (What John kindly does not say is that I had also mis-identified a *Cunninghamia lanceolata* as a Wollemi Pine! Andy).

I have said nothing about the history of the hall as Andy had already sent that out to you beforehand with his list of trees. In fact, we have to thank Andy for all his excellent preparatory work that made this visit run so smoothly. And it was so helpful that, by preparing the visit in this way, we could keep our social distancing under control. Thank you Andy. *John Tuer*

**Publication: The Great Gardens of Wales by Tony Russell – Supported by HRH Prince of Wales.** Signed copies of the book can be purchased direct from the website [www.gardenstovisit](http://www.gardenstovisit), or by sending a cheque for £15.99 (made out to Publicity Works Ltd) to *Gardens to Visit, Dan y Ser, Rhyd, Gwynedd LL48 6ST*. Please ensure you include the address you would like the book sent to along with your cheque.

**\* The visit to Cherry Tree Arboretum announced as a Stop Press in the September Newsletter, on which STT was going to piggy-back has also been cancelled due to the Rule of Six.**

*Below the 1000 year old oak (photo credits Rosemary Salter) Part of the group in the woods at Sansaw*



## **Tree walk in the Grinshill area.**

This is a 2-mile walk starting from the Corbett Wood car park. Please wear strong shoes or boots. In many places the ground is very rough. In some it may be slippery. You will walk across stony surfaces in some places and, when wet, these may be hazardous. Please just take care and you should enjoy this very pleasant walk.

### **In the car park:**

Look for Sycamore, Scots Pine, Yew, Damson.

### **Then make your way along the path which starts behind the information board, turns right immediately into a woodland path going downhill in a stone cutting.**

You will pass a number of quarries on the way. This sandstone has been used in the building of Powis Castle, Chirk Aqueduct and Attingham Hall among other places.

Look for: Oaks (which oaks are they: English, Sessile or a hybrid?); Hazel (are they coppiced?), Holly (Male or Female?); Birch (which species?); Yew (Male or Female?); Ash; Rowan; Elder; Beech. Have you found them all? Near the bottom: A yew hedge on your right, followed by Lawsons Cypresses.

### **At the bottom of this path, you'll be in Grinshill Village**

*Now at this point, you may wish to see a Dawn Redwood which would mean turning left here and taking just a short walk (100m or so) to see it in the garden of a house named Foxcote on the left. The Dawn Redwood is one of the very few deciduous conifers.*

Then please return to this corner and continue as follows:

Turn right and right again, almost immediately, at Higher House.

Look for (mainly in the church grounds, but also elsewhere): hawthorn; cherry; yew; walnut. Continue uphill past a cherry in Higher House garden, yews in the church grounds. You will reach an oak planted in 1935 with a seat around it: English or Sessile ?

### **Turn Left**

Look for: Lilac; Horse Chestnut (what disease does it have ?); Douglas Firs (can you find their distinctive cones ?); Contorted Hazel (Harry Lauder's walking stick); Scots Pine; Lawsons Cypresses; Japanese Larch; Rowan; Oak (very large and very old); Sycamore (can you see what fungus they have on them ?); Ash.

### **Go past the Animal Rescue Centre on your left**

Look for: Laburnum; Silver Birch; Smoke Bush (Cotinus -a red one in a garden to the left);

House No. 2 has a Lilac and a Sumac.

### **Go through the gates into the churchyard**

Look for: 2 Elms (which species ?); Limes (which species ?); Ash; Copper Beech; Irish Yews: Can you find the mistake on the gravestone (look for the sign); Variegated Holly; Lawsons Cypresses;

### **Follow the path around the left of the church**

Look for: Irish Yew; Cherry; Tulip Tree; Laburnum.

### **Go left to gate exit and turn right**

Look for: Cherry Plum (*Prunus cerasifera*); Holly; Hornbeam; Sycamore; Oak; Beech; Douglas Fir. You will arrive at the special Horse Chestnut on the green opposite the school.

### **Continue ahead and fork right to the summit (See the Sansaw Estates signboard)**

As you head up to the summit and viewpoint, look out for: Oak; Sycamore; Holly; Birch; Rowan; Scots Pine; Douglas Fir; Goat Willow.

### **At the summit/Viewpoint**

No trees!! Can you spot Hope Farm and Sansaw Hall?

Use the topography to get your bearings. Can you see the Brieddens or even Cadair Idris on a clear day?

### **Return from the Summit on the same path and take the right fork (a little way after the solar panels) where a direction post has lost its sign.**

A Douglas Fir is just behind this post. Between here and bottom of the path, Look for: Birch; Scots Pine; Oak; Holly; Sycamore.

### **Head for the white barrier at the bottom and turn right. This track will take you directly back to the car park.**

Look for: Sycamore; Cherry Laurel; Rowan; Oak; Sweet Chestnut; Elder; Ash; Hazel; Cherry Laurel in fruit; Lawsons Cypress; Holly; Hawthorn; Field Maple; Yew; Cherry; Damson; Goat Willow (a pollard)

***At the end of this track, the car park is just to your right.***