



Visit to NMA Alrewas cancelled, alternative visit to be arranged....

Dear Member,

It had been planned to hold our next outdoor meeting on 14th August at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas near Burton on Trent where Graham Pearce had kindly offered to lead us round the more interesting trees that have been planted there since 1997. (We will certainly rearrange as Graham has a lot of knowledge about the site). It is currently necessary to pre-book visits but due to its popularity during the Pandemic all places on 14th August have already been booked. As I write these comments, only a few places are still available on 7th August when an open-air concert is being held there. It is therefore very unlikely that by the time that you read these comments any places will be available on 7th or 21st as well. We are therefore trying to find another location for members to visit that does not involve pre-booking. In order to give members as much notice as possible of this change to the programme this Newsletter is being sent out before an alternative venue has been confirmed. Members will be sent details of the venue by email. **Those members who receive their Newsletter by mail are urged to contact me on 01743 357252 or David Martin on 01743 343784** to find out details of the alternative venue which will be on 14th August.

Tree Planting- In the past in these notes I have commented that the amount of planting that has gone on in Wales has been well below target figures and proportionately below that in England and well below that in Scotland. Hopefully that is about to change with the announcement by the Welsh Government in the last two weeks of two initiatives to help plant 100,000ha of new forests by 2030. Bearing in mind the current figure is less than 2000 ha, this target will be very hard to meet.

More and more commentators are making the point that before such massive tree projects get under way the instigators must address a range of scientific, political, social and economic concerns. Poorly designed projects that don't address these issues could do more harm than good, the researchers say, wasting money as well as political and public goodwill. There's too much focus on numbers of seedlings planted, and too little time spent on how to keep the trees alive in the long term (one only has to think of the number of plants that died on the HS2 site) or in working with local communities. And there's not enough emphasis on how different types of forests sequester very different amounts of carbon.

Agro-forestry. I have also seen a number of articles recently about this. Of course Peter Aspin is an STT member and past Chairman and has been practicing this for over 30 years on his farm at Saulton. STT made a guided visit to his farm a few years ago and I know some members made a specially organised visit there in the last few weeks. In a recent article which appeared in the Farmer's Weekly along with listing the benefits to animals of agro-forestry (shelter, shade, reducing stress and nutrition) the author gave an interesting table on the relative palatability and resilience of native broadleaves. Aspen and willow are the most palatable and in descending order of palatability ash, rowan, hazel, oak, Scots Pine, juniper, holly, birch, hawthorn, beech and alder. I remember that Peter has found that his cattle find the Monkey Puzzle surprisingly palatable but of course that is not native!

Yet another Tree Pest- In the last few years Oak Processionary Moth and particularly the caterpillars associated with it have become a notifiable pest and disease in the UK. It is endemic in much of Europe but sadly the Plant Health Regulations operating throughout the EU have not been sufficiently well implemented to prevent the pest entering Britain. Initially it was found only in the London area but in 2020 it was widely found in in a 50 mile wide circle around London as well as in a large number of individual locations throughout the UK. The pest should never have reached the UK in the first place. It is not found on young oak plants but can infect feathered and standard oak trees (only) from about five years old. The tell-tale symptoms are a plaque of tens to hundreds of caterpillars lying tightly packed against the stem. I have been unable to find a non-copyrighted image to include but those with a computer can immediately obtain photos by searching for Photos oak processionary moth. These plaques are very obvious on the stems and branches of young trees and should have been picked up by the Plant Health Inspectors and nurserymen in continental nurseries before allowing plant passports to be issued. They should never have reached the UK. On mature oaks in the London area binoculars are needed to spot the plaques which are covered in masses of greyish hairs.

It is the fine hairs of the caterpillars when disturbed, by accident or by animals which cause a serious skin irritations which in humans require hospital attention. When breathed in the symptoms are particularly serious.

As far as I know no symptomatic trees have been found in Shropshire although they were found in the Liverpool area and as far north as Glasgow. Since the UK left the EU over 200 new Plant Health Inspectors have been recruited and provided regulations are followed all large infected oak trees should be intercepted before they are distributed assuming they were not identified in Europe and banned from export. Being aware of the seriousness of the problem nurserymen are unlikely to break the rules; sadly it is what the industry calls the sheds which act as middlemen where rules are much more likely to be broken. I hope to see some of you soon.
Andy Gordon, Chair

Our visit to New Invention – Saturday, 10th July 2021: A big thank you to Sarah and Simon Jameson for allowing us to spend an afternoon at their new

woodland site with our picnics. Ahead of the event, the day's weather did sound to be not too promising but it brightened up especially for our occasion and the sun even deigned to come through.

We were able to sit on dry ground by their old barn that they have now set about restoring. Last December, at the time of our planting, this was such a run-down building that we thought of them having so much work to do on it. But now, the walls have risen to the height at which they are nearly ready to receive their roof. What wonderful progress but, then, Sarah and Simon are not people to sit and watch the grass grow!

We were also able to see the planting that we undertook for them and, in December, a time when there were no leaves on the trees, we couldn't tell whether the trees were going to succeed or not. They had all leafed up and, being on the wettest area of their site, were growing particularly well.

Sarah and Simon took us up the hill to show us the success of their first planting where they had put in 900 mixed natives. They were also growing well with very few losses. In planting this many trees, you are bound to have some failures and Sarah told us that these amounted to only about nine trees which is an excellent success rate. The average loss generally is about ten per cent – ninety trees in this case. But their trees have been receiving the most tender loving care that any trees could get. So well done Sarah and Simon, all your care and attention has paid off. They had even had a large delivery of bark chippings, and mulching had prevented much competition from the surrounding grassland.



Figure 1: The visit to New Invention with the marsh meadow to left and the field rising behind the rebuilt barn (photo Richard Dorrell)

Some of our group did partake in our tree quiz and I'm happy to say that Alison Owen scored the highest and won for herself a pot of honey from hives of bees near the redwood grove at Leighton. A most enjoyable afternoon was had by all and we want to thank Sarah and Simon so much for hosting us and for providing drink and cakes. *John Tuer*