



Newsletter

October 2021

*(Formerly Men of the Trees following the work of
Richard St Barbe Baker)*



9 October Visit to Dingle Nurseries, Frochais, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 9JD @ 2pm. (see below)

Dear Member,

As you will see from John's report of our visit to Bitterley Court there was a good turnout of members there and I hope that there will be an even better turnout of members for **Ted Green's talk on What tree to plant where?** which is being given at Shrewsbury School Auditorium (The Barnes Theatre) on 26th October at 7.30pm. I would urge members, if they have not already done so to obtain their free ticket from John Tuer by sending a Stamped addressed envelope to him at 5 Woodside, Homer, Much Wenlock, TF13 6NQ. Ted has years of experience in managing ancient trees and he is a very amusing speaker. You are guaranteed to spend a very enjoyable and informative evening.

Talking of old trees, I attended recently a Tree Health Seminar at Castle Howard which ended with a tour of their Yorkshire Arboretum with its collection of ancient oaks. The meeting was held in the Lecture Room of the brand new Tree Health Centre which was officially opened five days later by Prof Nicola Spence the Chief Plant Health Officer. If any member is planning a trip to Yorkshire I would strongly recommend that they include a visit to Castle Howard in their plans. The Tree Health Centre is a pioneering initiative that aims to make visitors more aware of the importance of a healthy treescape and the problems caused by tree pests and diseases. It offers specialist training in tree health matters through a wide range of courses to develop awareness of tree health issues. Full details of these can be found by accessing their website at treehealthcentre.org.

Visitors to the 120 hectare Yorkshire Arboretum are rewarded with identification labels on all trees. I have been to so many arboreta where labels have been removed as souvenirs? At Castle Howard I was interested to note that all of their native oaks were labelled as *Quercus spp*; no attempt is made to specify them as *Quercus robur* or *Q. petraea*!

I was able to attend this Seminar because I had been auditing a nearby forest nursery the day before for the Woodland Trust which is determined that all plants that it purchases come from seed collected and grown in Britain or Ireland. To their horror in 2015 the Trust discovered that a high proportion of the ash trees it had been purchasing, although grown from seed collected in Britain, had nevertheless

been imported by British nurseries from EU nurseries and that they had already been infected with ash die-back. For a ridiculous technical issue, ash trees infected with ash die-back in the EU were not on the proscribed list. At that date pre-Brexit the UK was not able to prohibit the importation of diseased ash plants. In my opinion one of the few good things that came from Brexit is that the UK can now unilaterally ban the importation of plants if it wants to, which it has done for ash as well as sweet chestnut. It is now also able to examine plants at the point of entry into the UK and to do this it has appointed 50 Plant Health inspectors.

Last week I also audited a large nursery which admitted to importing annually hundreds of thousands of one and two year old broadleaved seedlings. Although since Brexit the bureaucracy has increased these importations are still taking place and it was my job to make sure that this nursery's stock control was good enough to ensure that any plants it supplies under the Woodland Trust Assurance scheme do not get contaminated by non-Assured stock. All tree nurseries are required to issue Plant Passport for any trees it sells whether or not the plants are grown in the UK or abroad. When we buy trees we should be supplied as a matter of right with details of the Plant Passport under which the trees are sold. From this it will be immediately obvious whether the trees were grown in the EU or in Britain.

Before Ted Green's talk there is of course our visit to **Dingle Nurseries on 9th October** and I very much hope to see you there as well. **Instructions** from Shrewsbury; drive to **Welshpool**, turn off at Railway Station and go left and right into town centre, continue to Raven Square and go over the roundabout, (**not** alongside the narrow gauge railway to Llanfair Caerinion.) continue along initially twisty road for one mile and it is signposted to the left. Meet at the main car park. (*This is on at the minute, but we are watching the 'petrol crisis' carefully*).

Andy Gordon, Chair

Visit to Bitterley Court – Saturday, 4 September 2021

Well, we certainly chose a good day for this visit. Blue skies; and trees in green, purple, brown against them. What a beautiful combination for the many members who came along to see a fascinating range from the more common to very many rare trees.

Many of the more common trees were there at Bitterley Court: a ginkgo, a tulip tree, some snake-barked maples, a Wellingtonia, a Persian Ironwood, a Handkerchief tree, I could go on. But what was particularly interesting about this very large garden was the number of rare trees. Katherine and James, the owners, had prepared for us a map with the trees numbered and a full list of tree names. So we really didn't have to spend time trying to identify them. More time was spent gasping in awe at this unusual range of species.

When I say *unusual range of species*, I mean really the unusual range of varieties and cultivars. For example, readers may be familiar with the Bird Cherry (*Prunus padus*) but here were two varieties of this species: *P. padus 'Colorata'* and *P. padus 'Watereri'*. The '*Colorata*', at the right time of the year, would have had coppery-

purple young foliage and pale pink flowers while the 'Watereri' would have had longer racemes, up to 20cm long, than the basic species, *P. padus*.

For this report, if my readers will permit, I have chosen to leave out accounts of those more common species and dwell a little longer on the rarer trees. Some of these trees are rare simply because few are grown, so fewer can be seen in gardens. Others will be fairly new introductions to the range of trees so there would, yet, have been little time for them to be discovered by those who want the more unusual varieties.

Look, for example, at the wonderful Dutch Elm resistant *Ulmus x Wingham* of which many members will have heard as we planted five of them at The Hurst last year. This is a fairly new tree and not known about by many (unless you belong to S.T.T., then you're one of the fortunate few!) and so very few have been planted so far. Katherine and James managed to buy a specimen last year so this is a new addition to their garden.

The 'red-twiggled lime' (*Tilia platyphyllos 'Rubra'*) has been in the garden for many years and is now a large tree. James's father and grandfather and, I understand, great grandfather, were all keen tree planters and had planted trees in the garden for many decades. This tree is a planting of former generations. It is one of the Large-leaved Limes with, today, a huge spread of dark green leaves with numerous flowers, seeds and their bracts. On this day, of course, the flowers were over and we were seeing the development of a fine display of healthy seeds.

The Golden Whitebeam (*Sorbus aria 'Chrysophylla'*) was another unusual variety. It's yellowish leaves that we saw were to become a stunningly rich butter-yellow in the autumn.

The more common Snowbell tree (*Styrax japonica*) would be far too common for this garden. Instead we saw the varieties *S. japonica 'Benibana'* and *S. japonica 'Snowcone'*. The former, instead of the more common white flowers of the type, would have had pink flowers earlier in the year. I had trouble in finding any reference to 'Snowcone'. It was not in *Hilliers*. Nor was it in *New Trees: Recent introductions to cultivation*. I had to search the internet for this and found it to be a very hardy variety that could withstand temperatures down to -15°C. It might be more of interest because of its colourful bark. "On older trees, the bark splits to reveal orange inner bark which provides winter interest."



Figure 1: The amazing Bitterley Larch, the root bowl at ground level is all natural larch tree. (photo ed)

I also had difficulty tracking down *Prunus x persicoides* 'Spring Glow'. It was not in *Hilliers* but, once found in *New Trees* where it gave its former name – *Prunus x amygdalo-persica* – I was able to go back to *Hilliers* to find it under this name. Then I found that it was a hybrid between *P. dulcis* (the almond tree) and *P. persica* (the peach). And here it was at Bitterley where it would have had large dark pink long-lasting flowers.

I shall mention one more of Bitterley's trees, the *Sorbus wardii*. Not a variety or cultivar, but a species in its own right, *Hilliers* actually uses the word *rare* for this tree and says that the “*branches are stiff and erect giving the tree a distinct columnar habit. The fruits are amber/speckled brown*”. The tree was discovered in Bhutan by plant hunter Frank Kingdom-Ward, hence its name.

This superb afternoon was concluded with tea and *bara brith* made by our very own Angela. So many many thanks to Angela for that and to her and Roger for organising the whole visit for us. It would appear that owners, Katherine and James, also enjoyed the afternoon. Perhaps they were fired up by our own enthusiasm. They certainly told us that they wished to continue the family tradition of adding yet more trees to the garden. We thank them wholeheartedly for hosting our visit and giving us a glimpse of their very special garden.

December 2021 talk

Obviously we would like to see you at the Ted Green talk in October first but please make a note of our other talk to which we invite you before the end of the year. This will be on **Tuesday, 14th December** when we shall be back in the church hall on Monkmoor Road (more about that later). Our guest speaker on this occasion will be **Bob Watson**, a highly qualified arboriculturist, who will talk on '**Trees: Great Heights and Hidden Depths**'. More about this in a later Newsletter but please put the date in your diaries for the moment. Thank you.

Angela Hughes has asked me to advertise a private event for her:

[Sunday, October 17th](#). Cherry Tree Arboretum, Woore, CW3 9SR

Open [1-5pm](#), Please bring a picnic and cost is £7.50 cash.

(WC. Dogs allowed on leads.) NB. Please pre-book your car as parking is limited!

Contact Angela Hughes:Email a.dhughes@btinternet.com or Tel. [01743 367166](#)



Figure 2: David Cresswell's tree is an Oriental Plane (*Platanus orientalis*) which was his favourite tree.



Figure 3: Ruth Cresswell's tree is a London Plane (*Platanus x hispanica*). (both pictures Delia Naylor)

A reminder that it is the anniversaries of the deaths of David and Ruth Cresswell on 8 October and 22 September and as a tribute we want to share these pictures of their commemorative trees in Copthorne Park. Both trees are healthy and doing well and we actively keep an eye on them.