



Dear Members,

I hope that some of you were able to visit Attingham to see the snowdrops as well as perhaps completing the Mile Walk looking at the trees and shrubs in their dormant state. Although I was sorry that you were unable to visit the Acton Scott snowdrops, for sheer numbers of flowers Attingham far exceeds Acton Scott as the following pictures will show. Alison Acton kindly sent me a picture of the Hornbeam walk with the snow drops (on the left below). I took the one at Attingham on the right; each year they seem to get more plentiful.



*Figure 1: Snowdrops at Attingham (photo Andy Gordon)*

Did you know that there are over 1200 cultivars of Snowdrops but rather strangely only three are present at Attingham.



*Figure 2: Hornbeam Avenue, Acton Scott (photo Alison Acton)*

The hornbeam avenue at Acton Scott has been allowed to grow un-checked for over 25 years and the Actons are hoping to prune it back into its original shape. The feature is marked on the first Ordnance Survey map of the 1870's although it is difficult to believe that it was planted that long ago.

In keeping with my objective of providing at least one activity for members each month, John Tuer has kindly let members have the Tree Walk which he produced a few years ago in Much Wenlock. It is self guiding as is the walk you will get for April around some of the unusual trees in Belle Vue, Shrewsbury which will include, as far as I have been able to discover, Shropshire's champion Tulip Tree.

As I mentioned in the February Newsletter, the 2021 Annual General Meeting will be conducted by paper rather than in person. With this Newsletter you will receive the Accounts and Treasurer's Report, the Planting Officer's Report (all by John Tuer), the Membership Secretary's report

by Joanne Bracchi and my own. So far no one has come forward for or been nominated to stand on the Committee so in the absence of any objections by Tuesday 9 March, the members on the list which David is sending out will form your Committee.

In the same way if any member wishes to raise any matters for consideration by the Committee after receiving the Officers' reports or any other matter please do so by 9 March.

I look forward to meeting you all again in the not-too-distant future!

In the mean time please abide by the rules and keep healthy!

Andy Gordon, Chair

## **Tree Planting – March and April 2021**

**Please ignore the dates I put in the last Newsletter for tree planting in March.** We don't get the trees until 22 March and we're still not allowed out in numbers. So the new plans are as follows:

Richard Dorrell and I shall be picking up the free trees on Monday, 22 March, driving in separate cars of course. Then we have two planting sessions as soon after that date as Boris will allow. Let me explain how we intend to do this. Six people will be allowed together outdoors from 29 March so our two plantings will be on **Monday, 29 March and Thursday, 1 April**. In each case, the places where we're planting are large enough for us to split into two completely independent groups. So we shall be planting in the following places:

- 1. Monday 29 March at Coton Hill, Shrewsbury Countryside Reserve.** We have 40 standard trees to plant. They are very small at the minute but it is intended that they become standards rather than hedging. Each team can plant 20 and we shall be working on each side of the pathway. **Please meet there at 10.00 a.m.**

How to get there: I'm sure you'll know The Gateway on Chester Street in Shrewsbury. Go along here with The Gateway on your left and you'll soon come to the road that leads to the **West Midlands Show Ground**. This is Berwick Road, so please turn left onto it and the second road on the right is Corporation Lane. At the end of here on the left is our planting site. On my maps, it's called **Corporation Gardens**. Park where you can at the end of Corporation Lane and you'll see my trailer parked there. Then go left onto the site to find us.

- 2. Thursday 1 April at The Hurst** between Clunton and Clun. Please meet at 10.00am. We shall be planting 20 standards and 250 hedging trees in the same field but a distance apart. So, again, we can have two groups.

For those who you who haven't planted at The Hurst before, turn right at the main roundabout in Craven Arms (signposted Clun), Continue through Aston-on-Clun and Clunton. Then, eventually, at a right hand bend in the road with a white house on your right, the drive to The Hurst is signposted on your left. Go up here and keep left. Eventually you will find our cars parked in a small car park next to the orchard.

One more thing – if you intend to join us, and I really hope you do, would you please let me know ([john3tuer@gmail.com](mailto:john3tuer@gmail.com) or **01952 727642**). You will realise that if more than 12 of you make an offer to help, I shall have to decline your offer. Sorry about that. I'm sure you understand. But please do offer and I look forward to hearing from you.....*John Tuer.*

***Self-Guided Event for March – please follow Government guidelines as they are on the day – Mail members who wish to receive a trail should contact John Tuer (details above) in order to save on paper and postage- thanks for your understanding (ed).The Much Wenlock Tree Trail is right at the end of the newsletter for email members, thus hopefully making it easier to print out.***



*Figure 3: An oak tree in winter beside the old Roman road at Pitchford looking north towards the Wrekin (photo ed)*

## **Annual General Meeting of the Severn Tree Trust 2021**

**'As there is no physical A.G.M. this year these paper articles are in place of the A.G.M. The committee stays almost the same and unless anyone objects we take it as read that all the committee are re-elected as last year (one resignation, one new member) due to the exceptional circumstances. For any points of order please contact the chairman, Andy Gordon, on 01743 357252. Also if you wish to stand please make it known to us. Thank you for your understanding in this matter.'**

Your current Committee comprises the following persons:

***Andy Gordon, Chair***

***John Tuer, Treasurer (outgoing Tree Planting Officer)***

***Joanne Bracchi, Membership Secretary***

***David Woodhouse, Secretary (resigned)***

***Richard Dorrell, Tree Planting Officer (incoming T.P.O.)***

***David Martin, Newsletter Editor***

***Angela Hughes, Member at large***

***Julie Kaye, Member at large***

***Peter Aspin, Member at large***

***Graham Pearce, Member at large***

All apart from David Woodhouse are prepared to stand again. We were very sorry to lose David due to pressure of work and thank him for his sterling work on the Committee.

### **Chairperson's Report March 2021**

If I had known, when I agreed to take over as Chair from David Martin, what was about to happen I wonder if I would have agreed to the proposal?! Like for many other similar organisations it has been a difficult time. Initially after the first lock-down I think we all suffered from shock and S.T.T. was inactive but by mid-summer once we had assessed the situation and had realised that even sticking within the Government's guidelines it was still possible to hold out-door visits to some of our planned locations. The visits to John Massey's Private Garden at Kingswinford on one of the hottest days of the year and to the Gardens and Estate at Sansaw Park, Hadnall come particularly to mind. Social-distancing however turned out to be more challenging when we did the circular tree walk round the rocky Grinshill!

Then came the second lock-down which put paid to our planned lecture programme but your Committee felt that members should be offered at least one tree-focused visit each month as a substitute. These we endeavoured to offer until even these visits were banned by the third lock-down. Fortunately Attingham which for most of

us was local offered an alternative to Acton Scott for a snowdrop walk. We will endeavour to offer a tree walk of some description each month for as long as the restrictions are in place.

We were sad to lose our Secretary recently due to work pressure and thank David Woodhouse for all his minute taking, general administration and enthusiasm. We are still looking for his replacement as well as additional Committee members.

While thanking all members of the Committee for their help during the last year I would just like to thank David Martin for getting the Newsletter out each month so promptly but particularly also John Tuer who, while still carrying out his duties as Tree Planting Officer for nearly 20 years has also been our Treasurer for the last two years, keeping the double entry books so immaculately.

Finally I would like to thank all you members who have stuck with us during this last very unusual year of operation.

May 2021 soon return to normality.

*Andy Gordon (Chair)*

### **Membership Secretary's report**

The Trust has a healthy and loyal membership of 114 people who are based, not quite entirely, throughout Shropshire and Mid Wales. Twenty members live in Powys. Thirty one members pay by standing order for which we are very grateful and would like please to encourage others to use this system when subscriptions become due again in January 22. Forms are available from John Tuer, the Treasurer and from myself.

*Joanne Bracchi (Membership Secretary)*

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payment we made to allow members to visit John Massey's garden at Ashwoods Nursery.

6. You will see that so far this year (2021) our income exceeds our outgoings.
7. Generally, we are still in a healthy financial position.

*John Tuer (Treasurer)*

## **Tree Planting Report 2020**

Between our last AGM (February 2020) and this, we have only had two tree planting sessions for very obvious reasons. In March 2020, we had our last session to complete the hedge along the drive at The Hurst. We shall have another hedge to plant together with some standards trees but in the dovecote field on the site. This is planned for April 2021. The drive hedge was completed with free trees although we did have to pay for canes and spiral guards.

The other planting was at New Invention in November 2020, the other side of Clun, where we planted 125 standard trees suitable for wet ground to add to a woodland being created by the owners. These trees, plus appropriate guards, were all paid for by the AONB, from whom the owners had sought funding. So this was at no cost to ourselves.

I would like to thank all those members who came along to help at these plantings. We could not have done it without you. We just cannot carry out our tree planting aims without the help of member volunteers and, sometimes, friends, so to find that so many of you are willing to give your time to help is extremely encouraging. Thank you.

I must formally give you notice at this stage that our member Richard Dorrell has offered to take over from me as tree planting officer for the Severn Tree Trust. I am delighted with this and Richard and I will be working together for the next two seasons or so to enable him to get to know all my contacts and sources, etc. A huge thank you to Richard.

*John Tuer*

*This concludes the paper A.G.M. of the Severn Tree Trust, any comments please contact Andy Gordon*

**Self-guided and socially distanced Event for March 2021 – *please follow Government guidelines as they are on the day – Mail members who wish to receive a trail should contact John Tuer on 01952 727642 in order to save on paper and postage- thanks for your understanding (ed).***

## **MUCH WENLOCK TREE WALK** **Olympian trees**

Much Wenlock is noted for its role in restarting the Olympic Games in modern times. A local doctor, Dr. William Penny Brookes, started the Wenlock Olympian Games in 1850 and these have continued throughout the following years only being set aside during the two world wars. The last of these games was in 2019, none being held in 2020 because of the virus pandemic but hopefully they will be resumed in 2021.

When Baron de Coubertin wished to re-introduce the modern Olympic Games, he had heard of Penny Brookes's success and came to Much Wenlock to visit the good doctor. What he discovered and learned from Penny Brookes helped him in his new venture and the first of the modern Olympic Games was held in Athens in 1896.

What many people are unaware of is that Penny Brookes was also an excellent botanist with a special interest in trees and there are many trees in Much Wenlock that have been planted by him, have been influenced by the Wenlock Games or have been planted for him. These are most of the trees that will be included in this walk.

### **How to reach the start of the walk**

Start in the main town car park behind the High Street. This is a paying car park with the fee of 50p per hour. You will probably need two hours for this walk.

If you are coming from the Shrewsbury direction, you will see the Gaskell Arms on your right as you come into town. The main road bends right here and becomes the road to Bridgnorth. Continue on this road and turn left immediately after the garage (The Wheatland Garage). You are now on St. Mary's Road. Continue for about 100 yards and a car park sign will take you left into the car park with its paying public conveniences (20p).

In the car park, turn to face the toilets and look to your left. You will see a passage, the George Shut, leading to the High Street. Take this passage and, once on the High Street, turn right. Go to the end of the High Street (only a very short distance) and cross the road to the Guildhall. Go under the arch to the right of the Guildhall and you arrive in the gardens of the Parish Church, the Church of the Holy Trinity.

### **You are now at the start of the Tree Walk**

*I have taken the following from my booklet 'The Heritage and Other Trees of Much Wenlock' As I wrote it in 2011 in preparation for the 2012 London Olympic Games, a few of the trees mentioned have been lost but, essentially, the route is the same and so are most of the trees. I shall have some of these booklets available at £1*

each should you wish to have more information about the trees than that which I'm about to give you here.

The plans, however, are from the booklet and these will assist you in finding the trees.

**Tree 1** Go around the railings and look to your right and you'll see a tree in a metal cage.

This is CG5 on the plan but has been moved since it was planted. It is a Tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*). Think of the place where Elvis was born! It is very showy in the autumn with a wonderful red colouring of its leaves. This tree was planted in 2009 to commemorate the bicentenary of Dr. Penny Brookes's birth. The cage was made for us by our very own S.T.T. committee member, Richard Dorrell.

**Tree 2 (CG3)** A Corsican Pine (*Pinus nigra* var. *maritima* also known as *Pinus nigra* var. *laricio*)

**Tree 3 (CG4)** A Japanese Cherry...but which one? Not easy to tell at this time of the year.

**Trees 4, 5 and 6 (CG6, CG15 and CG17)** These are Wellingtonias (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) or Sierra Redwoods. It is quite unusual for a town the size of Much Wenlock to have one of this species. Much Wenlock has six! You'll see the other three later. Dr. Brookes presented and planted Tree 4 in 1859. He measured it at its base ten years later and found it to have a circumference of 3 feet.

Tree 5 is in the shrubbery to the right hand corner of these grounds. This was planted by the vicar of Much Wenlock, the Rev. W.H.Wayne, also in 1859. When Dr. Brookes measured this in 1869, its basal girth was 4 feet 8 inches.

Tree 6 was also planted by Dr. Brookes in 1859, with a basal girth ten years later of 3 feet 4 inches.

**Tree 7 (CG12)** This is a Weeping Willow (*Salix babylonica*) adjacent to Dr. Brookes's grave.

**Tree 8 (CG13)** A Monkey Puzzle or Chilean Pine (*Araucaria araucana*).

**Tree 9 (CG14)** this is the Oak at the front of the shrubbery with a plaque at its base. It is a fastigiate oak (*Quercus robur* 'Fastigiata Koster') planted in July 1986 by the grand-nephew of Baron Pierre de Coubertin, Geoffrey de Navacelle, when he visited Much Wenlock for that year's Olympian Games (always held each July).

**Trees 10 and 11 (CG18 and CG19)** These are not in the Church Grounds but 'lean over' from the Priory House beyond the wall. These are the Fern-leaved or Cut-leaved Beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Asplenifolia'). Splendid trees when in leaf. Come back in the summer to see them.

Now look to your left towards the Priory Hall (Much Wenlock's Community Hall, the former National School) and between the row of Limes, go through the gate and

down the steps and through the yard to the road. Turn right. This will take you to Wenlock Priory car park but just before this car park, go through the stile to your left and take the path uphill with fields each side of you. Do not take the right sign-posted path, but go straight ahead. At the end of this path, you will cross the old railway track before reaching another road. On your right will be the former Railway Station.

Go right to the wooden gates on the bend in the road. You may now enter the Gaskell Recreation Grounds where the Olympic Games are held each year. As soon as you enter, you are now in the Linden Avenue, the avenue of Lime trees.

**Trees 12 (GG1 on the plan)** There are 42 trees planted along the left-hand side of the avenue and turning left across the top of the field further on. These were planted by Dr. Brookes and his friends on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1869. They are mostly the Common Lime (*Tilia x europaea*) a hybrid of our two native limes – the small-leaved and the large-leaved limes.

**Trees 13 (GG2)** complete the avenue but we have no information about their planting. It is thought that these had already been planted by the railway company ten years earlier (1859). All are the Common Lime but, as often happens when batches of trees are bought, there is an odd one that is not what was ordered. Among all these Common Limes, which are of the form 'Pallida', there is the occasional "Hatfield", another form. But there is also the occasional Large-leaved Lime (*Tilia platyphyllos*). We are sure of all this because the international lime-tree expert, Prof, Donald Pigott, visited Much Wenlock to view the trees in 2010. He recognised the differences straight away and told us that he, himself, had named the Hatfield form from trees he saw at Hatfield House. Mostly, the form 'Pallida' may be recognised from the amount of epicormic growth that spring up from their bases.

Go through the limes to your left and you will see 8 evergreen trees of the same species.

These are **Trees 14 (GG5)** Western Red Cedars (*Thuja plicata*). The planting information on these trees has been lost but it is thought that they were planted in 1950 to commemorate 100 years of the Wenlock Olympic Games. Tony Kirkham of Kew Gardens has visited these trees and suggests that their age would probably take them back to a 1950 planting date. There were originally 8 trees and you can see the gap where one of these trees was lost.

Between the Linden Avenue and the Western Red Cedars is another row of trees. Starting with **Tree 15 (GG6)** we have five trees before the Cricket Club store (the white building): a Spruce, a Hawthorn, a Monkey Puzzle, a Lawson's Cypress and a Cherry plum (*Prunus cerasifera*). Of the trees beyond the store we have more information.

**Tree 16 (GG7)** is a Cut-leaved beech, similar to those in the Church Grounds, followed by an Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*).

**Tree 17 (GG8)** is the Jubilee Oak planted to commemorate the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977.

**Tree 18 (GG9)** is a Tulip Tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), thought to have been planted on 30 April 1890 for Lady Milnes Gaskell the person who donated these grounds to Much Wenlock residents. The grounds were actually given to “the People of Much Wenlock” rather than the Town Council but it is the Council that maintains them. After this tree is an English Oak (*Quercus robur*) and following this is the, by now, very recognisable

**Tree 19 (GG10)** Another Wellingtonia. This was planted in memory of Lord Wenlock on 23 September 1885.

*Each of the three commemorative trees is known to have been planted by members of the Wenlock Olympian Society of the time.*

The tree in the corner is **Tree 20 (GG11)** a Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) but nothing is known of its planting.

*As we turn left at the top of the Gaskell Grounds, look for the notice board in the corner by the gate which gives you a little more information about the trees. Then turn left with the trees and you will find the following:*

**Tree 21 (GG12)** a Spanish Fir (*Abies pinsapo*), unusual for its very short needles spread around the branchlets. This tree was planted for the Earl of Harrington in 1888.

*Look beyond and you will see Windmill Hill with its windmill remains. It was on the slopes of this hill that spectators used to sit while watching the Wenlock Olympian Games.*

**Tree 22 (GG13)** This is the “Coubertin Oak”, planted by Baron de Coubertin on his visit to see Dr. Brookes on 22 October 1890. Look for the plaque at its base. It is from this tree that acorns were taken to grow new young oaks to be planted in 2012 at the London Olympic site and at 40 schools between Much Wenlock and London. Another is planted at the National Arboretum at Westonbirt.

Now things become a little difficult. Between the Spanish Fir (Tree 21) and the three trees that you can now see in cages, there were 6 oaks as follows: the Coubertin Oak (1890) mentioned above; that planted for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, planted in 1887; that planted in 1888 for the Prince of Wales (eventually Edward VII); that planted in 1888 for his wife, the Princess Alexandra of Wales; that planted in 1888 for their son, Prince Albert Victor; and that planted for George I, King of the Hellenes, making a connection between the Olympics of Greece (he was king in 1895 when the first Olympics of modern times was held) and the present Wenlock Olympian Society.

There are only 4 oaks left. We don't know which tree is which but we do know that the stump you see was that of George I's tree and the tree next to it was Princess Alexandra's tree. Now here's an interesting coincidence. George I, King of Greece was formerly a Danish prince and Princess Alexandra was his sister, a former Danish princess, so brother and sister have ended up side by side in the form of trees here in Much Wenlock. Not many people know that!

**Tree 23** King George's tree died in 2015 and we replaced it with the first of the trees in cages but, instead of dedicating it to King George I of Greece, it is now dedicated to the People of Greece.

**Tree 24** The caged tree furthest towards to boundary is that planted in memory of Norman and Barbara Wood. Norman was the last President of the Olympian Society and it was he who reinstated the Wenlock Games in 1977.

**Tree 25** The newest cage is really interesting. We (the Wenlock Tree Forum) planted this in November 2019. It commemorates the visit to Much Wenlock in 1994 by Juan Antonio de Samaranch of Spain, President of the International Olympics Committee. During his visit, he planted a Luccombe Oak but in early 2019, this was hit by severe winds, limbs split and the tree became dangerous. It had to be removed. This original tree was next to the Bowling Green. As the Luccombe Oak is also known as a 'Spanish Oak' because it has Cork Oak in its forebears, we tried to find a replacement of the same variety. This proved to be extremely difficult but, in the end, we found a different Spanish Oak, 'a step-brother or sister' of the Luccombe Oak in a nursery in Penrith, Cumbria. The tree was eventually brought down to Much Wenlock and planted by Jonathan Edwards, Olympic Gold Medalist. The tree is the very rare *Quercus x hispanica* 'Ambroziana', but more recently it has had a name change to *Quercus x crenata* 'Ambroziana'.

**Tree 26 (GG19)** Now look in this corner of the field and you will see Much Wenlock's fifth Wellingtonia. This tree was planted 1885 to honour Charles George Milnes-Gaskell, the then owner of the Gaskell Field

**Tree 27** Turn around here and head to the bowling green where you will see another fastigiata oak (*Quercus robor* 'Fastigiata Koster'). This tree was planted by Princess Anne in 1990 when she was President of the International Olympic Committee.

*Now take the path to the right alongside the school grounds (The William Penny Brookes Secondary School) and you will quickly see the last and sixth Wellingtonia in the field to your left.*

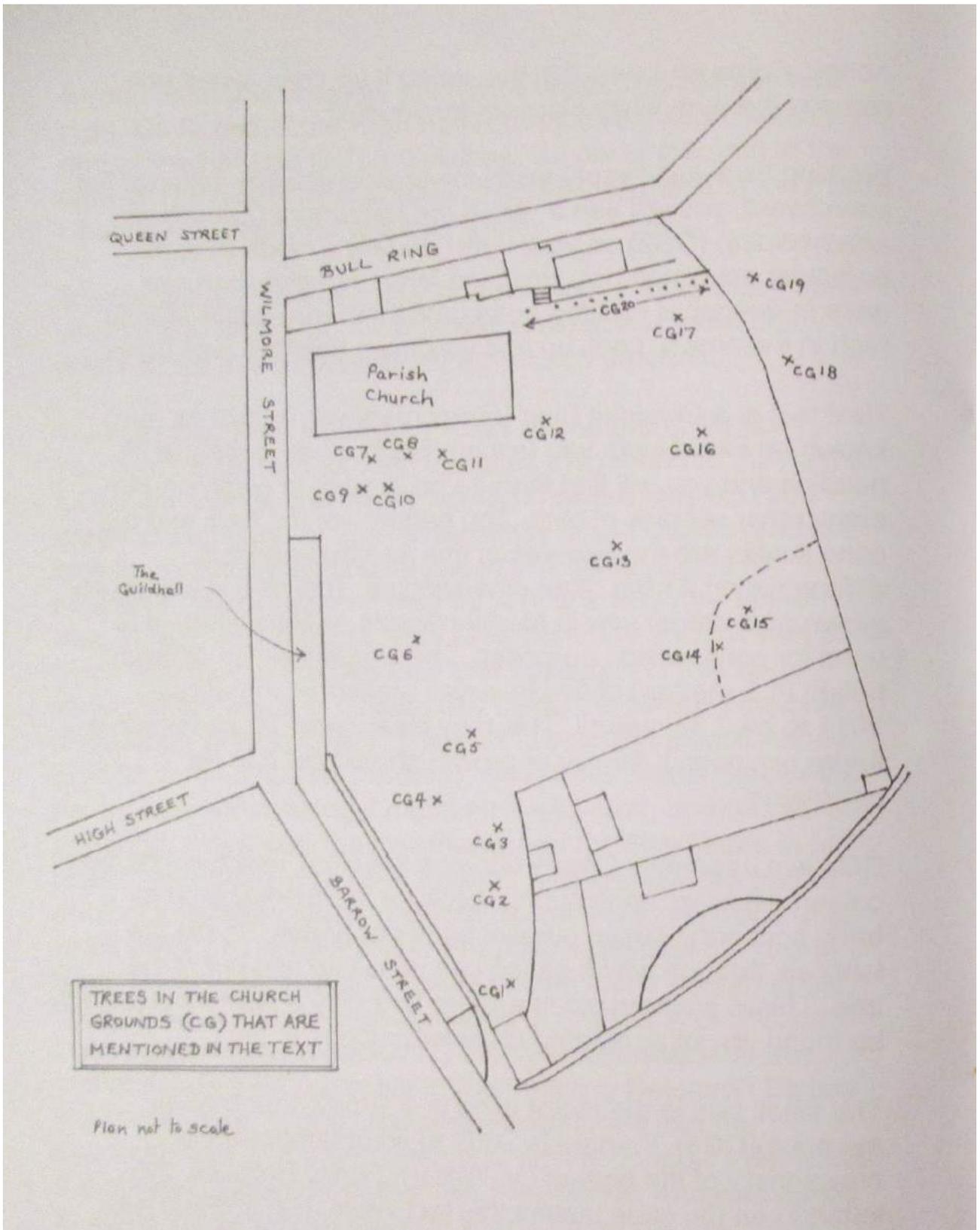
**Tree 28 (GG4)** This is the tree planted in honour of Dr. Brookes in 1872. It marks the south-west corner of the original Olympian Field. From here, you can now see the full extent of the first Olympian Games site. This tree was brought onto the site with much celebration followed by the children of the local National School. A poem dedicated to Dr. Brookes was then read to all to tell of his wonderful achievements in the Borough.

***An aside:*** whenever William Penny Brooks planted a tree he had to add to the roots a 'libation of champagne'. Following his planting, he often said words similar to the following: 'perform this ceremony according to our usual custom by pouring upon the tree a libation of champagne and of drinking out of the champion tilter's cup to the health of the nobleman (or noblewoman) we wish to honour. Had the Chancellor of the Exchequer known of this custom he would, I feel assured, had exempted all the members of the Wenlock Olympian Society from the additional duty on imported bottled champagne, in consideration of the laudable object for which it is used at these festivals.' Often followed by loud laughter and applause.

I have planted a number of these trees for the Olympians and, on each occasion, the Olympians have insisted on their 'libation of champagne'. The tradition continues. I don't know what it does to a tree's roots but, I must say, it's much cheaper planting trees with the Severn Tree Trust!

*Now continue back on the path past the children's playground and onto Station Approach. Turn right here and go to the main road. Turn left and make your way back to the Car Park.*

*John Tuer*



Much Wenlock Tree Walk – Map Number 1

