



**NB visit to Hopesay starts at 12pm on Sunday 20 June – Please bring your own picnic lunch... and meet at the church lych gate.**

Dear Member,

It seems that we are slowly getting back to normal although the next Government date line is the day after our next visit on 20 June. **(Please follow government guidelines on the day and can non-email members please ring Andy if you are thinking of going on the visit as things can change very quickly- ed.)**. This visit unusually is on a Sunday with a visit before and after a picnic lunch which I hope you will support, despite the unfavourable weather forecast for the visit to Christine and John's remarkable garden near Pystill Rhaeadr on 22 May. (See report below). Unless the situation changes dramatically this dual visit will go ahead.

For the visit on 22 May with the poor forecast we felt it might be necessary to cancel the visit at the last moment. For those on email that would have been easy but for those who receive their Newsletters by post last minute notices would have been impossible. It was then that we realised that for many members who joined STT in the last few years, we do not have your telephone numbers. Those of you who receive their Newsletter by post and are happy to be advised of any changes in plans by telephone, if you are prepared to let us have your phone numbers please phone Andy on **01743 357252**.

I was asked to announce by the Acton family that The Tree Walk with refreshments in the Historic Hall at Acton Scott opened for the May Bank Holiday Week end. Bookings were through Eventbrite.co.uk.

Ivor and Rosemary Salter pointed out to me that our website is not kept fully up-to-date. I am fully aware of this and apologise. It gets lost in my other volunteering duties. I would like a member to come forward to take over responsibility for keeping our website up-to-date. It really will not take up much of your time.. Our site is hosted by my sister who up-loads the Newsletter monthly and adds anything else that I send her. She has designed and administered our website since 2015 totally free of charge to us but she can only add what we give her. I am looking for someone who will do this on a regular basis.

A number of important events in the tree world took place recently. The most important was the publication of the England Tree Action Plan in Mid May. It sets out the long-term vision for trees, woodlands and forests in England and the actions the Government will take during this parliament to reach that ambition. The plans are to treble tree-planting rates in England, funded through the Nature for Climate fund which has £500 million available.

Already a number of criticisms have been raised. The Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF) noted the lack of references to timber and how the UK imports some 80 per cent of its needs.

The Royal Forestry Society warned that planting millions of trees may not deliver on carbon store promises if there is not a sufficiently skilled and sustainable workforce to manage them for generations to come.

An article in The Times suggests this is a 'false dawn' as tree growers and suppliers have warned that the Government's pledge is unrealistic unless it creates more certainty and provides funding to support greater investment.

The UK Renewable Energy Agency criticised the Plan for omitting mention of Bioenergy.

A representative of Green Goals questions whether this really is a turning point or will it be another short term scheme that changes after an election.

There is no scientific proof in this country that changing over to an Agro-forestry regime does actually improve the environment, sequester additional carbon, reduce flooding, increase drought-resilience, improve animal health and boost biodiversity although a properly funded 12 year study has just started on seven farms on good quality farmland in Devon.

It is a step in the right direction but with all the other recent Government Funding commitments, I will believe it when I see it. *Andy Gordon*

**Report of visit to Bryn y Llidiart** (*We are very appreciative to Andy for this write up as John had another engagement that day. ed.*)

In response to my question put to Christine as to where in Shrewsbury she and John would be moving to, she replied that she did not know, but wherever it was it would have to be a challenge. It is difficult to imagine many greater challenges than the one they took on in 2003 when they moved from Hastings to Bryn-y-Llidiart, near Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant, in the old County of Montgomeryshire. These eight acres are 360m (nearly 1200 ft) up a Welsh mountainside and used to be rough grazing covered in wild flowers and Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*), a grass which

itself is spectacular when in flower with pink panicles which wave in the wind. John and Christine have turned these eight acres into a landscaped garden fit for being shown on TV.

When they moved in, the house was a typical Welsh longhouse facing south east which was extended very tastefully to provide five bedrooms and a dining area. Later the Wrekin was visible through the very large picture window where we were enjoying a very welcome tea, coffee and cake at the end of the visit. The regulations differ in Wales meaning we could enjoy a relatively normal 'social experience' for these times. This will let readers know that our 17 visitors were very lucky with the weather and experienced none of the forecast showers while walking round the plantings.

The slightly acidic soil on Bryn-y-Llidiart, which means 'Gate on the Hill' in Welsh, is very shallow over most of the eight acres with shale only 20cm below the surface in most places. The problems of establishing nearly 2000, mainly native, broadleaves in such a hostile environment is no mean feat. Most of the trees are in a small wood (gelli) which one passes on arriving; Christine and John planted *Betula pendula* as bare-root one or two year old plants. Due to the terrible rabbit problem the trees had to be well protected with spiral tree guards. They also planted some exotic birch mainly *Betula utilis* var *Jacquemontii* but also var *jermyns*, both as multi-stemmed and maidens and these seem to have retained their leaves rather better than the native birches. Bearing in mind the common name for this species is Himalayan birch, this is perhaps not surprising! In fact so concerned were Christine and John about the poor leaf retention of their birch that they sent samples to Forest Research who reported that the birch were suffering from birch die-back which can be caused by a number of different fungi. On F.R.'s recommendation *Betula papyrifera* were also planted but as the birches were still at the original planting density of 2m x 2m and all had a more or less white stems it was next to impossible to differentiate between the other species.

The fact that no thinning had taken place was a subject that led to some discussion with Peter Aspin leading the call for more use of a chain saw. Christine and John, have taken this recommendation on board and hope to manage this before relinquishing ownership.



Figure 1: The amazing orchard and landscaped seating area (photo Richard Dorrell)

In addition to these native plantings a number of exotic trees with fragrant flowers or unusual bark were also planted. *Staphlea trifolia*, *Crataegus tanacetifolia* (Tansy leaved thorn) and *Acer palmatum var senkaki* (Coral bark maple). But these were the rare exceptions from all the other native trees.

In the last year further plantings have been carried out on their highest ground and for these local provenance trees were specified, not only with birch but with rowan, which seem to do well at Bryn y Llidiart, but also with *Prunus padus* with *P.padus* var Le Thouriel (not named in Hilliers) doing particularly well. In this area three of the five Scots Pine, recently shown also to be native to this part of Wales that they had planted in the early years have survived.

Three other features make Bryn y Llidiart particularly out-standing. One is the pond which Christine and John created by damming a small water source with the shale taken from the excavation for a garage they built behind the house. This has provided a sanctuary for wildlife (Johanne Bracchi saw a bat while we were on site) and for Christine and John who have cleverly hidden a garden table and chairs in a concrete shell in a small bank beside the lake.

A second feature is the vegetable garden which John has created on better soil in a slightly more protected area by setting oak palings cut from the oak beams taken from the old long house into the ground and surrounding these with a hawthorn hedge and some standard Bardsey Island Apples (which again Peter thought should be pruned). Inside the garden were well fertilised raised beds with already planted out runner beans which were further advanced than those in my my own garden in Shrewsbury.

And finally but by no means least is the Welsh Heritage orchard with among others the strangely named Pig apples and a Snowdon Pear. The apples are named for their shape which is like the snout of a pig, although seeing the name PIG on label on the stake was rather surprising. They are produced by a specialist grower Ian Sturrock and Son near Bangor. Also in the orchard is an apple variety proven by DNA testing to be unique to the Tanat Valley.



*Figure 2: Tanat Reviver label (photo the Salters)*

All members who defied the forecast were rewarded with a fascinating afternoon which as I mentioned earlier ended with a hot drink and home made cake and Bara Brith!

A big thank you to Christine and John!



*Figure 3: tea and tasty cakes were enjoyed by all (photo Angela Hughes)*

### **Visit to Hopesay on Sunday 20th June. Starting at 12pm.**

The simplest way to get to Hopesay is to take the A49 as far as Craven Arms and then turn right at the main (but small) roundabout in the middle of the town on to the B4368, signposted to Clun. Proceed for about two and a half miles to Aston on Clun. In the middle of the village, the road bends to the right and then to the left. Just before the bend to the left you will see the replacement Arbor Tree (Black Poplar) on the right. Turn right to Hopesay immediately after the Arbor Tree, over a small bridge. Follow the road for about a mile, watching out for blind corners and potholes. One in Hopesay, park on the though-road anywhere that you won't be a

nuisance to villagers. Near the start of the village there is a side road on the left leading to the church. **Meet by the lych gate of the church at 12pm** from where Andrew Allott will conduct us to his ten hectare wood, about ten minutes walk away.

The wood is mainly mixed conifers, planted on a bank that in places is steep. There is one ancient sessile oak tree with a girth of 6.26m in 2018 which was probably a boundary tree at the top of the hill. Elsewhere Andrew is creating a mini-arboretum in an area where European larch was felled a few years ago and is adding temperate forest species from as many botanical families as he can obtain seed. He is growing these in containers in his garden and allotment in Shrewsbury and transplanting them when they become big enough to get away. Bracken and brambles are actively controlled.

Andrew has a wooden cabin in a secluded spot in the wood where it is proposed that we eat our sandwiches; please bring your own drinks. There are no loos at the wood, other than trees to disappear behind!

After the visit Andrew will lead us down to another tree collection in Hopesay with some large conifers and recently restored ponds. It was once part of the garden of a country house and is now owned by the Trenchard family, who live in the village. Mr Trenchard may join us and pick our brains about the trees. Apologies, but again there are no toilet facilities.



*Figure 4: The pond at Bryn y Llidiart with copse behind leading up to the Berwyn mountains (photo Angela Hughes)*