



- **STT Christmas social: Tuesday December 10<sup>th</sup> from 7pm in the Darwin Suite at Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury. Come along, enjoy meeting up with other members, join in the raffle and drink seasonal refreshments.**

### **A Seasonal Message**

I have managed to thaw out my fingers sufficiently to write this message. The sun is shining just now which lifts the spirits after the recent poor weather. What's more, look on the bright side, from the 1<sup>st</sup> of December there are only 21 days to the shortest day!

Despite the leafless trees there is an architectural beauty about them, especially when rimed with frost. It is encouraging in these darker days, to think of the process of trees gathering strength for the coming Spring. One tree which always lifts my spirits is the *Sorbus caloneura* or 'Beautifully veined Mountain Ash' from China. Even now you can see its distinctive buds beginning to swell slightly with the promise of the appearance of the bronze-tinted leaves which appear in late winter / early spring. Although termed 'rare' it has grown well for me with no problems and requiring little attention. Worth seeking out.

So, use the short days to look more closely at deciduous trees, you may see a different beauty without its leafy 'clothing'. Even on the coldest of days I'm sure you will find that promise of Spring.

Finally, my very good wishes to you all for Christmas and the New Year. *Julie Kaye*

### **Enquiry**

A message from member, Richard Gulliver.

*Is any member of STT a member of the Institute of Chartered Foresters?*

*If so he would like to hear from you.*

*Contact Richard at - [richardgulliver@gmail.com](mailto:richardgulliver@gmail.com)*

*Please note there is a letter 'l' in the middle of Richard's email address which is sometimes not picked up.*

### **Ice Cream.**

One of the biggest tourist attractions in Cheshire is Snugburys Ice Cream Farm situated close to Nantwich between Dorfold Hall (home of Cheshire County Show and which STT last visited a quarter century or so back) and the canal confluence

of the Shropshire Union and Llangollen at Hurlston (if one has ever walked or sailed the canals of Shropshire there are mileage stones with this name upon them). A couple of years back the owners and a group of other farmers came along to look at the work here and they invited us back recently to advise on the tree planting they had done and were intending to do.

The first thing to say is that it is extremely easy to find as they have erected a huge Paddington Bear close to the buildings which it seems everyone wants to be photographed next to. It has to be said that it is a pretty good imitation of the “real” thing. But the sculpture is never in place very long and changes every few years- not too long back it was a Dalek.

The planting had taken place in April 2024, far too late in normal years, and the owners knew full well how lucky they had been with the wet and cloudy spring and summer. Establishment was over ninety per cent. Taking their inspiration from forest gardening they had planted alternate Walnuts and Hazels (many varieties of both) at three metre spacing in rows over thirty metres apart to suit the machinery for mowing the grass. The biggest criticism I had was that these deciduous trees had been mulched with coniferous shavings which is rather a cardinal sin- as was their intention to prune the Walnuts to shape in October. At that time of year they bleed profusely.

The one thing I found surprising was that along the metre-wide rows of young trees the ground was dry after a period of only six months whereas either side of the strip it was completely saturated. As I’ve been boring people for far too many years, the only way flooding can be prevented is by arboreal engineering, conventional concrete and steel civil engineering will never manage it. This once again proved it. We toured the farm with advisors from ELM (Environmental Land Management) along with a farming couple from interior British Columbia who were visiting. There, winter temperatures can descend to as low as minus fifty Centigrade. I think that the window for tree planting must be pretty narrow. STT will have to arrange a visit before too long, Snugburys not B.C.

You may well ask where can you get Snugburys. Well, there is a freezer full of it at Shropshire Wildlife Trust HQ at The Cut. Perhaps STT should take along a load of teaspoons at the December meeting and sample some. And in my illusory role as advertising manager for regional ice cream, I’ll suggest two others for visitors in the North Shropshire/Wales borderlands. Firstly Oak Farm at Redbrook Maelor (most generous portions ever) and secondly at Brooklands in Dudleston Heath made from Brown Swiss/ Braunveih milk (who needs to go to the Alps?). And another place to see in the area; STT has visited Oteley Estate near Ellesmere several times over the years. There is a pop-up shop and café now open a couple of days a week. And the ever-intriguing gardens are normally open at the same time (entry £6 I believe). Well worth a winterwalk. *Peter Aspin*

## **John Box on “Can Trees Save the Planet? Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2024**

As our poster said, John is a trustee of the Shropshire Wildlife Trust and the Severn Gorge Countryside Trust. During his working life, he told us that he had been a

landscape architect so he does know a lot about trees. His talk was illustrated with excellent slides and there was a good turn-out to hear him.

But before I report on John's actual talk, I want to remind ourselves of the great value that trees have on our world today. You'll see where I'm coming from when I finish my list.

In no particular order:

Trees help to stabilise the soil, prevent flooding and can help reclaim contaminated land;

Trees improve the quality of our landscapes;

Trees help the local economy by providing employment in timber-associated industries;

Trees provide us with lots of our needs – building materials, furniture, yes, but also fruit and nuts;

Trees improve the climate by reducing greenhouse gases and storing carbon, by giving shade and protection from strong winds;

Trees help to achieve sustainability;

Trees help us enjoy healthier lives;

Trees encourage biodiversity by ensuring habitats and food supplies for fauna and other flora.

I know that I've left out some things but I think these might be the main ones. After all, last month Peter Thomas also told us about bomb protection and cardboard boxes.

But here's a vital one: Maybe some of you remember the stickers in some rear car windows a few years ago - "If you can read this, thank a teacher". Well my version is "If you can breath, thank a tree". Because my last "great value" of trees is that they are the providers of most of our oxygen.

So back to John's talk....

John concentrated on how trees improve our climate and was very strong on how they were helpful in removing greenhouse gases and storing carbon. This was the main thrust of his talk. He told us that greenhouse gas emissions were currently 1°C more than in prehistoric times, that they have risen to 1.5°C with global warming and climate change and will increase with further human activities. Even at 2°C there will be a significant increase in the risk of drought, floods and extreme heat.

Of course we are seeing the effects of this already. Look at the fires we've seen around the world in recent years and the very recent floods in Spain. I haven't looked up the present figures but I think we might be up to 2°C already but John did say that if we were to restrict global heating to 1.5°C it would require halving global emissions of greenhouse gases by 2030 and ending emissions by 2050.

And this is where trees play their part in a big way. They remove the Carbon Dioxide from the air during the process of photosynthesis to provide for themselves carbon and carbo-hydrate foods that they vitally need and we benefit from the oxygen they release.

Thinking of the Bigger Picture he told us that we must consider the energy we use at home and work, what we buy and where it comes from, how we travel and how we use our gardens.

“We can all play our part”, he said, “Hope is created by actions.” Now that's an interesting philosophical statement. I suppose if our actions are positive in personally doing what we can to use the message of the Bigger Picture, then there is “hope”. Very true, and John also suggested that we might find out the climate action plan of our local council.

But he did say that planting woodlands is far more beneficial than planting just single or small numbers of trees. A newly planted woodland can take up 14 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per hectare per year. A woodland of one hundred years in age can take up many times this.

And what about woodland cover in Shropshire in comparison to other parts of the U.K. ? Apparently, there is only 9% woodland and forest cover in Shropshire whilst the figure for England is 10% and for the whole of the U.K. is 13%. This does surprise me. I thought that Shropshire was much better covered with trees than this. But, I suppose, we have large tracts of moorland and fens such as the Long Mynd, the Stiperstones and Whixall Moss, all with very few trees.

So John urged us to plant more woodlands and where there is space available to note the trees growing around it and replicate the species as these obviously take better in these local conditions. When planting, John suggested linking new trees with existing copses or hedges. He also suggested that we encourage natural regeneration. This would cause less disturbance of the soil which is also holding lots of carbon. Remember Peter Thomas's talk last month and Ted Green's talk a couple of years ago. John's remarks also copied Peter's in his mention of much carbon locked up in peat and he urged us, too, not to disturb deeper peat where most of the carbon is found.

He told us that if lowland bogs are drained for crops or grassland, 25-30 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per hectare per year are lost.

So I come back to my original list of the values of planting trees. John's talk was particularly useful here because by focusing on just one of these values – that of reducing greenhouse gases and storing carbon – he was able to give us much more information on that one value alone.

So thank you John for coming to give us this interesting talk and I believe he has further talks about trees so we might see more of him in the future. *John Tuer*