



Visit to Powis Castle, NT gardens on September 13th @ 2pm

Dear member,

It seems that the wait is over and rain is on its way, fingers crossed. The hot summer weather has been excellent for those wishing to have a day out, by the sea or at an event, but for those of us trying to keep our trees hydrated it has been just that – very trying!

I am fortunate to have some large containers in which to collect rain water therefore managing to use little via hosepipes. The only slight issue was transporting sufficient water to each tree, a 2 ½ gall watering can weighs 25lbs.

I looked at ways of carrying 2 cans at a time without sustaining back / shoulder injury including various commercial carriers but they were often still too heavy to wheel around. We looked at motorising one, a step too far really for my needs. Then came inspiration – the old pram chassis that the children used as a racing trolley complete with a wire tray in the base. Problem solved, 50lbs of water trundled most successfully to each tree as required and back strain averted!

Looking at some trees, unsurprisingly autumn seems to be coming early with dry leaves and some fruits dropping already. Looking at a pedunculate oak nearby I saw quite a large number of strange, almost otherworldly, distorted acorns scattered around. These were knopper galls induced by the activity of a species of gall wasp. I wondered if the dry weather had caused such a large amount to form. Seemingly this is not necessarily the case although if the tree is under stress it can be more vulnerable, luckily there is no major threat to the tree itself but can affect its reproductive ability as the acorns are not viable. More detailed information can be found on the internet.

I hope you will be able to attend the guided tour of Powys Castle gardens on September 13th, at 2pm. All details in the August newsletter.

Best wishes

Julie

Powis Castle, Welshpool, Powys. Wales. SY21 8RF

Off the A483 Welshpool to Newtown road.

About a mile South of Welshpool follow brown tourist signs to Powis Castle on your right. Please note it's a one way system once in the park.

Please note there is a 5-10 minute walk allowing time to pay or show your NT cards at the Car Park Ticket office first. Meet at the picnic tables near the Garden Entrance.

Our visit to Powis Castle takes place on a Saturday this month, September 13th. National Trust members have free admission, otherwise normal prices apply, £15 per person or £16.50 with Gift Aid.

The tour will be led by David Swanton, the Head Gardener, or by one of the gardeners should he be unavailable. We hope to have copies of their maps of the 'Trees at Powis', particularly helpful for anyone leaving early so they can spot more trees on their way back!

David plans to meet us all at 2pm by the picnic benches opposite the Garden Ticket Kiosk. Toilets are located at the garden entrance level, underneath the Garden Shop.

Something not to miss at Weston Park

If you enjoy landscape, trees, Capability Brown and photography, this exhibition is really first class. We believe it is on till the end of September, please check online. "The Green World of Brown - Weston Park"

Our visit to Hodnet Hall on Sunday, 13th July 2025

Twelve members turned out on this very hot afternoon, a few of us meeting at Peter and Faith's farm first, then meeting the rest as we arrived. So firstly, thank you to Peter and Faith for providing a welcome drink with our sandwiches and directing us correctly from their farm.

Hodnet Hall estate is a wonderful place for a huge variety of trees mostly situated around the large lake. With many footpaths to follow, we wove our way in and out of the woodland keeping together with no particular leader on this occasion. It was a case of "Oh what's that tree over there?" and we'd move across to look at it. This seemed to work very well. We didn't lose anyone and we saw lots of the important trees. Of course there were those we missed. A reason for another visit perhaps. And perhaps a cooler day might have drawn out a large number of members.

I'm not going to list all the trees we looked at but just some that took our attention more than the others.

It took a little time trying to work why the *Acer heptalobium* was so called. The specific name obviously means 'seven lobes'. Or so we thought, but could we find any leaf with seven lobes? We could not. Neither could I find any such Acer in any of my tree books. As this was a young tree, perhaps it's only just been introduced to the tree world. Perhaps others of you can help.

Then there was a group of five of those conifers that are deciduous. They certainly weren't Larch, but were they Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) or Swamp Cypress (*Taxodium disticum*)? I always get confused between the two. Checking this when I got home, the Dawn Redwood's leaves are a little larger than those of the Swamp Cypress but, what's more, their branchlets are opposite each other. So I'm going for the Swamp Cypress on this occasion. If they were in or alongside the lake and showed their "knees" or pneumatophores, then that would clinch it. So look them up in your tree books and see what you think. That's if you were with us of course.

There were some quite rare trees here among the more usual specimens and one we hadn't seen before was a cultivar of a pear species – *Pyrus nivalis* 'Catalia'. We immediately recognised it as a pear because of its small blotches of pear rust, a fungal disease fairly common among pear trees. This was a lovely small tree with grey/blue leaves.

Some of the group immediately recognised the Birch, *Betula ermanii* – with its large leaves and the Indian Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus indica*) with its matt brown fruit, not at all like the glossy conkers. But *Betula papyrifera* 'Vancouver', now that was a new one on us. My copy of Hilliers says that this is a very vigorous birch with downy leaves and "bark a combination of brown, pink and white. Autumn colour rich orange." The latter meaning the leaves. Now this is a reason for visiting an arboretum more than once. Having been there in spring or summer, it can look quite different in the autumn.

Another rare tree was a cherry that looked very much like the Tibetan Cherry with its very smooth red bark. This one, however, was a variety of the Tibetan Cherry – *Prunus serrula* 'Branklyn'. So what made it different? It has the same red/mahogany coloured bark but is a smaller tree with a vase-like shape. Its leaves are narrow and willow-like which turn yellow in the autumn. That autumn colouring of the yellow leaves against the red of the bark must be quite something to see.

Our last tree that we spent some time looking at was a very large oak with a particularly large trunk. Graham reckoned it must have been about 500 years old and Peter noticed something that had been pointed out to us at Croft Castle and that was that this, with its lean, it had a compensating large limb which, growing out in the opposite direction, helped to balance the tree to stop it blowing over. So you see, we do remember and can use information we receive from one visit to the next.

And so to the tea room to enjoy a cuppa and a piece of cake. And to be honoured by a visit from Sir Algernon himself. "Have you enjoyed your visit?" he asked. "Yes, very much, thank you," I replied, "did you know that we were a specialist tree group?" I don't think he heard me. His hearing is as bad as mine but it was lovely of him to come and ask and it certainly won't put us off going to Hodnet again.

Just as an extra and nothing to do with trees: If you followed the exit signs when you were leaving, they will have taken you past the house on your left and right onto the drive with, on the hill in front of you, what looked like classical pillars. When the second house at Apley Castle in Telford was burning down, the pillars at the entrance to the house were saved and here they stand as a feature on the Hodnet Hall estate. Just thought you might like to know that useless piece of information! *John Tuer*