



Autumn visit: The Leasowes on 19th October: The Leasowes Farm, Cound, Shrewsbury SY5 6AF

Winter talk: Archie Miles on 11th November at the Wildlife Trust, Abbey Foregate.

Chairs Notes,

How to lift the spirits now we are getting into Keats' 'season of mists and mellow fruitfulness', with shortening days and falling temperatures, find an arboretum or, at least, some lovely trees hopefully nearby. This year we travelled a little further than we'd hoped to

an arboretum which is new to us – the Himalayan Sculpture Park and gardens near Ripon, N. Yorkshire.

This arboretum is reminiscent of a mini Bodnant, being set in a steep-sided valley with lakes in the bottom. It covers 45 acres, included within this are 12 acres of over 300 trees in multiple varieties -comprising, 52 oak; 25 limes; 20 Birches and 17 acers. In addition there are some more unusual trees – Chitalpa (a hybrid of Catalpa and Chilopsis); Broussonettia and a Schefflera Impressa. Add to these an Oak directly descended from the 1000 year old King Alfred's Oak at Blenheim Palace.

The sculptures sit amongst the trees and are an interesting, if rather expensive (in some cases) addition and gave an added dimension.

Sadly we were a little too early for the full autumn colours but still well worth a visit and we ran out of time to visit another fascinating place nearby – Hackfall Woods (details on the internet) which we visited many years ago before it was tidied up, but still to be recommended.

We are going to try our luck for autumn colour a little nearer home – Arley (Bridgnorth), Bodenham; Winterbourne gardens; Quinta; etc.

Finally, a reminder of our major speaker, Archie Miles, on the 11th November.

Please get in touch, via my email, if you are hoping to come, the venue at the Wildlife Centre seats 70 so we need to know numbers. Remember it is free for members; £10 for non-members (pay on the door). jkaye0848@gmail.com

Julie Kaye

STT autumn visit to The Leasowes, Garden and Arboretum 19th October at 2pm.

The Leasowes Farm, Cound, Shrewsbury SY5 6AF

Directions: On the Cressage straight on the A458, one mile north-west of Cressage. Follow signs for Oakleys. Parking is in the field below the house.

A remarkable arboretum with over 700 unusual and rare specimen trees and shrubs planted by the current owner. Connecting lakes with steep banks of rhododendrons and shrubs, and mixed level paths offer opportunities to explore the woodland.

The Leasowes is open for the Shropshire Historic Churches Trust and we are taking the opportunity to visit.

Please note the gardens are open from 10am - 5 pm, but we are starting at 2pm and meeting at the ticket table.

Entry is £6, and does not include teas, which are available in the gardens near the swimming pool. WC available.

Report on our visit to the gardens of Powis Castle, Saturday, 13th September 2025.

Fourteen members turned up to this visit on what looked like it was going to be a wet afternoon. But, despite it being sandwiched between two rainy days and even our afternoon at Powys being during two or three hours between other wet parts of the day, we escaped all rain and enjoyed an afternoon of lovely weather with our guide Peter Aspin.

Unfortunately, our proposed National Trust guide was indisposed so Peter kindly stepped in to do a great job in taking us round all the significant trees and even finding others that the garden's plan didn't show on its map.

Once again, I shall not describe every tree we saw. That would be both repetitive and tedious for our readers, and of course unnecessary because so many of the species we saw we had seen so many times in other gardens. It's the trees that we hadn't seen very often and, therefore, appeared to be rather rare that made Powys gardens stand out.

One of these was the fine example of the Turkish Hazel (*Corylus colurna*). We just couldn't work out what it was. The leaves were too large and shiny for a hazel. Then we found it had catkins and realised that it might be the Turkish Hazel. It was only when standing away from the tree that we saw its very pronounced pyramidal shape and that clinched it for us. It was such a good example of having to look at all parts

of a tree – flowers, seeds, leaves, bark, overall shape – to give us all the clues to help with an identification.

That was not the case when we saw the Hiba (*Thujopsis dolabrata*). We recognised its very bright green scale-like leaves with their stand-out white shapes on their backs straight away.

There were a number of Mediterranean Cypresses (*Cupressus sempervirens*) but on not one of them did we find any of their large egg-shapes cones. For those of you who don't know, “sempervirens” means “long-lived” and we also came across many of the American Coast Redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) This is not a rare tree these days. It is the species from which we have (on the western American Coastal Range) the tallest tree in the world (called “Hyperion”), currently standing at about 381 feet. So tall in America, that when the mist comes in from the Pacific Ocean, the tree takes in water through its crown as well as through its roots. This is a very unusual feature and I can't say that I've ever read of any other trees being able to do this. It must be because of its height and proximity to the Pacific creating a unique position for it.

While we're talking about tree names, Ivor reminded us that “Sequoia” was the name of a North American Indian. He was the person who put their language into writing for the first time. Thanks Ivor.

So what else was there of interest? There was a *Nyssa sylvatica*, the tree with the vivid red autumn-coloured leaves. Also called the “Tupelo” after the town in the part of America from where it originates, I always remember its common name as this was the town where Elvis was born. And, no, I'm not a particularly fan of Elvis. This tree at Powys was already in its autumn colour and it was only the 13th of September. Now I know that for a meteorologist, the first of September is the beginning of autumn. But, being a geographer, my start to autumn is, and always has been, the equinox, the 21st September. So I felt the autumn-colour to be surprisingly early.

We also found an interesting tree with very curled-up shiny leaves. Roger took a photograph of this with his phone and used his app to identify it. It said that this was a kind of Privet – *Ligustrum japonicum* 'Rotundifolium', not one any of us knew. My copy of Hilliers says that it's “an outstanding evergreen” and that it's “very slow growing.....with round leathery black-green leaves”. It seemed to match that description. You have an excellent app Roger.

The Pecan tree (*Carya illinoensis*) was another rare and interesting specimen that we saw. Hilliers says about this: “A large and valuable nut-bearing tree in North America but not so successful in the British



Figure 1: Powis Castle, Cork Oak
(Photo A and R Hughes)

Isles". It didn't say why but looking around the ground at its base, there were no nuts to be seen.

I could go on, there were some very large oaks which a label told us were hybrids: *Quercus robur* x *Quercus petraea*, but these are not uncommon in the Welsh Borders. However, these oaks were very large and may have been some of the first trees planted in these gardens.

We made our way back to, inevitably, the tea rooms and it was so pleasant that we were able to take our cuppas outside. A fitting end to a splendid afternoon. And many thanks to Peter for taking hold of the reins.

P.S.: Those of you who visited Hodnet Hall gardens on our last but one visit might remember that we came across an Acer that was named *Acer heptalobium* and in our last Newsletter I asked if anyone could tell us why it was called a seven-lobed tree when we couldn't find any of its leaves having seven lobes.



Figure 2: STT visit to Powis Castle: Trees and architecture (photo A and R Hughes)

Well, Graham has come up with a possible answer. Firstly, it's highly likely that I wrote down its name incorrectly and Graham suggests *Acer palmatum* var. *heptalobum* which appears to be a group name for various forms of Japanese Maples, some of the leaves of which have seven lobes **but not the one we saw**. Makes a great deal of sense to me now. Thank you Graham. Just shows that someone reads my reports! *John T.*