



**Notice of AGM – March 10<sup>th</sup> 2026 at SWT Abbey Foregate with refreshments and a talk by John Tuer on ‘Perthshire, Big Tree County’. 7 for 7.30pm.**

- **Visit to the Leasowes with special guided tour by Robert Bland (see below)**
- **New couple rate of £15 per person, so everyone is paying the same. Please renew your membership at this new rate.**

From the Chair,

An important reminder to members, we have our most important meeting of the year coming up, the Trust’s AGM.

In common with all organisations STT requires a committee to function. We currently have a committee of enthusiastic and committed people who are anxious to see the Trust continue. However, some members of the committee, who have held office for a number of years, would like to hand over to other Trust members who may bring fresh ideas and skills.

I would like to encourage anyone who feels strongly that the Trust still has an important role to play, to come forward and help maintain our dedicated organisation.

Time commitment is kept to a minimum as Committee meetings are held on dates agreed between the members when important decisions need to be discussed. Please consider joining the committee in whatever capacity you feel able to fulfil. There is no pressure to take on a major office, unless you wish to offer!

One last plea, please come along to the AGM to show your support for the Trust and make your views known on how the Trust is organised, we are open to change. Additionally we appreciate any suggestions for future talks and visits etc.

After the business we are to be entertained to an illustrated talk by John Tuer – ‘Perthshire, Big Tree County’ **and** there will be some refreshments! So, all-in-all, it will be a good evening! *Julie Kaye*

### **Open Garden day at the Leasowes**

On Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April the **Leasowes Gardens and Arboretum** (near Cound) is having an open day in aid of the Shropshire Historic Churches Trust – 10am to 5pm. The owner, Robert Bland, has offered to give STT members a personally guided tour at 2pm (approx.), a very generous offer. Even if you have been before it will give a different insight into the trees, especially the cherries.

**Please put the date/time in your diary.**

## Andrew Allott “The Trees of Central China”

What an excellent turn-out we had for this talk, despite such a wet evening. Even Graham and Lyn came down from Nottingham especially to hear it. At one point, we thought we might have to bring in some extra chairs. So what was the draw? Well, it was obviously Andrew. He has given us talks before, always interesting, always erudite and always something new. And the “something new” this time was the trees of Central China.

I've been looking up places in China in my World Atlas and also, and I'm lucky to possess a copy, in my Roy Lancaster's book “Travels in China”. Roy went to different places from Andrew but many of the tree species he mentions are the same as those discovered by Andrew's group. Andrew was a member of a party from the International Dendrological Society, visiting parts of Gansu, Shaanxi and Sichuan provinces, starting their tour at Xi An in Shaanxi. They spent over two weeks in the mountains around Xi An, in particular the Qinling Shan (“shan” meaning mountains) and the Daba Shan. If any of you wish to look up these provinces in an atlas or even on-line, you'll see that they really are slap bang in the centre of China. What an experience this must have been!

Touching first on some of the geology of the area, Andrew told us that this area was the meeting point of two tectonic plates where the South China block was moving under the North China block and as this was, geologically, fairly recent mountain building activity, the mountains had had little chance of being eroded. As a result, they were high, very very steep, almost vertical in places and, to say the least, very impressive. Forests almost totally covered these mountains and in many many places trees clung precariously to these near vertical slopes. We were shown a number of slides of overall views of this area and one could see the immense forestry cover often in picturesque cloud with the trees poking through.

Amazingly, China has 4,886 native tree and shrub species. Compare that with our thirty five and you'll see just how diverse these forests are. Gasps of awe from the audience! China also has 2,429 trees and shrubs which are endemic to certain regions only while we in the UK have none. This can be explained by the heights of the mountains. Lower down, where the climate is sub-tropical, the hotter-loving plants will survive whilst higher, different species will welcome the cooler temperate climate and, while Andrew showed us excellent slides of both genera of trees and shrubs, for this report I shall stick to his contact with trees. To do otherwise, this could be a very long report.

The first tree he mentioned was *Keteleeria davidiana* and he showed us a specimen that was 1,200 years old. It was a conifer with quite unusual cones. My copy of Roy Lancaster tells me that this was first discovered by Father Armand David, hence its specific name, but first introduced to Britain by Augustine Henry. It is apparently very rare in western cultivation but there are a few in major collections, one being the out-of-London Kew site at Wakehurst Place.

Another tree species discovered by David is the Handkerchief Tree, *Davidia involucrata*, (also known as the Dove Tree or Ghost Tree) and, of course, many of you will have seen specimens of this in the U.K.. So we could possibly divide the trees seen by Andrew's group into two categories: those that seem to be endemic to China and those that have been collected by the famous names who collected in those parts and which we now see growing in our own country. We have one of each mentioned above.

Another seen in its native home by Andrew's group was the *Koelreuteria paniculata* or "Pride of India" and Andrew told us that this was widely used as a street tree, showing us slides of it in flower and seed pods. The latter are not easily found over here in Britain but, naturally, it is very showy in its native home.

A list of the trees that Andrew saw and photographed in China are the following: *Acer forestii*, *Betula utilis* 'albo-sinensis', *Acer griseum*, a viciously thorny *Aralia alata*, *Acer groseri*, *Sorbus discolor*, *Sambucus adnata*, *Dipteronia sinensis*, *Ligularia nelumbifolia*, *Pterocarya stenoptera*, *Emmenopterys henryi*, *Castanea henryi*, *Actinidia chinensis*, *Quercus shenongiana*, *Ilex pernyi*, *Paulownia tomentosa*, *Descaisnia fargesii*, *Fagus engeleriana*, *Liriodendron tichatomum*, *Abies fargesii*, *Tetracentron sinensis* and *Cercis racemosa*. Many of you will know that the specific names "sinensis" and "chinensis" mean "Chinese". Other specific names give a clue as to who was plant collecting in this region of China: Henryi, Fargesii, Forestii.

I said that I wouldn't mention the shrubs that Andrew saw, but I must err from that for a moment to mention *Helwingia chinensis*. What a remarkable place to grow its seed, right in the middle of its leaves. This was a difficult shrub to spot as it had several climbers scrambling over it but it was so unusual that I felt I must mention it.

Andrew focused on a number of the above trees to tell us more about them. In the U.K., *Acer griseum*, for example has peeling orange bark, yet in its original forests, the bark is grey. Hence the specific name "griseum". *Emmenopterys henryi* is a stunning tree, quite spectacular in the wild as Andrew's photograph showed us. The *Quercus shenongiana* leaves looked most unlike many of the oaks that you and I know but the acorns were the give-away indicator on this specimen. Andrew had managed to get a wonderful photograph of *Descaisnia fargesia* with its amazing fruit that look like blue beans. There are a number planted in arboreta in Britain. There's one at Bodenham Arboretum just over the border in Worcestershire. Once seen, never forgotten.

And so, Andrew's group moved south to the great Yangtse River and the town of Yichang in Hupeh Province before heading north to Beijing and the northern woodlands of *Betula chinensis*. In Yichang they stopped to view the stump of a very old Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*). It had been cleaned and possibly varnished to keep its appearance but a count of the rings, apparently, showed it to be 800 years old. What a wonderful tree with which to finish his talk.

Thank you Andrew for giving us such a fascinating talk for the Severn Tree Trust, and showing us your excellently clear and colourful slides. The room was abuzz with talk about it afterwards and that's certainly the right way to leave an audience.  
*John Tuer*

## **Severn Tree Trust Programme of Events for 2026.**

Please note that **Visits** are for members only and **Talks** are open to all. Non-members will be asked for a contribution of £5 and to become a member please see the 'Join Us' section on our website:  
severntreetrust.co.uk

Full details about Visits will appear in the Newsletter.

Talks will be held at the Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, at 7 for 7.30pm.

### **Severn Tree Trust Programme 2026\***

January = No meeting

February 10th = Forests of Central China. Talk by Andrew Allott.

March 10th = AGM + 'Perthshire, Big Tree County' Talk by John Tuer.

April 12th = Visit: Nobridge and Oakgates, Telford; Self lead.

May 9th = Visit: Bolesworth Castle, Tattenhall (Sat.): Self lead.

June 13th = Visit: Willey Estate, Broseley (Sat.)

July 15th = Visit: Birmingham Inst. for Forest Research (Wed.)

August = No meeting

Sept. 12th = Visit: Gredington, Hanmer (Sat.)

October 11th = Visit: Gatley Park, Leominster

November 10th = A fascinating Talk by Bob Watson. Refreshments.

December 8th = Urban Woodland Initiatives: their past and present in creating better places for people and nature. Talk by Tristan Haynes Christmas Social & Refreshments

*\*meetings are subject to change depending on weather and other events. Please see monthly newsletters for updates.*