



- **Change to date and visit: Sunday, 29th April- Oakgates Nursery, nr Shawbury @ 2pm. Ellerdine, Telford, TF6 6RL.** Take A58 through Shawbury, then turn right on Hazles Lane.
- **Please remember to renew your membership @ £15 pp**

From the chair

First of all a very big thank you to Julie for being chair for the last three years. She is on several other committees that I know of so it is about time that she took a slight rest from STT though she is remaining as a non-executive director. In other words I expect she will put the chair in his place, hopefully not too frequently. We recently tried to figure out which one of us had been a member for the longest. We couldn't recall though at least to the last millennium.

I am one of four members on the committee from both sides of the Pennines, but despite that we get on quite well. Many of you will have visited the farm here over the years to check out the work on landscape, climate and all the other stuff but as well as farming there are five gardens to look after so I'm fairly busy and cannot get to all meetings. Fortunately the other non-execs are more (than) capable of managing without my presence/interference.

STT has a really good programme for the remainder of the year; including one place which we have never previously visited, another not visited for over a quarter of a century and a second look in a decade at BiFor, arguably one of the most important projects anywhere into climate adjustment. And towards the end of the year we have a third talk over the years by one of the most knowledgeable speakers on all things arboreal.

If any members have ideas for other places or projects to visit, please suggest them or if you would like to join the committee then put yourself forward. And please pay subscriptions as soon as possible, it makes life so much easier for the treasurer.. Hope to see you at a meeting soon. *Peter Aspin*

Our next visit – a meeting at Oakgates Nursery, north of Shawbury, on Sunday, 29th April

On your 2026 events programme, you'll see that we have down visits to two nurseries. Sadly we shall not be able to visit the first one listed – NoBridge Nursery north of Telford.

This is their busiest time of the year from Easter onwards in which people are buying plants for spring. It tends to get very crowded and the car park gets full.

So Oakgates is still on the menu and we shall meet there at our usual visits' time of 2.00pm. If you're going there from Shrewsbury, take the road to Shawbury and very few miles beyond look out for the brown "Oakgates Nursery" sign to ask you to turn right. It's along here on the left and there's an entry road and an exit road with overflow parking if needed.

If you're going from Telford go north through Crudgington and Waters Upton and a short distance on you'll see a brown sign pointing left to "Oakgates Nursery". Just carry on along this road and eventually you'll come to the nursery on your right on this road.

Oakgates sells plants of course but we're going to look at its trees. It has three lovely gardens to explore and a very good eatery where you can sit outside if the weather is good. We hope to see many of you there.

The Big Tree Country: Perthshire Notes on the Talk given by John Tuer at the AGM of Severn Tree Trust

Perthshire is old and big, literally and culturally, as evidenced by all the tourist literature.

The Fortingale Yew

There is plaque to commemorate Elizabeth II 's jubilee stating the yew is 5000 years old, the oldest living thing on the planet. It is not possible to date it exactly, it could be 9000 years old.

It has a healthy crown but the trunk which once was 17m in circumference has receded.

David Douglas

The Life and Times of David Douglas by William Morwood is recommended.

He was born in Scone in 1799, moving on to Glasgow Botanic Gardens and then the RHS.

Andrew Payne Kinglet owner of Downton Castle in Shropshire took a particular interest in apples and employed Douglas to go to New England to search for new apple varieties. In the 1820s and 30s he was sent to the USA west coast to discover seeds for new timber varieties. He travelled by way of the Hudson Bay forts reaching California. He sent back the seeds of 200 tree specimens. Sadly in 1834 he fell into a bull pit on the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) and was killed, aged only 35.

We were shown a slide of his grave and memorial plaque in Scone. A pinetum was planted in his memory at Scone Palace.

He discovered inter alia

sitka spruce

western red cedar

noble fir

grand fir

the Douglas Fir *pseudotsuga menziesii* (false hemlock)

The Meikleour Beech Hedge

It is close to the A93 and was planted in 1745. It is cut on the road side only every 3 years and is huge

The Hermitage by Dunkeld

A folly built for the Duke of Atholl which has many very tall trees but the trunks are not very wide as the trees are very close together and have to struggle for light. There is the tallest silver fir in the country.

The bark of the mature Douglas fir is easily identified by the orange stripes, the cones have bracts.

Burnham Beeches

Although little is left, a 500 yearold oak is carefully propped up.

Dunkeld Cathedral

The 2nd Duke of Atholl received 5 larch seeds in 1738. The remaining trees are called the Mother of Millions as they proved to be particularly good timber and at least 27 million larches have been grown from this source. They have transformed the Perthshire landscape.

The talk was accompanied by well chosen slides.

John was thanked by Peter Aspin

“What is your favourite tree?”

A couple of months ago, Julie asked members to tell us what their favourite tree might be. Now that's a question I've been asked a number of times and I have no hesitation in giving my answer. Some of you will think my answer to be boring! Always green, never coloured, nothing to attract one in autumn, not much to the flowers or seed. So why on earth does a tree that looks very much like *Leylandii* become my favourite? Peter, our new chairman, knows the answer because he's heard me go on about it frequently.

It's *Thuja plicata* or Western Red Cedar. Why? Let's start with in this country. We have a large one in our garden. Admittedly it's *Thuja plicata* 'Zebrina' which is a little different in having black stripes across its yellow/green scale-like leaves. But even the bog standard *Thuja plicata* attracts me greatly. When it has rained and I clip off some of the spreading branches, the smell of pineapple is wonderfully all-pervading. Yes, it has a wonderful smell. I once went to the greenhouse and cold-frame makers, Gabriel Ash, in Cheshire and their whole workshop smelt of pineapple. It's commonly used for garden buildings because it's so good at withstanding inclement weather. It changes colour over a time and the reddish wood turns to silver but it withstands snow, rain, ice, whatever. When the new William Brookes Secondary School was built a few years ago here in Much Wenlock where we live, they planned to clad it with shingles of Douglas Fir but realised very quickly that Douglas Fir does not cope with adverse weather conditions as an outdoor constructional timber in the way that Western Red Cedar does. So they changed plan and clad the new school with *Thuja*. This wood is often used for the outdoor cladding of buildings.

But what about overseas and by that I mean where it comes from, its home territory? This is the western side of North America, particularly in Canada to as far north as Alaska. I've visited huge stands of it and it is a very tall tree, the whole forest giving off that pleasant fruity scent after rainfall. So it reminds me of a wonderful holiday in that part of the world. But the First Nations peoples used the wood a lot. It is the timber from which their totem poles were made and having seen them making these cultural emblems myself, again the trees remind me of my visit. They also made their log cabins of this timber and what they called “bent boxes”, their way of storing their possessions. Instead of jointing the boxes at the corners, they bent the timber around the sides and just jointed at one point. They also made blankets from this tree. I could go on and on. But I'm hogging the newsletter. Must stop here and let someone else have their say. I think you've got the message, I love Western Red Cedar. *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.

Sunday, 29th April = Visit: Oakgates, Telford.

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.) **BIFOR**

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.*

THE SEVERN TREE TRUST – Membership Renewal 2026

Renew your membership – the easy way

We're always saying that we must keep up with events and then not doing anything about it! So we really must do something and the best way to start is with your membership renewals. If a number of you have had difficulty in renewing your STT memberships for 2026, you can do so by using BACS.

Our account name is **Severn Tree Trust**

Our bank's sort code is: **08 92 99**

and our Account Number is: **65401288**

But please add your name where it asks for a reference. We've had problems with some members not giving their name on the bank transfer and it's been difficult to sort out who you are. So name please if you wish to use BACS.

We do hope that makes things a lot easier for you but if you want to pay annually by Standing Order (not Direct Debit note because with Standing Order you control your payments), please ask us for the appropriate form. Hoping that's helpful.

To renew your membership by cheque, please complete the following and send it to our Treasurer.

John Tuer, Evergreen, 5 Woodside, Homer, Much Wenlock, TF13 6NQ

(please tick as appropriate)

Single Adult membership (£15) _____ Under 21s Membership (£5) _____

Double Adult Membership (£30) _____

Title (Mr.) (Mrs.) (Ms.) (Miss) (Dr.)

Name(s) _____

Please confirm your email address. _____

Address _____

Receipt of newsletter. If possible we would like to send you the newsletter by email as it saves on postal costs. However our editor will post it to you if you have no email access. The newsletter is always available on the website <https://severntreetrust.co.uk>. **Thank you for renewing your membership. We look forward to seeing you at our meetings.**