

Tree Report – John Wheeler

for November meeting.

Autumn is upon us and our trees are showing their finest colours in leaves and their ripened fruits and don't they look fantastic.

Some of the village field and road side hedges have already been cut back very early this year reducing the winter food for birds. I guess there is a good reason for this, not something I personally am in favour of, but on the positive side the contractor in my opinion did a good neat and tidy job.

Where fruits and berries remain the last of this season's butterflies enjoy a final feast. Red Admirals, Peacocks and the Commas are the some of the last of the season's survivors. It's been a great year for the Red Admiral Butterfly whose numbers have been quite abundant throughout; But countered by the lack of Small Tortoiseshell butterfly's which used to be far more common.

I did see a White Admiral Butterfly (more black than white) this year in the village a first for me but know they can be seen at Surlingham nature reserve and guess it's where it came from.

Going back to trees, of course we must continue to promote and plant new trees, but for me there is far more to it than that.

For me It's about planting the right trees in right places and then looking after them.

In Our villages I come across trees that have been planted with little thought of how big they will get, How will their root systems thrive, will they get enough water, will they cause damage to property, and thus get cut back or down once they reach maturity, Are they native trees and from disease free stock all important considerations.

Larger Landowners of course are key to this process and should be encouraged to plant new woodland and hedging. I applaud them when they do, but again for me it's about management and after care, or lack of it!

If they are not managed and thinned out so they can thrive and grow, they will fail and slowly die.

Sadly, there is an example of this in our village where a newly planted wood has been neglected and has become a dense thicket of willow, with dead and dying beech, Oak and Ash all smothered in-between the dense willow.

I am hopeful something will be done to sort this out before it is too late! Mature established Woodlands tend to look after themselves but still in my opinion need some Management and a helping hand.

On a more positive note we are so privileged to have such a lovely and old wood as Hazelmere. It has a public footpath through it and is a site to behold particularly in Springtime with primroses followed by a carpet of Bluebells amongst which are woodland Orchids if you look carefully.

With the birds in full voice if you stop and pause for a minute it is almost the perfect country place right in our village.