



### **Ruth's 30ft garden giant escapes the chop to take pride of place as Stoke Hall's Christmas tree**

A giant conifer which was felled to stop its roots damaging a Nottingham woman's home has escaped being chopped into firewood – by becoming a Christmas tree at a Newark wedding venue.



The 30ft Picea Omorika, or Serbian Pine, was cut down last week after a survey found that its roots were growing dangerously close to the foundations of Ruth Lee's terraced home in Elm Avenue, Carlton.

Just six feet from her back door, its roots were also lifting her garden path and were pushing over a low retaining wall and so, with a heavy heart, Ruth decided to have the tree taken down earlier this year.

However, when she rang Paul Stephenson, owner of Tall Trees Landscapes and Tall Trees Garden Centre in Burton Joyce, he asked her to postpone the felling. Recognising that picea omorikas make excellent Christmas trees, he realised that the tree could be recycled to spread some festive cheer.

He in turn rang Diane and Bryan Ansell, owners of Stoke Hall, a wedding venue in East Stoke, near Newark, and offered them the chance to display the tree in their hallway.



The couple, who also live at the hall, agreed and are now the proud owners of the tree, which is spreading Christmas cheer with its adornment of hundreds of baubles.

The tree, which could have grown to a maximum height of 60ft, was only four foot tall when Ruth moved into her home 18 years ago, but has since grown into a monster.



She said: "I really didn't want to get rid of the tree, because it's beautiful and I didn't have the heart to kill it, but the survey was the final straw.

"The funny thing is, the tree had obviously become a local landmark because when I told my neighbours I was getting rid of it, they were saddened by the news.

"However, like me they were delighted to hear that Paul said it was going to become a Christmas tree, because they felt it was more of a fitting end."

It took three people to cut the tree down and manhandle it on to a trailer for the drive to Stoke Hall. It then took seven people and a lot of pushing and shoving through the hall's doors to get it into position in the hallway.

Paul said: "It's most likely that the tree was a Christmas tree that was replanted outside the house once Christmas was over and it's carried on growing ever since.



"The picea omorika is a lovely, slender specimen and, although it's part of my job, I hate cutting down trees. But it was clear that this one had to go because of the damage it could go onto cause.

"What made the job easier was that I knew that Diane and Bryan were after a big Christmas tree. Big trees like this are scarce and very expensive to come by, so I was delighted when they said they would like it."

The tree has now taken pride of place at the foot of Stoke Hall's magnificent curving stairs.

Diane added: "Paul has supplied large Christmas trees to Stoke Hall for a few years but because it is difficult to get big ones, we have had to have an artificial one for the past few years.

"To have the smell of a real Christmas tree throughout the hall is wonderful again. We have been given strict instructions to feed it eight to 10 litres of water a day, but what Paul hasn't told us is how to reverse the process to get it out of the house on the Twelfth Night!"

**ENDS**

## **Notes to Editors**

Situated in open countryside almost a mile outside the village of East Stoke and approximately four miles from Newark-on-Trent, Stoke Hall is a magnificent Grade II listed building designed and built in 1812 by renowned architect Lewis Wyatt.

Owned by Bryan and Diane Ansell, it is licensed to host civil ceremonies or partnerships for up to 100 guests, seat 120 comfortably for the wedding breakfast and 150 for the evening entertainment. Couples can choose to have their ceremonies in the bright and cheerful Orangery flooded with natural sunlight, the Grand Reception Hall with its high glass cupola, the more intimate Lord Bromley Study or the richly decorated Old Library.

All four rooms are can be adapted to couples' individual requirements, from casual to more traditionally formal, while private dressing rooms are also available before the ceremony. There are also beautiful landscaped grounds and an enchanting Secret Garden filled with colourful and exotic plants, palm trees and bamboos.

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