

The Avenues today



35 of the English oaks in the long avenue still survive and appear to be in good health. At least 4 of the original interplanted silver birches remain. When the new Joel Park estate was built a road was laid between the two rows of oak trees, known as Jubilee Avenue. 11 of the red oaks survive in the short avenue. These trees grow faster and do not live as long as English oaks. Some have been felled as a result of disease, but 8 younger trees have been added to replace a few that have been lost. No trace of the Lombardy poplars remains. This avenue was named Connaught Avenue in honour of the Duke of Connaught and Strathearn, third son of Queen Victoria and the High Steward of Berkshire from 1918 until his death in 1942.

More details of the planting ceremony can be seen the Wokingham Town Council scrap book for 1935 in the Berkshire Records Office.

Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association was established in 2007 to increase public awareness of the importance of veteran and other significant trees in the district and to ensure they are identified, protected and properly managed.

Visit the WDVTA website at www.wdvta.org.uk



Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association

Two Jubilee Avenues, Wokingham

The long avenue of
English oaks
(*Quercus robur*)
Jubilee Avenue



The short avenue
of red oaks
(*Quercus rubra*)
Connaught
Avenue

**Planted in 1935 in Holt Meadows, Joel Park, Wokingham to
commemorate the silver anniversary of King George V.**

Plans to plant the Jubilee Avenues

Late in 1935 the Mayor of the Town Council of the Borough of Wokingham, Alderman F.C. Barrett, suggested a scheme for *'the planting of an avenue of oak trees in Holt Meadows adjoining Joel Park, as a commemoration of the Silver Jubilee of H.M. The King'*.

A sub committee met on 26th November in Holt Lane and the Borough Surveyor of the Berkshire County Council put forward an amended layout for two avenues. Members heard that *'Mr P.O. Wilson had kindly consented to give a piece of land to enable the longer avenue to be sighted in a westerly direction, subject to the corner of Milton Road being improved to give sight lines to traffic.'* The tenant of this land had offered to vacate it within a fortnight for a consideration of £4.10s. and rent exemption from September 30th.

On December 5th the council agreed the recommendations of the sub committee *'to plant the short Avenue leading from the Holt School with Crimson Oaks and the longer Avenue leading from the corner of Holt Lane and Milton Road in a westerly direction with Green Oaks, Birch or poplar to be planted between the Oaks. The Oaks to be presented and planted by members of the Council.'*

Later it was confirmed that the intermediate trees should be Lombardy poplars in the short avenue and silver birch in the long avenue. The ceremony was planned for 18th December at 2.15 p.m.



**One of the silver birches
(*Betula pendula*)
planted between the English oaks
along Jubilee Avenue**

'70 Oak Trees planted in One Day!'

Wokingham's Mayor and Mayoress inaugurate Great Ceremony 18th December 1935

'Civic and various other representatives of the town's life, together with local school children, witnessed and participated in this historic ceremony. At the top of the avenue the children formed a three-square and inside the square members of the Council and other notabilities faced down the avenue. A short service was conducted by the Rector of Wokingham, The Rev. G. Kenworthy, and Mr Burgess, organist at St Paul's, led the singing of two hymns and the national anthem.'

From the Reading Evening Gazette Dec.19th 1935



The Mayor and Mayoress, Alderman and Mrs F.C. Barrett, planting the first trees

An Emblem of Peace

'The Mayor expressed the hope that the trees they were planting that afternoon would grow to be as beautiful as others round about. He said it used to be the custom to plant oak trees to produce ships of war. They were not doing that that day, rather he was hoping that these trees would be an emblem of peace – and would give joy and beauty to many thousands of people in the future.'

Sadly King George V died on January 20th 1936 and World War II began four years later in 1939. However many trees planted in 1935/6 remain to remind us of the hopes for peace at the time.