



Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association

Tree Watch

Issue 2

August 2009

As of 11th August 2009 we have **2739** trees in our database and **2151** photographs

Welcome to the second issue of *Tree Watch*. *Tree Watch* is designed to contain items of interest about our survey and related issues. It is not the newsletter of the association and hence will not contain details of forthcoming WDVTA events. Those are in the WDVTA newsletters, which are distributed separately and are, of course, also on the Yahoo site. *Tree Watch* will be produced every 3 months - February, May, August and November. The copy deadline is the end of the previous month.

Thank you to everyone who has sent in contributions - Barbara, Gill, Heather, Sheila, Linda, Angus, Steve, Carole and John - unfortunately, there was not enough space to include them all. Feedback so far suggests that you think 4 pages is about the right length. When I incorporated all the contributions I received this time, it came to 8 pages, and so I have had to hold some over for the next issue. Let me know whether you think I should restrict the length to 4 (or 5) pages, or whether you'd rather I included all interesting contributions and let the length vary. Postponed until the next issue are two excellent accounts of what it's like surveying trees for WDVTA; as well as the "Did You Know", "Sadly Departed" and "Frequently Asked Question" items.

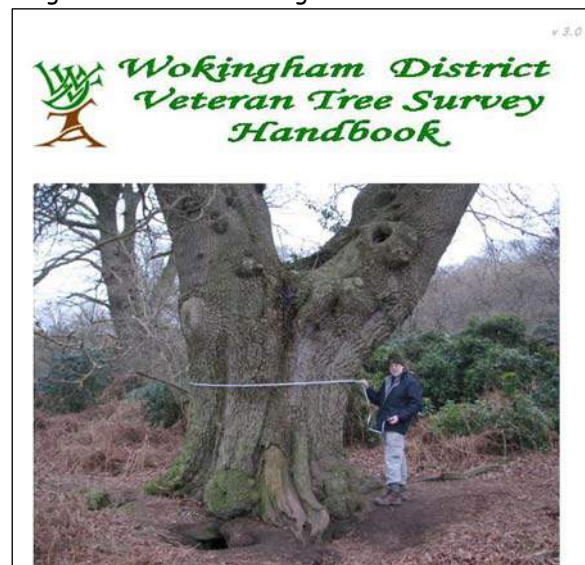
All comments and contributions please to: Elaine Butler datamanager@wdvta.org.uk

The total number of trees in our database includes 128 from Crowthorne. Crowthorne is partly in Wokingham Borough (Wokingham Without) and partly in Bracknell Forest. CVAG (Crowthorne Village Action Group) decided that they wanted to survey their veteran trees and formed a group - which has secured lottery funding. Their surveyors have joined our association and their trees are going into our database (under the parish code of XC, the X indicating that it is outside Wokingham Borough). See later for a profile of their co-ordinator, John Baster, and a piece about their official launch.

Two of our members, membership secretary Ellen Singleton-Wood and Winnersh co-ordinator Fee Young, have taken a short break from WDVTA responsibilities whilst working on their masters degrees. We wish them luck and hope that all their hard work is rewarded.

If you are not currently involved in our survey, why not join us? Can't identify trees? - Don't have a computer? - Don't let that stop you. Trees don't move! If you find a large tree, someone else can identify it. If you don't have a computer, your co-ordinator can arrange for your data to be computerised. So if you'd like to help record our trees contact me, and I'll put you in touch with a co-ordinator. Alternatively, there is a list of co-ordinators and their e-mail addresses on the Yahoo site. We still have a long way to go and we'd love to have more people involved.

Details of how to measure trees, what to record and how to submit your data to the database can be found in our revised handbook. If you are recording trees, do make sure that you have the latest version (the cover photo - as shown here - has been changed, to avoid confusion). It is available from co-ordinators and from the Yahoo site



[Files > Information and Files for Recorders > Recording Information > ***WDVTS Handbook v3 ***]

If you'd like a printed version or a laminated "Where to measure trees", suggested abbreviations and list of drop-down options, then just ask your co-ordinator.



THE CROWTHORNE LAUNCH

The Crowthorne Village Action Group, which supported a group that wrote one of the first Village Design Statements for Bracknell borough, also instigated an independent team of volunteers, CaTH (Crowthorne ancient Tree Hunt), to survey all the trees within the parish boundary. Twenty volunteers were signed up and trained during the spring. Andrew MacKay officially launched the venture on the 18th May 2009 and the event in the churchyard of the parish church of St John was well reported in the local press. To fund the scheme and the equipment needed the CVAG treasurer, Eddie Lyne, who is also one of the tree hunters, secured an Awards for All grant.

The group have already had a meeting with the Biodiversity and Tree Protection departments of BFC, and assured them that they will have access to the data once it is collated, and they offered to assist the group wherever possible.

John Baster



Barbara explained it all to Bracknell MP, Andrew MacKay, who then went off to hug the large cedar in the churchyard. This cedar is not in our database yet, but hopefully soon will be!

SPEEDY NEIGHBOURS STOP DEVELOPER AXING PROTECTED TREES

This was the headline in *The Crowthorne and Sandhurst Times* last month. Residents of Albert Road, off Dukes Ride, Crowthorne heard the noise of chain saws and were dismayed when they realised that trees and bushes were being removed from a potential development site. Fortunately the residents knew that the trees at number 5 had TPOs, although the tree surgeons didn't. As responsible tree surgeons, they stopped work when they were told. The Council (Bracknell Forest) responded quickly and the trees were saved. Apparently the Leicester-based developer, T&B Ltd, had hired tree surgeons to clear the land before submitting a planning application for a block of nine flats.

The moral of this is - keep alert - and ring the Council if you think a tree is about to be cut down unnecessarily. You might be wrong, but no harm will be done. Once cut down, saying sorry won't help.

MORE VETERAN TREES TO BE MAPPED

As you may have read, the National Trust has just begun a 3-year survey of the ancient trees on its sites - an estimated 40,000. They include Newton's apple tree and the Ankerwycke yew tree (Runnymede), which overlooked the signing of Magna Carta (one for you Linda). On their website, the Trust is described as "the most important organisation for ancient trees in the UK". It depends how you interpret the word "for". They no doubt have more ancient trees than the Woodland Trust, but (at least so far) the Woodland Trust has done much more *for* ancient trees. Veteran and notable tree will also be recorded, especially those of historic interest, and they will all be added to the Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Hunt. The survey and a new post of Ancient Tree Advisor are being funded by Cadbury. Brian Muelaner has been appointed to this position, and I think we all agree with his sentiments: '*Standing next to an ancient tree that has lived through centuries of history can be a truly humbling experience. We want to champion these special trees and raise their profile within the landscapes that they can be found.*'

THE MAGNIFICENT CROWHURST YEW



© Dan Gregory
<http://www.geograph.org.uk/profile/16895>

We continually hear about the health benefits of walking and how it is recommended for people making a recovery from illness, operations or just wanting "to get fit". My good health allows me to focus on the sheer pleasure of being in the fresh air and marvelling at our countryside whilst enhancing my fitness and enjoying some new found knowledge that I have seen or heard of along the way. I would like to share with all you tree lovers an absolutely fantastic tree that I came across whilst out with the Long Distance Walkers in Surrey a couple of weeks ago. The Crowhurst Yew is an absolutely magnificent tree being the third oldest Yew in England. The oldest tree in the British Isles being in Fortingall, Perthshire estimated to be 3000 to 5000 years old. The two other notable yews in this country are at Tisbury, Wiltshire and Linton in Hertfordshire and both are estimated to be 4000 years old.

The Crowhurst Yew is situated in the graveyard and its sex is unknown. It has a girth of 32 feet and the trunk has hollowed out with age. Within the trunk a 4-foot high door has been installed presumably to provide shelter. The

earliest mention that can be found of the tree is in the parish records of 1630.

I urge you to go and see this ancient tree if you are in the area or just passing through. My plans are to see the other trees on my travels whilst enjoying my walking.

Further information can be found on www.ancient-yew.org/ancientyews.shtml

Linda Ashwell, Remenham Co-ordinator

Note: This tree is recorded on the Woodland Trust site - tree number 6733 (girth 9.61m; 10 photos)

A FAVOURITE TREE

Linda's favourite tree may not be in Wokingham, but Angus Ross has two closer to home - in his back garden, in the grounds of Barkham Manor. He sent this photo of an Oriental Plane in winter. It has a girth of 7.45m at 0.3m. I'm told that this is a better specimen than the one in the Waitrose car park, which has a girth of 6m at 1.5m. The Barkham Manor Plane is not publicly accessible, but there are 10 (other) photos of it in our database, so have a look at them on our web site (tree number 1887). There are 9 photos of the Montague Oriental Plane (tree number 76) and so you can compare them.



So far we just have these 2 Oriental Planes (*Platanus orientalis*) in our database. This species is native to Asia Minor, SE Europe and India; and was introduced into Great Britain around 1550.

His other favourite is a Wellingtonia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) with a girth of 7.45m at 1.5m. See two photos of this one on our web site - tree number 1888.

PROFILE – JOHN BASTER

John is co-ordinator for Crowthorne Parish. This description is written by Carole Doran, the secretary of CVAG, a fellow surveyor and (as the photo shows) fellow dancer too.

"John is keen on conservation matters and has willingly taken on the role of co-ordinator of the Ancient Tree group in Crowthorne. He has been involved with many organisations. For several years, he helped to manage an ice dance competition, the World Ice Challenge, which was very popular with adult ice dancers. He still gets requests to run it again but there is only so much that can be crammed into a John Baster timetable!"

For many years, he was a keen ice skater himself, only stopping because ballroom dancing took over all of his time.

He writes for several magazines, mainly about dance and ice-skating issues, and he is keen to promote dance in schools, helping to run a small dance club at a primary school in Bracknell. He dances three or four times a week, taking lessons as well as going to social dances, he goes to the gym on a daily basis and visits his family in Coventry as often as he can.

He is also a valued member of the Crowthorne Village Action Group, organising and running their newsletters and web site. John wrote the 'Nature' section to the Crowthorne Village Design Statement that is now used as supporting documentation to both Wokingham and Bracknell plans. Therefore, if you see someone doing a Foxtrot round an ancient tree, you can bet it will be John Baster!"



AN EVENING AMBLE, looking at veteran and exotic trees in historic Whiteknights Park, with leader Rupert Taylor, Assistant Grounds Manager.

Rupert led us on a trail round Whiteknights' large collection of ornamental trees and ancient woodlands. We began to understand the intricacies of tree management both from a conservation point of view and a safety one. We got a sense of Rupert's strong commitment to conserving the native trees and saw many lovely oaks, particularly in the Wilderness woods, some already veterans and other possible future ones. Long may they live. We criss-crossed paths in the Wilderness woods and apart from many oaks, we saw yew, turkey oak, cypress oak, and beech to name a few. We also saw a couple of hybrids oak oddities. One was a Lucombe oak, raised by Mr. Lucombe in 1762, a cross between Turkey and Cork oaks grafted on to a common oak. The other was a Turners Oak, raised by Mr Turner in 1783, a cross between English and Holm oak grafted onto another English oak. Both trees had large girths and a very distinctive bulge caused by the graft. You can't miss 'em.

Nuggets of information, dropped into Rupert's narrative of trees, conjured up far more exotic places than Whiteknights Park. Take the Jeffrey Pine with an aptitude for growing in high altitudes, demonstrating how tolerant it is to grow in not-very-mountainous Reading. It was discovered in 1852 in the Shasta Valley of California, by John Jeffrey, a Scottish botanical explorer. What a tale he could tell. He disappeared forever, after leaving San Diego to cross the Colorado Desert, still looking for plants. He possibly died of thirst or was perhaps killed by Native Americans.

Rich collectors wanting to show off the latest exotics probably fell over themselves to get hold of specimens from the New World. Another tree from the Eastern states of North America, and in Whiteknights Park, is the Shagbark Hickory, first known in this country from about 1629. From its name you can gather the mature tree has shaggy bark. It's used for smoking meat, provides nuts for squirrels and its cut timber is highly prized.

Of the many ornamental trees we saw, were the Highclere Holly: originally found in Highclere Castle, a cross between Madeira and Common Holly; and a Cretan Maple, thought to be the second best specimen in the country, the only evergreen maple and a most attractive tree (first introduced into Britain in 1752).

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the visit thanks to Rupert's knowledgeable guidance, and we raised over £53 for Tree Aid.

Sheila Crowson

A THREAT TO OUR CONKERS?

It's nice to see any form of tree research receiving recognition. A poster entitled "*A threat to our conkers? Characterisation of the horse chestnut bleeding canker pathogen*" took second prize (£1,000) in the Biological Sciences section of the SET for BRITAIN awards at the House of Commons in March. What's more there's a local connection - the poster was presented by Federico Dorati, a PhD student at the University of Reading. The SET Awards (Science, Engineering & Technology Student of the Year) are Britain's most important awards for science and technology students and there were 600 applicants this year. The awards will be presented in September.

YOUR YAHOO SITE

Yahoo has made some changes recently. You can now upload photos in groups, rather than one at a time, which is much more convenient, and they do not reduce the size now. If you send an e-mail to the group with an attachment, that attachment is now available on the group site. The attachment itself is now a link to the file on the Yahoo site. This has the advantage that when you download the e-mail, you do not download the attachment. If you are not interested in the attachment you do nothing. If you want to open it, you just click on the link at the bottom of the message. It means that you can send attachments to the group without clogging up anyone's inbox.

Some recommendations from the Yahoo site:

WEBSITES:

- ① www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.9251 - Veteran trees on English Heritage sites
- ① www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk/discoveries/interactivemap - Interactive map showing the trees registered by the Ancient Tree Hunt (Woodland Trust) [Only one of ours is there as yet.]
- ① www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk/discoveries/TreeSearch.htm - Search the Ancient Tree Hunt database. [Type in tree number 6733 for the Crowhurst Yew.]

READING: (in Files > Useful Files > Natural England documents)

- ① EN-VetTreesFuture - A discussion on the future for veteran trees.
- ① EN520-Thames & Chilterns3 - A survey of the veteran trees in local parkland and wood pasture.
- ① EN Veteran Trees Management Handbook Ch3 - How a tree grows, becomes old and decays.

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Don't forget: The latest database and all the latest files relating to the survey are on the Yahoo site:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/WDVTA>

The maps on our web page (hosted by TVERC) are updated monthly: www.wdvta.org.uk

Finally, and most importantly,
THANK YOU to everyone who is out there recording our trees.
We wouldn't have a database without you.