



As of 24th February 2010 we have **3489** trees in our database and **2936** photographs

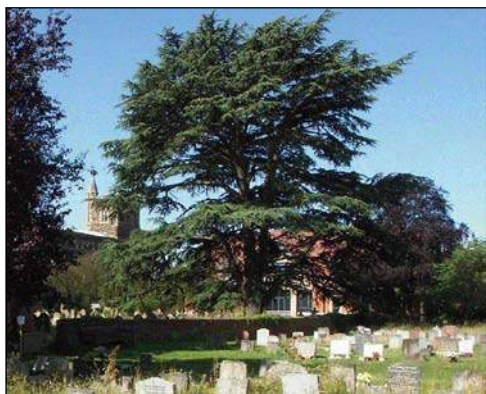
Towards the end of February I thought I'd be able to say that spring was approaching, but with the recent snow here, it seems rather a long way off. How did you enjoy the heavy snow this winter? Did you take any nice photos of any of our trees in the snow? If you did, we'd love to see them. If any of the trees that you've recorded have been damaged by the snow, then please record this as an update to the original record, with a photo if possible. Don't forget that WDVTA does have a camera that can be borrowed by any member, so if you don't have a camera, you may borrow it and send in your photos. Unfortunately the snow did interfere with some of our activities. Our "At Home" in January was cancelled, but we do hope to re-schedule it later in the year, and our Jan/Feb committee had to be postponed for a week. Details of the WDVTA programme for this year are in the Newsletter, which you should have received; and of course all Newsletters and Tree Watches are on the Yahoo site. There are a couple of outside events that might be of interest. You can hear all about Osterley Park's rare veteran trees on a guided walk by the National Trust on 21st March (14:00-15:30); booking is essential (0208 232 5050; £5). The Ramblers Association is celebrating its 75th anniversary and have produced an excellent booklet of 16 (free) guided walks in "Beautiful Berkshire". One of these is of special interest to us - "Veteran Trees on Bucklebury Common" (13th June; 10:30). See the WDVTA Yahoo calendar for more details. Don't forget that any Yahoo Group member can add an event to the calendar, so if you know of an event that would interest other members, please do add it - and of course do check the calendar to see what's on. Details can also be found on the Yahoo site in *Files > News and Events > FORTHCOMING EVENTS*.

We have now worked out a protocol for verifying trees and have started verifying those recorded in Wokingham Town. This is a prerequisite for publishing the results. We are particularly interested in the history of our trees and hope to include historical details and anecdotes in any publication. So if you have any old photos showing trees that are still standing or you know of any stories relating to them, please tell us about them. See Barbara's piece below about the Cedar in All Saints Church.

The next issue of Tree Watch will be May 2010 and the copy deadline is 30th April. All comments and contributions please to: Elaine Butler datamanager@wdvta.org.uk

CEDAR OF LEBANON AT ALL SAINTS CHURCH, WOKINGHAM

John Harrison, Tower Captain of the All Saints Church Bell Ringers, has sent us some lovely photos of one of the



cedars of Lebanon in the churchyard. Sadly the recent heavy snows have left it badly damaged. One photo shows the tree in its prime in 2006 and another was taken in January this year after the snow damage. There is very little that can be done to protect these trees from snow, apart from pruning (which can be



very costly) and propping up the branches (which is not very attractive). Coralie Ramsay, WDVTA member, has pointed out that Cedars of Lebanon need snow for long periods in their natural habitat to proliferate. She suggests, and others concur, that when these trees grow in the usually mild climate in the UK, they fail to become 'snow trimmed'. This being so, the occasional heavy snowfall can prove too much for them.



The cedar can also be seen in the background of this photograph of the funeral of the Rev. F.E. Robinson in February 1910; when the tree was between 10 and 20 years old.

Jon Matthews and Sarah Duckworth of the Wokingham Borough Trees and Landscape team confirm that it is now between 110 and 120 years old.

Barbara Stagles

This article, with an extra photo, is on the Yahoo site in the WT parish folder. Unfortunately the tree is not in our database yet.

A FAVOURITE TREE - THE PALMERSTONE OAK

Tim and Anne Hill's favourite tree is in their back garden on the north side of Palmerstone Road in Earley. It appears on old maps. They did try to get a TPO on it some years ago, but this was declined because it had a fungal infection. It is tree number 3403 in our database, so have a look at it on our web map.



We originally moved into Palmerstone Road way back in 1984, and have been here ever since! When we first came here to view this property, we were completely amazed by the sheer size of the tree, and how well it framed the garden!

We understand that this tree is one in a line of Boundary Oaks, marking the original limits of the Royal Windsor Great Park, and was planted during the reign of King Henry VIII. This would put the dates of planting somewhere between Henry's 1509 Accession and his Death in 1547, giving it an age between 501 and 463 years. There is, however, a record of a significant

programme of oak tree replanting in the Great Parks in 1580 by Lord Burleigh, to make up for oak used in naval warship construction during the war with Spain. Should our tree have been included in this particular replanting, it would then give the tree age of 430 years! Still quite old!!

It presently stands some 30-35 m high, with a girth of 5.20m; and it fortunately managed to survive the great storm of 1987 unscathed. None of the cats we have owned have attempted to climb very far up it! Just as well perhaps, as there certainly is diverse wildlife in its branches, with several families of crows and squirrels making their homes in it every year. On warm summer evenings we can sit underneath its branches and watch the bats hunting for moths and insects.

We would welcome any further details of this tree and its origins should other records be available or known.

Tim & Anne Hill

NB: If you look on the age charts in our handbook or on the Yahoo site, you'll see that an oak with girth of 5.2m is estimated to be anything between 230 and 825 years old, depending on its growing conditions. Such an oak growing in ideal conditions would be around 230 years old, whilst one growing inside a woodland could be over 800 and a woodland boundary pollard around 330 years.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Forestry Commission has received £25 million from DEFRA to fight Phytophthora infection of trees.

The new funding will support a five-year programme to manage and contain the risks from *Phytophthora ramorum* and *Phytophthora kernoviae*. The main threat to woodland comes from infected *Rhododendron ponticum* shrubs, which are very susceptible to the pathogens. Grant schemes are being established to help owners remove rhododendron from woodland areas identified as being at high risk of infection.

It was another species of this pathogen, *Phytophthora infestans*, that caused the Irish potato famine. *Phytophthora* spores are dispersed by wind and rain and can germinate on shoots and roots in wet conditions. Infected roots die, resulting in wilt, canopy dieback, general decline and death. Cankers on the trunk are often the most obvious sign of the disease. *P. ramorum* is the species responsible for 'Sudden Oak Death' in the USA, where it has had severe effects on North American oak and tanoak species. English and sessile oaks are much less susceptible, with only a handful of our native oaks being infected, and then only when in very close proximity to heavily infected rhododendrons. Unfortunately other British trees are more susceptible, particularly beech (probably because it is susceptible to both pathogen species) and to a lesser extent, ash. Even here the number of trees so far infected is very small, with only 26 infected beech trees being reported by the summer of 2009. Now concern is being expressed about the vulnerability of yews to these pathogens, with the Arboricultural Association reporting an increase in reports of yew infection. *P. ramorum* was first detected in the UK in 2002 and *P. kernoviae* in 2003. The first confirmed infection of yew (by *P. ramorum*) was in May 2003 (in a nursery alongside infected rhododendrons). Since "Sudden Oak Death" is inappropriate in yews, it is termed Ramorum die-back! There is no cure for this disease, but a preventive treatment at the first signs of the disease may be successful. One treatment (provided by Terrain Aeration) involves decompacting the soil, injecting dried milled seaweed to keep the underground cavities open and then introducing a mixture of parasitic bacteria and beneficial fungi. This method has been used on the trees of the Yew Tree Walk at Sissinghurst in Kent.

[Incidentally, *Phytophthora* is no longer classified as a fungus. It currently belongs to the kingdom Chromalveolata, and is an oomycete or water-mould, as is that other notorious plant pathogen, *Pythium*, which causes seed rot and damping off disease in seedlings.]

Bullace and Blackthorn



One of the delightful signs of the coming of spring is when the bare branches of winter hedgerows become transformed with drifts of snowy white blossom. Most people think this is blackthorn, *Prunus spinosa*, bursting into flower. However many of the hedges in this area are planted with bullace, *Prunus insitiae*, and it is the blossom of these bushes and small trees that we see first. The blackthorn, which also grows in the hedges, flowers later, giving us a long season of white bloom. The bullace is distinguished from the blackthorn by its leaves, which are a broader oval shape (*top right*) than the more elongated blackthorn leaves (*right*). Also the twigs are not as spiny as the blackthorn.



Bullace produces small sweet golden or red plums, which many people collect for stewing for desserts. Blackthorn produces the sour purple sloes, which can be used to make sloe gin.

Barbara Stagles

PROFILE – SHEILA CROWSON

Sheila is a "founder" vet tree surveyor, helping to get the project started and surveying in Wokingham Town, before the survey was extended to the rest of the Borough, when she became joint co-ordinator for Earley. She is standing down as a committee member in March, but will continue in her co-ordinating role.

I have been working with Anne Booth for longer than I care to say looking for old trees in Earley. I have to admit to a guilt feeling that we have not yet finished surveying, even with the able assistance of several members of Earley Environmental Group, but we'll get there one day! Like many other volunteers, we also have other pressing interests.

Most of the vet trees, the majority of which are oaks, are now isolated on local new estate roads, gardens or car parks which have obliterated the original agricultural landscape. Perhaps one of the most exciting aspects of the survey is finding out the original landscape in which the tree was set. The oaks lining Maiden Erlegh Drive would have seen Soly Joel and his rich friends annually processing in carriages or possibly Rolls Royces to Royal Ascot to watch his racehorses, perhaps accompanied by some of the chorus girls from Drury Lane Theatre in which he had a share. The large oaks in Maiden Erlegh Reserve would have witnessed local people working the wood, including charcoal burners. (There was still one in living memory). How many carts and farm labourers trudging along old Cutbush Lane might the big oaks still there have seen? One could wish it was possible to hold a conversation with these old timers, hear their story and tell them how much we appreciate them.



I keep busy working with the Earley Environmental Group, producing the quarterly newsletter (www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk) but I do have other interests. I can't come anywhere near to John Baster's ice skating skills, but having acquired a love of ice skating as a teenager I still manage a very slow and careful twirl round the rink with my family, most recently at the winter outdoor Somerset House rink (I hear people murmuring 'at her age she should know better!'), and look forward to the Winter Olympics. I've also spent years 'digging up dead relatives', as my granddaughter describes it, and have managed to produce some books for the family on our history. A very addictive occupation once you start. Life is never dull!

Sheila Crowson

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do we protect a tree with a Tree Protection Order? How effective are TPOs?

If you see a tree that you think should have a TPO, you just have to complete a simple form and send it into the Trees and Landscape Section of Wokingham Borough Council. They will check to see whether it qualifies and let you know the outcome. Anyone can request a TPO. You don't have to be the landowner. You can download a form in pdf or Word format from our Yahoo site. There are also guidance notes there. (See below.)

Alternatively, the Yahoo site has links to the WBC pages, to the application form and to lists of all the TPOs granted over the past six months. The WBC website is <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/environment/conservation/tpo/>

When we see a tree which has a TPO being cut down (usually because it is unsafe) we are apt to wonder whether TPOs are of any use. John Baster can testify to their effectiveness. A planning application for a development in Crowthorne (Bracknell Forest Council) was rejected recently because the trees in one corner of the site are protected. The conclusions of a tree survey carried out for the developer were rejected as "missing the point that the TPO is a Woodland designation".

The full statement is on the Yahoo site in the Crowthorne folder. [*Files > Parishes > X Bracknell-Crowthorne (XC)*]

Some recommendations from the Yahoo site:

WEBSITES: (*in Links > Websites of local natural history groups and other organisation*)

- ① <http://www.lvra.org.uk/> - Loddon Valley Ramblers group
- ① <http://www.seberksramblers.org.uk/> - South East Berks Ramblers group
- ① <http://www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk/> - Earley Environmental Group

READING: (*in Files > WBC information > TPOs - forms and guidance*)

- ① Guidance note for Tree Preservation Orders
- ① Request to include trees in a TPO.doc - the TPO application form
- ① Tree Preservation Orders - January 2010 - all the TPOs granted by WBC in January 2010 (*temporary file*)

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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.