



Tree Watch

Issue 5

May 2010

As of 23rd May 2010 we have **3751** trees in our database and **3223** photographs

Now that the good weather is here, I hope it will encourage our recorders to go out and measure more trees. As you can see from the number of trees now in our database, progress continues steadily. In fact we have four parishes that have nearly completed their surveys - Wokingham Town, Twyford, Ruscombe and Charvil, although there are no photos in the database for the last 2 parishes yet and some of the data still needs checking. It seems timely to remind recorders of some aspects of our system, such as the feature combiner and how to correct inaccurate grid references (see pages 3 and 5).

I hope you have all noted the forthcoming events organised by WDVTA. They are entered onto the WDVTA Yahoo Group calendar and details can be found in [Files > News and Events > FORTHCOMING EVENTS](#) on the Yahoo site. You were all sent details of our Burnham Beeches visit and identification workshop, but I'd like to draw your attention to three other events.

BBOWT have asked us to do a training course on ancient trees and how to survey them. It's at Dinton on Saturday 24th July and is essentially our revised training course. If you have not attended a training course, would like a refresher or would just like to see how much our course has improved, then why not come along? It's free, but you do need to book - see the BBOWT brochure in the *FORTHCOMING EVENTS* folder or go to their website.

If you are involved with woodland management there's a free course on 12th June which will explain how and why our woodlands need to be managed and what grant schemes and opportunities are available to improve them. Details and booking form in the *FORTHCOMING EVENTS* folder. Unfortunately this is on the same day as our Burnham Beeches visit.

Priestfield Arboretum is a privately owned tree collection in Little Kingshill, Buckinghamshire. It contains broadleaved trees and conifers, with representatives of all genera that are hardy in the UK. They have an open day on Sunday 6th June - and admission is only £1. See their website for details (address in WEBSITES recommendations).

Don't forget that any member of the Yahoo Group can add to the calendar and upload files to the site, so if you know of any event that may be of interest to other members, please do post it.

On the subject of the Yahoo Group, I expect you've noticed that you are now getting notifications about the activity of the site - when new files are added or new members join. This is a new "service" from Yahoo. Many people like to know when a new file is added, but if you're not one of them, you can suppress these e-mails. At the bottom of Yahoo's e-mail, there is an "unsubscribe" link. Just follow the instructions and you won't get any more e-mail notifications.

The next issue of Tree Watch will be August 2010 and the copy deadline is 31st July. All comments and contributions please to: Elaine Butler datamanager@wdvta.org.uk



TREES SAVED IN FINCHAMPSTEAD

Those of you who went to John Stokes' talk on 13th May will recall his tale of the demise of a magnificent beech tree apparently resulting from a misunderstanding between the tree owner and tree surgeon. A reputable tree surgeon would never have cut it down, even if instructed to. We have a good example of the opposite situation here in Wokingham.

When Stephen Arnold of Tree Solutions Arb Ltd, a member of WDVTA, was asked to cut down some large trees in The Ridges, Finchampstead, rather than accepting the contract, he immediately contacted the Trees and Landscape team at WBC. They responded very quickly and put a TPO on "trees of whatever species within the area...". (TPO/1352/2010)



April 2010 - details on the WBC website - see last Tree Watch.) Many tree surgeons do act responsibly, but there are some rogue ones out there. If you think any trees are under threat, tell the Trees and Landscape team immediately. You may just save them. Sometimes of course it is necessary to cut down trees, but to be sure it is important to consult a responsible and fully qualified arborist. If you do need some tree work done, make sure you employ a contractor approved by the Arboricultural Association. They are listed on their web site; although for some reason, 'Tree Solutions' and other local firms are listed in the "Home Counties/North London" region, rather than South-East or South Central, where you might expect to find them.

PROFILE - ALISON GRIFFIN

Alison is new to WDVTA, joining last summer, and becoming a committee member in April. She has now taken over responsibility for the Association assets. You may have met her at one of the Associations outings, talks or walks.



I was aware of the formation of the Association through little pieces in the Wokingham Times and at the time thought that it might be something that would interest me "when I had more spare time".

I grew up in Loughborough in a house with a lovely acacia, Scots pine and horse chestnut trees on a cherry tree lined road. An early and lasting introduction to trees! My teenage years were spent in NE Cheshire on the edge of the Peak District.

At university I read chemistry and then stayed on to do research into chemical structures. I met my husband David at university and we married while doing our PhDs. David's job applications took him to the ICI site at Jealott's Hill, now Syngenta, and we moved to Berkshire in the 70s. I joined Mars

in their IT unit and spent all my career with them ending up managing global IT programs before I took an early retirement-redundancy offer.

The time freed up by not working was rapidly filled as I looked into a number of volunteering activities. An e-mail to Barbara back last Summer resulted in going out with her to learn how to survey, joining the verification pilot team, surveying Fox Hill and finding myself on the committee.

Joining the group has been fascinating; my identification of species and form is improving, my cuts and bruises, from battles with rhododendrons, brambles and the odd bit of barbed wire, are healing and I've enjoyed discovering Keeptatch and Fox Hill. Fox Hill has given the database 57 new trees of which 44 are sweet chestnuts; Chestnut Park is a good name for the area. Only 4 of the 44 are maiden trees, so there is some interesting history of extensive coppicing of the woods to be uncovered. My favourite tree in the area, however, is a pollarded beech MRN 3684, very Arthur Rackham.

Alison Griffin



Bullace and Blackthorn

Surveying veteran trees has been a surprisingly rich experience. Not only do we learn more and more details about the trees we have so often taken for granted, but sometimes we find that what we thought we knew wasn't correct after all.

In the last issue of Tree Watch I wrote about the hedgerow prunus, which comes into flower before the blackthorn, *Prunus spinosa*. I had always thought this early flowering prunus was bullace, *Prunus institia*, but one of our readers suggested it is more likely to be the cherry plum, *Prunus cerasifera*. On checking with our WDVTA expert, Coralie Ramsay, it seems that this is probably correct and that the bullace (*P. institia*) and the closely related wild plum (*P. domestica*) flower later than the blackthorn. However Coralie says that prunus species are notoriously difficult to identify. At a recent arboriculture conference a new website was suggested - plumconfused.com! Thank you to the reader who drew attention to this difficulty. Does anyone have any further thoughts on this?

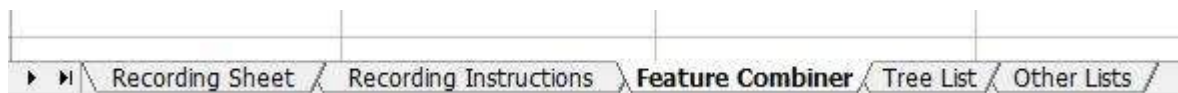
Barbara Stagles

RECORDING NOTABLE FEATURES

Don't forget that there is a very handy "Feature Combiner" on the recording spreadsheet that allows you to combine up to 5 features from the "Notable Features" drop-down lists. It's a separate page of the Excel file and you will find full instructions there. Quite a few people are just selecting one feature from the drop-down list and writing other features in the comments column. You can elaborate on any features in the comment column, but if features are omitted from the "Notable Features" columns they will not be included in any analyses and not incorporated into the Woodland Trust's database.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1			Notable Features multiple drop-down menu combiner					
2	On the Recording sheet, in both of the Notable Features columns, you can <i>either</i> choose from the drop-down menus or type something. If you mistype a feature or use a non standard description then it will not be transferred to the WoodLand Trust and so you are encouraged to use the drop-down menus. However, you may want to list more than one feature and in that case the simple drop down list is not sufficient.							
3	In the 2 coloured rows below is a simple mechanism for compiling a list of features using the drop-down lists . Each of the feature cells 1-6 can have a value assigned using a drop list. These features will be combined in the first box of each row, ready for copying onto the recording sheet. ***** You need to COPY (right mouse click) the compiled list and PASTE onto the Recording sheet ***** REMEMBER: In Excel (pre 2002) or in OpenOffice, PASTING can cause the drop down list and validation on that cell to be lost or changed. To avoid this happening you should use Paste Special and choose Values (or in Open Office, Paste Special and choose Text).							
4	compiled feature list	feature 1	feature 2	feature 3	feature 4	feature 5	feature 6	Notable Features 1
5								
6	compiled feature list	feature 1	feature 2	feature 3	feature 4	feature 5	feature 6	Notable Features 2
7								
8								

There are 5 separate pages in the recording file. As well as the recording sheet itself and the feature combiner, there are detailed instructions and several lists. Just click on the tab to get to the page you want. The tabs are at the bottom alongside the scroll bar: -



Do check out all these pages - there is a lot of useful information there.

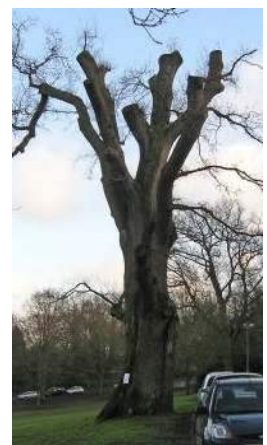


SADLY DEPARTED # 452

This much loved oak, with a girth of 5.1m, in Joel Park opposite the entrance to the Holt School, was recently felled, much to the distress of local people.

Two species of lower stem and root decay fungi (*Fistulina hepatica* and *Collybia fusipes*) were responsible for the loss of a substantial amount of root material and the tree was likely to fall. Given its position this was an obvious safety hazard and there was no alternative to felling.

Problems were noticed as far back as October 2008, and the tree was reduced in size to alleviate the wind sail effect, but the fungal damage eventually became too great. The tree is the responsibility of Wokingham Town Council. Having done all they could to retain it, they will now replace it with another oak.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Woodland Trust runs a "dedicate a tree scheme". For £15 you can dedicate a tree to yourself or anyone else. £30 buys you 2 trees and for £60 you can dedicate 10 trees. There are 20 sites across the UK to choose from. Tesco now offers the 3 tree package for £8 in clubcard vouchers. See the relevant websites for details.

Thanks to *Linda Ashwell* for this information.

A FAVOURITE TREE - HOLM OAK

There are more than just English oaks amongst Earley's notable trees.



A giant among trees, this Holm Oak is in Crawford Close, a stranded colossus from the old Maiden Erlegh estate. (Girth approx. 6.9m but hard to measure)

You can just see two tiny figures under it in this photo.



The Evergreen, Holm or Holly Oak (*Quercus ilex*) is a member of the oak family, but is sometime mistaken for a large holly tree. This tree was once in the landscaped estate of old Maiden Erlegh House. First introduced into this country in the 16th century, it is really a native of the Mediterranean area, where it is affected by increasing desertification and soil degradation, and in some countries the holm stands are in serious decline. Conversely, it is spreading too much in some places in the UK. A gardening website makes the following observation: *"It's best not to allow the holm oak free rein among our native woodlands as it can be a bit intrusive, especially in warmer coastal areas. The National Trust attacks it with goats on the Isle of Wight. But it's absolutely fine in gardens where it also makes an excellent hedge, a good screen and fine topiary."*

It has catkins and acorns just like the Common Oak. When cut green, the wood is heavier than water. Before the advent of plastic, its acorns, like those of other oaks, were once used for packaging for fragile and delicate objects. Although the ground below may be bare, birds can nest in its large canopy and long-tailed tits, woodpeckers, nuthatches and goldcrests may eat its catkins and acorns. It would be interesting to know which of these might be found in Crawford Close.

There is (was?) a famous avenue called Ilex Avenue in Worthing that once boasted 245 of these trees, but the area is very much coveted by developers. I wonder if it's still there?

Sheila Crowson

This magnificent tree is not in our database yet, but soon will be I hope. We have 12 Holm Oaks in the database, 5 in Wargrave, 3 in Arborfield, and 2 in Earley and Wokingham Town. They range in girth from 2.95 to 4.6m, and so don't quite match this one.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How accurate is my GPS? Why is my tree on the wrong side of the road?

GPS units usually require a strong signal from at least four satellites to give a position reading. Even when you get the "Ready to navigate" display, if it is only receiving a few satellites (tree cover can cause this!) your accuracy will be reduced. Under the very best conditions, there is still a margin of error in the basic measurement caused by a variety of factors including the weather and solar activity. A secondary error is also introduced when converting to an OS grid reference. This is discussed on page 5-1 of the handbook. Our target accuracy is $\pm 10\text{m}$, but that can of course still put your tree on the wrong side of the road. To get a really accurate grid reference you need to use the OS maps that we send back to you. These show all features to an accuracy of about 0.5m in a town and about 1m in a rural setting. Other maps, such as Magic Maps based on the 1:10000 series can introduce other errors. Features can be up to 7m out of position and roads are depicted wider than they really are. To aid visibility side roads can often be shown more than 15m wide where the road is actually less than 10m wide. Therefore an accurate grid reference on those maps can seem to place a roadside tree in the middle of the road and a grid reference taken from the roadside can end up well inside an adjacent property.

This is why it's so important to include a good location description. If the location description places a tree on an island and the grid reference doesn't, we know the grid reference needs correcting.

How do I correct an inaccurate grid reference?

If the grid reference is approximately correct, there is no need to go out and take it again (unless of course you have forgotten where the tree is). In fact you are unlikely to get a more accurate reading the second time. You should use the maps sent back to you to correct any inaccurate grid reference. These maps are not really suitable for printing. They are intended for screen use, so that you can zoom in and out to see details clearly. If you know where a tree ought to be on the map, you can measure (on the screen) the distance from the inaccurate position to the accurate one and calculate the true grid reference from that. The method is explained on page 5-3 of the handbook. [All recorders should have a copy of the handbook. Check with your co-ordinator if you need one.]

Some pdf readers (including free ones) have a measuring tool - so that you can draw a line between the position of your tree as marked on the map and its true position, with the distance being displayed on the screen.

Hint: If you do want to print just a section of the map - zoom in to get the section you want on screen and then use "Print Screen" (or the snippet tool if you have Windows 7).

Some recommendations from the Yahoo site:

WEBSITES: (*in Links > Places to visit*)

- ① www.priestfieldarboretum.org.uk - Priestfield Arboretum
- ① www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/burnham - Burnham Beeches
- ① www.kew.org - Kew Gardens

READING: (*in Files > Information and Files for Recorders > Recording Information*)

- ① WDVTS Handbook v3
- ① Submitting Photos
- ① Where to Measure a Tree

Images may be subject to copyright, so please do not reproduce any without checking first.

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.