



Tree Watch

Issue 8

February 2011

On 26th January 2011 we had **4523** trees in our database and **4238** photographs

Welcome to the first 2011 issue of *Tree Watch*. I hope you all survived the winter. Although the snow was not conducive to surveying, it did make the trees look pretty, as captured by Malcolm Inglis in this lovely photo showing Corsican pines on the soon-to-be-developed Buckhurst Farm site in Wokingham.



WBC is now processing planning applications for substantial developments resulting from the Core Strategy and SDL designations. Detailed tree surveys are part of the planning application documentation and so coordinators need to check these and make sure that any veteran trees specified in these reports are in our database. All documentation is on the WBC website. Planning application can be searched by parish, keyword or application number. You can also see printed versions at your Parish Office or at Shute End.

Our association goes from strength to strength, with over 4500 trees recorded, 240 members and our great new website. After four years Barbara is stepping down. Could you be our next chairman?

There was so much material for this issue that I've had to postpone some items until next time - including an article by Patricia Green on remarkable trees and the report on our verification trial. That report is on our website and on the Yahoo site if you want to read it.

In the last issue there was a TPO consultation to consider, and now there's an even more important one on the "Future of our Forests".

Main items in this issue:-

- | | |
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The next issue of *Tree Watch* will be May 2011 and the copy deadline is 30th April. All comments and contributions please to: Elaine Butler datamanager@wdvta.org.uk

THE BIG FOREST SELL-OFF

Did you know that the United Nations has declared 2011 as the **INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FORESTS?**

It has invited "governments, organisations and individuals to do all they can to raise public awareness of the key role of forests and sustainable forest management in building a greener, more equitable and sustainable future." Our government has certainly raised public awareness of forests; but could Britain's contribution to the Year of Forests be a move that eventually leads to a drastic reduction of our forests? I doubt anyone is unaware of the proposals to sell off many publically owned woodlands. It has generated a lot of media interest, and opposition from people from all walks of life. A YouGov poll taken

at the end of January found that 84% of people surveyed thought that forests should stay in public ownership. Of course they still will be in public ownership if they are leased, so perhaps that wasn't the right question to ask. It's quite difficult to discover exactly what is proposed, with a lot of doublespeak from Government spokesmen assuring us that our current rights will be protected. Organisations such as the Woodland Trust, National Trust and RSPB are certainly very alarmed by the proposals. The consultation on these proposals finishes on 21st April, so you have until then to make your views known. The consultation document is on our website, on our Yahoo site and on the DEFRA site. The completed questionnaire can be submitted on-line or by post. In addition there are at least three petitions you can sign. The Woodland Trust has launched its biggest campaign ever: "*Save England's Ancient Forests*." You should all have received a request to sign their petition, as we circulated it to all members. The link is on page 7, on the Yahoo site and on our website - as well as on the Woodland Trust website. Another more general petition, "*Save Our Forests*", had collected 400,000 signatures by the end of January.

In the parliamentary debate on 2nd February, the proposals were described as "*Ecological vandalism*". On Radio 4, Lord Clarke of Windermere, a former chairman of the Forestry Commission, referred to them as: "*A confidence trick*" "*Bereft of ideas*" and "*Economic madness*".

The Society of Biology portrays forests as "*silent public servants*". "*They filter and purify the air, regulate floods and stabilise soil, support wildlife and contribute to the mental and physical wellbeing of people.*"

At the same time as Britain, along with other western countries, wants Brazil and Indonesia to protect their forests, it is apparently all right to sell off ours. Yet, as the Woodland Trust reminds us, "*ancient woods are the UK's equivalent of the rainforest: unique, irreplaceable and our richest wildlife habitat.*" Ancient woodlands are protected under the planning system, but in the last decade the Woodland Trust has fought to protect 850 cases of ancient woods threatened by development. The Government's proposals do recognise the importance of some ancient woods and will designate them as heritage woods; but not all ancient woods come into that category. A revised inventory of Wokingham's ancient woodlands was completed last year. As reported in November's Biodiversity Newsletter, it contains 175 sites, including 61 newly identified ones. Let's hope their future is secure.

BBOWT is equally concerned about "*the smaller, but vitally important, woodlands in Berks, Bucks and Oxon that will be forgotten about in this consultation.*" Two forests close to us under threat are Mortimer & Bramshill.

"The green heart of Britain is not for sale." David Bellamy

TAKE PART IN A SPECIAL YEW SURVEY THIS MONTH

Charles Harrison is a third year student at Southampton and for his project he is investigating smartphones and their potential for mobile field data collection. Now whilst very few of you have iPhones or android mobiles (yet), I do know that most of you would be very happy if you didn't have to transfer your data from paper recording forms to Excel spreadsheets!

He needs to compare the system (described below) with a paper recording one - and our recorders are just the people to ask. Hence we are arranging special sessions verifying the yews in our database. That way he gets his comparison and we get some useful data too. We are going to have one session on Saturday 26th February in Wokingham Town, starting at All Saints Church, where we have recorded 18 yews! Meet in the churchyard at 10:00. You can park (free) in Shute End or in the nearer Easthampstead car park (£1.20 for 2 hrs). In the afternoon we'll do the yews in Barkham. Meet at St James Church, Barkham at 14:00, to verify yews there and record some new ones in the Coombes. There is (free) parking outside the church. Just turn up if you can, although it would be helpful to know who intends to come - and of course do contact me if you want more details - datamanager@wdvat.org.uk



THE GREAT YEW TREE HUNT - DISSERTATION PROJECT

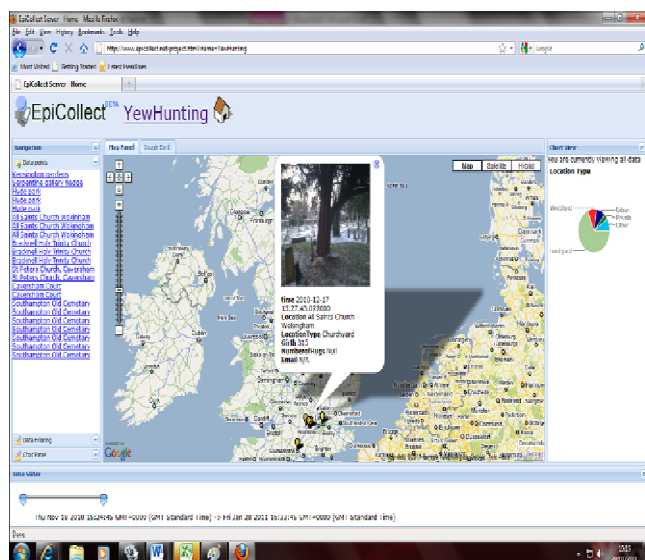


The Great Yew Hunt Brochure

Firstly I would like to say thank you to Elaine Butler for letting me write this short article. I am currently in my third year at Southampton Solent and in need of at least 10 volunteers to collect data for my project "The Great Yew Hunt" - using the innovative piece of software EpiCollect. EpiCollect is a free application which can be downloaded to both iPhone and Android Mobiles and allows data collected in the field to be instantaneously transferred to a designated project website - also provided by EpiCollect. EpiCollect has the potential to act as a field data collection time saving tool, by eliminating the process of manually transcribing data into an online database. I decided to create the project "The Great Yew Hunt" to trial the software. In the field, when recording a yew tree, the recorder is faced with the smartphone interface (right). Once the project form has been completed, the data entry can be sent from the smartphone and stored on the project website database. Each data entry (i.e. each yew tree) can be viewed in two ways; in the form of the tabular database or as a pinpoint on the mapping interface. Each data entry (i.e. each yew tree) can be viewed in two ways; in the form of the tabular database or as a pinpoint on the mapping interface, which when clicked on produces an associated information box (see below).

A screenshot of the EpiCollect smartphone interface. It shows a form for recording yew tree data. The form includes fields for Location, Location Type, Height of Girth Measurement in Centimeters, Girth Measurement of Trunk in Centimeters, and Girth. There are also dropdown menus for Location Type (Churchyard, Woodland, Urban Setting, Private Land, Other) and Access (Public, Private). A section for Comments is also present. The interface is designed for easy data entry on a mobile device.

Smartphone Interface



Site	Created	Latitude	Longitude	Altitude	Location	Location Type	Height of Girth Measurement	Girth Measurement	If you do not have
Caversham	2015-11-27 16:57:4	51.4079680867	-1.501441730221	87.0	Caversham Court	Other	530	100%	
St Peters	2015-11-27 16:13:2	51.4084298247	-1.500934040009	97.0	St Peters Church, C	Churchyard	210	100%	
Caversham	2015-11-27 16:13:0	51.408206040	-1.518075320197	89.0	Caversham Court	Other	210	100%	
St Peters	2015-11-27 16:15:0	51.4084438024	-1.500934040009	93.0	St Peters Church, C	Churchyard	280	100%	
Bracknell	2015-12-15 14:12:0	51.4357742262	-1.746664013541	139.0	Bracknell Holy Trail	Churchyard	230	100%	
Bracknell	2015-12-15 14:12:0	51.4358830955	-1.746664013541	133.0	Bracknell Holy Trail	Churchyard	190	100%	
Bracknell	2015-12-15 14:15:0	51.4354339824	-1.746728170254	135.0	Bracknell Holy Trail	Churchyard	240	100%	
St Peters	2015-12-17 15:27:4	51.4358830955	-1.500934040009	101.0	St Peters Church, C	Churchyard	215	100%	
St Peters	2015-12-17 15:28:4	51.4358830955	-1.500934040009	101.0	St Peters Church, C	Churchyard	240	100%	
St Peters	2015-12-17 15:28:4	51.4358830955	-1.500934040009	99.0	St Peters Church, C	Churchyard	200	100%	
Serpentine	2017-01-28 16:27:0	51.50041844	-1.174233007	85.1899999482	Serpentine gallery	Private	N/A	100%	

Above: 'The Great Yew Hunt' Tabular database

Left: 'The Great Yew Hunt' Mapping interface

zoom in to see detail - or go to

www.epicollect.net/project.html?name=YewHunting

The main objective of my dissertation is to analyse the usability of EpiCollect and how volunteers find using the software compared with writing survey data down onto paper. I will provide my phone to trial the software and would be extremely grateful if volunteers could fill out a short questionnaire on how they found using the software - i.e. if they found it simple or confusing to use and any problems that they encountered.

Thank you to anyone who is able help!

Charles Harrison

THANK YOU BARBARA

I think you all know Barbara Stagles and so you will be interested to read her profile below. She almost single-handedly set up WDVTA in 2007 and has been its inspiration and guiding hand ever since. She personally recruited most of the coordinators and committee members, and has done so much work for the association - so much more than demanded from a chairman. Her sterling work has established WDVTA as a well-known and respected society. She is stepping down as Chairman and from the Committee at the AGM in March. We are all very grateful to her for all the hard work she has done for the association. She certainly leaves it in a very healthy state, paving the way for her successor. Both Barbara and Ray will continue to enjoy trees and come to our events. We all send them our very best wishes.

So we now need someone to replace Barbara as Chairman and we also need someone to fill the newly created post of Vice Chairman. Is there anyone out there who's passionate about trees and would like to be a spokesman for the association? Don't be shy - we need nominations. We also need someone to edit the newsletter, since that was one of Barbara's many jobs, and as usual we are looking for new committee members. If you'd like to become more involved with the running of the association, why not join the committee? The committee currently meets 4 times per year.

Nomination papers, with details of the AGM, will be sent out on 22nd February. The closing date for nominations is 16th March and the AGM is on 23rd March. If you want to know more then contact me.

PROFILE - BARBARA STAGLES

I have always loved the world of nature, especially flowers and trees. Appropriate perhaps with the surname of Wood!

I grew up in the north-west of Bristol and, with my friends, roamed the woods, banks of the River Avon, golf courses and open spaces where Simon King was to develop his own enthusiasm for wildlife some decades later. A year of evacuation in Somerset during the war was also a wonderful introduction to country life with a chance to explore the local fields and riverbanks with glorious freedom. And being a Girl Guide later helped to enhance my love of nature and acquire knowledge and develop skills useful for living happily in wild places.

The opportunities for an environmental career were not great in my day and so after graduating at Bristol University, I decided, eventually, to take Froebel training as a primary school teacher, an unusual career for graduates then. I thoroughly enjoyed my years teaching young children, and always made 'nature study' an important part of the curriculum.

Then, after further study, I moved into teacher education at what was Bulmershe College of Higher Education (now part of Reading University). This was a great experience and was where I met Ray.

Retirement has given me the opportunity to return to my roots in the countryside. There has been more time to spend in the garden and to develop a second garden on a small piece of derelict land very near to where we live. The Folly, as we call it, has been transformed into a wildlife orchard and cottage garden and is 'my piece of heaven'. I spend whatever time I can in it, when we are not visiting our regular haunts in southern Spain and the Great Blasket Island, West Kerry.

It was near The Folly that a beautiful old English oak was felled early in 2005 in preparation for land that was sold for development. This tree had not been protected and my anger led to the discovery that we didn't know where all our important old trees in Wokingham were. Something had to be done! Fortunately many other Wokingham people thought so too - and WDVTA was born.



Barbara Stagles

A FAVOURITE TREE - Lucombe Oak - *Quercus x hispanica* 'Lucombeana'



Lucombe Oaks are crosses between Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris*) and Cork Oak (*Q. suber*) and was originally raised by William Lucombe at his Exeter nursery in 1762.

There is the only one Lucombe Oak in our database. It is MRN 1642 and is in Wargrave - in Sewage Farm Road (SU 78360 77960). Its girth is 3.65m (measured at 1.5m). There are others in the area. You can see one in the grounds of Reading University. It's number 14 on their tree walk.

This is a brief extract from a document that you can now access via our web map. If you go to the full record for this tree,

you will see an additional box "RELATED DOCUMENT" with a link to [Lucombe Oak](#). Click that to view the file. This is a new feature on our web map. Check out MRN 76, 432, 554, 697 or 2630. I think this will prove a very useful and popular feature - and I hope it will inspire some of you to write articles that can be associated with individual trees in this way. Just send them to webmaster or datamanager.

Another additional feature on our web map is a feedback form. In the last Tree Watch I described how the Google map can be used to detect errors in our records, especially regarding location. If you notice something wrong with a record - whether it's a spelling mistake or the wrong location description or if you want to add some more information about that tree, you can now let me know via a very simple feedback form below the full record. This is of course available to everyone accessing our website and I have already had a response from a non-member pointing out a slightly inaccurate location description. This is not intended to replace the correction and update spreadsheets, and data submitted in this way may have to be passed on to coordinators for checking, but its simplicity should encourage people to report any apparent errors and supply additional information.

TREES IN LITERATURE

More than 70 people came to the Milton Road Baptist Church on Thursday 20th January for the joint meeting of Wokingham Literary Society and Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association on the theme of *Trees in Literature*. A very appreciative audience in which both societies were well represented enjoyed a programme of poetry and prose readings. Authors chosen ranged from 17th century Japanese to contemporary British. Favourite authors like Kipling and Hardy were included alongside perhaps less well known writers such as WS Merwin and Alice Oswald. The subjects covered included poems and prose about particular types of trees (including a first public reading for Ray Stagles' own poem *Wollemi Pine*), about *Green Men*, about the uses of wood, about the way trees have inspired the imagination and metaphorical inventiveness of writers, about woodland



Oak by the Emm Brook (MRN 255)

The Wollemi Pine

Transported from Australia
Back to England, to Kew:
A young innocent

From a Blue Mountain ravine
(Not so far from Botany Bay)
Now kept in prison,
In a strongly-barred cell
Just a yard in diameter:
Yet open to the air, wide lawns
And the sky.

Yes, kept in a prison
To protect him from crazy collectors:
An upright green-limbed aborigine
Whose ancestry is attested in fossils
Created 90 million years ago.

Ray Stagles

life, and many other tree matters.

Particular highlights included Ray's reading of James Joyce's elaborately tree punned wedding fantasy from the Cyclops section of *Ulysses* and, and from the floor, Martin Woolner's recitation of John Hegley's short poem to close the evening.

The leaves have all left but the trees will be all right.

We were very fortunate to have amongst our readers four year 8 students from St Crispin's School who read with vivacity and feeling.

So much wonderful writing about trees could not be included that if another such evening is ever considered there will be no difficulty putting together a new and equally entertaining programme.

Martin Haslam

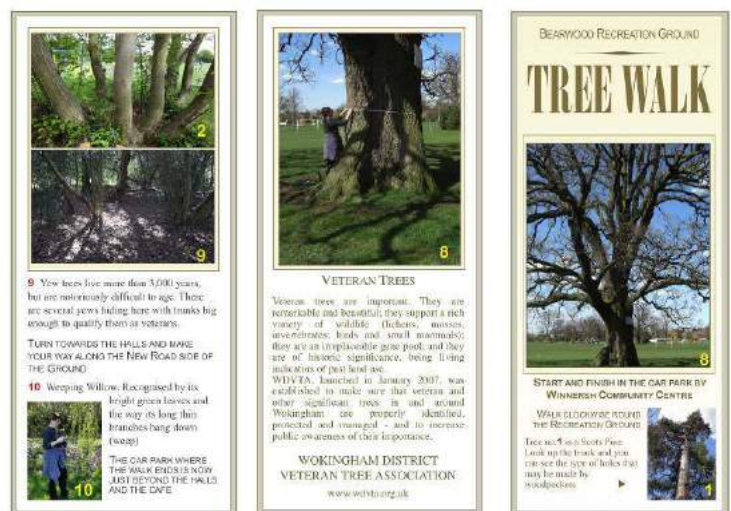
[There's a list of the literary items used on our website.]

SADLY DEPARTED

In June 2010 Linda Martin produced our first printed tree walk – for Bearwood Recreation Ground. Leaflets were produced for the Winnersh Village Fete (held on the recreation ground) and laminated versions for the café. You can see and download this very attractive and professional leaflet from our website.

The walk demonstrates that you can appreciate trees in very ordinary places and we hope to produce many more like it. How sad then to learn that some of the trees featured in this walk have been felled – on health and safety grounds of course.

The Scots Pine (stop one) in the car park was taken down just before Christmas as an emergency, leaving just a stump and various lengths of trunk.



The beeches at stop six were felled in the autumn. They were hollowing out and had already been topped, but they were still losing branches and judged too dangerous in a public area adjacent to a football pitch. Linda took the photo below in November – the gap in middle of the tree line is where the beeches were.



"There are many good reasons for growing trees, but as an investment they have been more like horses at Newmarket."

"Politicians love to be told they can make even the trees grow or not grow, but do not remain in office long enough to find out."

Oliver Rackham (2006) "Woodlands"

WOULD YOU LIKE...?

To use of some of the group's equipment or to return anything?

In particular, the group has two folding tables and a camera that are not currently being used.

Camera: Samsung S760 available for anyone in the group to borrow at any time.

Tables: Two folding tables 1520x760mm x 760mm height (5ft x 2ft 6ins x 2ft 6in height). These were bought for use in meeting rooms with no tables, but have never been used. If you are interested to use, house or borrow them, then do get in touch.

Following the asset review last year, there are also some spare GPSs and tapes. Contact me if you would like to borrow any of them.

Finally, if you have any GPSs or tapes that are no longer being used, please let me know and their return would be much appreciated.

Contact: equipment@wdvta.org.uk

Alison Griffin

Some recommendations from the Yahoo site:

WEBSITES:

Various links relating to the forest proposals are in **Links > *** Forest sell-off *****

- ① www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/forests/index.htm - full details of the consultation
- ① www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/campaigning/save-ancient-forests/Pages/fc-disposals-act-now.aspx - the Woodland Trust petition
- ① <http://saveenglandsforests.org> - the Save Our Forests petition

READING:

- ① **Verification trial - analysis** - in - **Files > Information and Files for Recorders**
- ① **'Consultation: Future of the public forest estate'** - in - **Files > *** Consultations *****
- ① **Whiteknights tree walk** - in - **Files > Local Tree Walks**

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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>

Details of all trees in our database are available via the web map pages:

www.wdvta.org.uk/WDVTS/

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