



Tree Watch

Issue 14

August 2012

On 10th August 2012 we had **6089** trees in our database and **6872** photographs

Welcome to the August issue of Tree Watch. There is a lot to report this time. We had a very nice boost to our funds when we won the first prize of £100 in a survey draw organised by the Wokingham Borough Voluntary Sector Forum and we were delighted to receive a letter of appreciation from Brian Muelaner, Chairman of the Ancient Tree Forum, in which he says *"I have been asked to write to you on behalf of the Ancient Tree Forum to commend you all on your stunning work in recording the notable trees within Wokingham District, telling their stories and raising their profile."* This letter was circulated to all members and is on the Yahoo site.

Our veteran tree survey continues to go from strength to strength. We have recruited and trained some new surveyors and we've added over 200 trees to our database since May. Perhaps spurred on by the completion of the Wokingham Town survey, other parishes are keen to complete their surveys too.

Do we have any Heritage Trees in the Borough? Jon Stokes (Tree Council) is revising his "Heritage Trees" book. The previous edition didn't mention any trees from Wokingham and Jon is keen to rectify this omission. So if there are any trees that you think might qualify, let me know. He wants trees of historical importance or with some interesting story attached. The Bound Oak in Arborfield (MRN 4197) is a good candidate, but I'm sure there are more out there.

As I hope you all know by now, we have not one, but two Jubilee projects - tagging 60 hedge trees and planting 60 oak trees. Good progress is being made with both these projects (see page 3), but it's not too late to contribute. Full details are on our website.

Trees feature prominently in this Jubilee year and it was so nice to see that at least one Sunday newspaper chose the image of the ascending oak tree to put on the front cover of their Olympic supplement after the opening ceremony.



MRN 4197 - Arborfield's "Bound Oak" in May 2010 - it's marked on OS maps from 1876 onwards.

The next issue of Tree Watch will be November 2012 and the copy deadline is 31st October. All comments and contributions please to: Elaine Butler datamanager@wdvta.org.uk

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Events planned for September - November to book places e-mail Kerry - honsec@wdvta.org.uk

- ① Thursday 20th September - Visit to Barcham's Nursery - details previously circulated - places still available - contact Kerry if you want to go.
- ① Tuesday 23rd October - Members evening - Favourite Trees (see below) - 19:30-21:30 Emmbrook Room, Dinton Pastures. Let Kerry know if you'd like to contribute.
- ① Sunday 4th November 11:00 - Visit to Kew Gardens for autumn colour. Details to follow. Book with Kerry.
- ① November - Visit to the Typography Dept at Reading University, where Martin Andrews will talk to us about printing with particular emphasis on wooden printing presses and the best woods for printing blocks and papers. We'll then have a tour of their fascinating collection of artefacts.

For details and updates see the events page on our website - wdvta.org.uk/events.php

A FAVOURITE TREE

Do you have a favourite tree? Have you encountered a remarkable tree? All members are invited to a social evening on 23rd October in which you will have the opportunity to talk about and show photos of a favourite or remarkable tree or a tree that has special meaning for you or your community. It doesn't



have to be in Wokingham - or even in Britain. This is an opportunity to tell us about trees that don't grow here or ones that evoke memories of a very different landscape. It could be a "1000 year old olive tree" in Madeira or a declining poplar, reminding us of better days in a former stately home. You don't have to spend a lot of time preparing for this - talks will last just 5-10 minutes. If you don't want to talk, then



MRN 5211

come along and hear what others have to say, but if you would like to tell us about a particular tree, just let Kerry know so she can sort out the arrangements for the meeting - honsec@wdvta.org.uk

THE SIBLY HALL SAGA - RETRACTION

The statement attributed to Nigel Frankland, the University's Estates Manager in quotation marks (Tree Watch issue 13, page 4) has been retracted following a complaint from the University that this was not a statement actually made by Mr Frankland, then, or at any time when he has been presenting information or answering questions about the Sibly site. It was also wrong to give the impression that University has an attitude towards the local community typified by something that was not in fact said.

A TIMELY REMINDER

As the hedge cutting season is on the horizon, could you all have a look at your local hedges for hedge trees before the flails come out in the autumn. If you spot any suitable candidates they can be tagged as part of our Jubilee Hedge Tree Project, but in any case you need to contact the landowner and alert him to the need to avoid cutting these trees.



Jubilee Hedge Tree Project Snapshot

27

trees included in our
Jubilee Hedge Tree
Project
... so far...

63%

existing trees tagged
(37% newly planted)

3

number of different
species
(oak, ash & damson)

5

parishes participating (*so far*)
– Charvil, Earley, Ruscombe,
Twyford & Wokingham
Town

PREPARING TO PLANT 60 DIAMOND JUBILEE ENGLISH OAKS ACROSS WOKINGHAM BOROUGH

Finding good planting sites

In the May edition of Tree Watch you will have seen that the WBC/WDVTA Jubilee Trees working group was planning to circulate Town and Parish councils, schools, environmental groups and many others to invite them to suggest suitable sites for the 60 Diamond Jubilee English Oaks.

We can report a very good response to the circular. Already we have received specific indications of possible sites for most of the trees and they include a school playing field, a churchyard, public recreation grounds, a road verge and the central reservation of a major road. Nearly all the town and parish councils in the Borough have submitted suggestions and we know that other proposals are in the pipeline. We are quite sure we shall have a very interesting range of suggested sites.

If you would like to propose a site but are not sure how to do this, please contact Barbara Stagles, WDVTA Jubilee Trees Coordinator on jubileetrees@wdvta.org.uk or 0118 9784013 to discuss the next steps. Barbara is visiting all the sites and is happy to talk over possibilities. The working party will meet on September 26th to decide where the trees should be planted.

Ideas for the Tree Planting and Plaque Unveiling ceremonies

The planting will be done in National Tree Week (24th November to 2nd December) when it is hoped that a variety of different tree planting/plaque unveiling ceremonies will be organised. These will probably take on different characteristics but one idea suggested by Jon Stokes of The Tree Council and Stephen Loyd, Wokingham Tree Warden Network Coordinator, is that the event might be combined with a 60th anniversary celebration.

Besides a local person's 60th birthday, it could be a couple's diamond wedding anniversary, a company's 60th year of trading, or anything else celebrating 60 years such as being resident of the parish for 60 years. So if you know, or hear about, anyone associated with a 60th anniversary, please send details to Barbara Stagles on jubileetrees@wdvta.org.uk and she will pass the information on to the appropriate event organisers to see if it can be incorporated in some way.

Barbara Stagles

"But there is a frightful interval between the seed and timber. He that calculates the growth of trees, has the unwelcome remembrance of the shortness of life driven hard upon him. He knows that he is doing what will never benefit himself; and when he rejoices to see the stem rise, is disposed to repine that another shall cut it down."

Samuel Johnson (1775) "A Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland"

OPAL HEDGE AWARDS

One of the on-going OPAL surveys (see links on page 11) concerns hedges and biodiversity. On completion of an on-line survey form, the hedge is awarded a bronze, silver or gold award (or none) in three categories - hedge structure, food for wildlife and animal diversity. So, for example, one of the hedges at St Crispins School (ID 10766) has a gold award for hedge structure, bronze for animal diversity, but none for food resources. Results from across the country are summarised on their website and their interactive map shows the locations and results for all the hedges already recorded. Of the 2,941 surveys so far completed, 10 are in Wokingham Borough - and they are all at St Crispins School.

PROFILE - GILL HOPKINS

You must know Gill. She is a stalwart of the association and contributed significantly to the veteran tree survey in Wokingham Town. Having completed that survey, she now helps in Barkham, as well as being part of the recently formed Wokingham Town Hedgerow Group.

A Very Enjoyable apprenticeship

My involvement with WDVTA, like so many others, sprang from conversations with Barbara and visits to her delightful wild garden, The Folly. We went out together in the early days, measuring trees and learning how to use the GPS and answer very varied questions from tree owners who thought they'd spotted Council workers! Barbara introduced me to Heather Mills and thus started a partnership of several years as we explored and measured trees in 7 areas around central Wokingham, with invaluable support from Malcolm Inglis.

I grew up in Shinfield with a garden that backed onto a big old orchard, 'Pearman's Grove', where, as we knew the owner, we had an unlimited opportunity to play and make rope ivy bridges over streams and gather fallen apples to make blackberry and apple 'mush'!

Our parents planted three trees for three daughters and I was a silver birch! The best tree in the garden was an ancient and very climbable apple tree until it blew down in a storm. Because my father worked at Leighton Park School we also had free access to the Park with its magnificent oak and poplar trees.

My schooling was first at The Abbey where I saw the fine avenue of trees up Kendrick Hill. Then I had a period in boarding school with regular Sunday afternoon walks in varied and beautiful Essex countryside and a lime avenue with overwhelming scent on summer evenings.

Finally I came to The Holt in Wokingham with splendid trees in the 'Shrubbery', but I don't remember much use being made of the Holt Copse and the avenue of oaks.

After graduating from Manchester I taught for 4 years in Harlow New Town and saw the beginnings of extensive tree planting, now grown to full maturity there. I then changed careers to social work following a year living in Bloomsbury and seeing the seasons round with superb trees in Tavistock and Russell Squares. My second job took me to Liverpool. There some trees were so much climbed that they had little chance to grow to maturity, but the parks and the Botanic Gardens were very well kept.

I then had a year in Edinburgh, walking to lectures across The Meadows and enjoying expeditions to the Pentland Hills and another fine Botanic Garden. When I returned to Berkshire I worked in the Child Guidance Service in Maidenhead, Reading and Wokingham with a spell at Sindlesham School where my job



visiting families allowed me to travel the whole length of the old county of Berkshire and savour the richness of our very varied habitats.

After 9 years there I went to work in London for the Religious Society of Friends and my viewing of trees was largely from a commuter train! My final job was back in Berkshire for 14 years in the Clinics.

Upon retirement a friend who was a fine botanist introduced me to Kew Gardens and I became 'a Friend' and visited frequently, getting to know more varieties of trees, especially the many fine veterans. My knowledge of trees having been very basic, I then had the chance to recognise more varieties which helped when I started studying trees with WDVTA. Heather and I were very 'green' when we started off with Area 7 - south and east of Denmark Street. It must have needed a lot of verifying! But, gradually, as we did more and more areas around the centre of the town we learnt 'the trade' and met some amazing people who were intrigued to know our aims and were often very knowledgeable about their own trees. Complaints about 'the mess' made by oak trees in gardens were not uncommon but many appreciated the magnificence of our heritage from Windsor Forest.

One of my unfulfilled wishes is to learn to draw trees! Instead of learning to draw, I have been learning the clarinet and joined two Bands and an orchestra where I play Bass or Alto clarinet.

Now that the town project is finished, Heather and I have been helping Janet Firth in Barkham occasionally and have discovered the delights of measuring trees in a rural area! We have now joined the group which is starting to look at hedges and to identity hedge trees. There is much to learn again.

Gill Hopkins

ANOTHER NEW THREAT

In the last issue it was the Asian Longhorn Beetle, this time it's ash dieback, caused by the fungus *Chalara fraxinea*. The disease causes leaf loss and crown dieback, often resulting in the death of the tree. It has spread across central Europe during the last two decades, causing widespread losses, including the loss of an estimated 60-90% of ash trees in Denmark. It has not been found in the natural environment in Britain yet, but recorded instances in the nursery trade are sufficient for it to be treated as a quarantine pest under national emergency measures. All suspected cases must be reported.

In February this year it was found in a nursery in Buckinghamshire, in a consignment of ash trees from the Netherlands. In June it was found in ash trees planted in a car park in Leicestershire, sourced from a nursery in Lincolnshire and in July there were confirmed cases in nurseries in Surrey and Yorkshire. The disease is specific to ash (so far) with the common ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) being particularly susceptible. It has been reported in the narrow-leaved ash (*Fraxinus angustifolia*) and the 'Pendula' ornamental variety of common ash, but the susceptibility of other ash species is unknown. Exactly how the disease is spread is also unknown, although movement of diseased plants is certainly a contributing factor!

The Forestry Commission website - www.forestry.gov.uk/ashdieback - has more details and a fact sheet, which also describes comparatively harmless symptoms that can be confused with those of ash dieback.

Incidentally there's an interesting chart showing new tree diseases and pest outbreaks in the UK on page 33 of the Independent Forestry Panel Report (see p 8). *Chalara* dieback will have to be added to that chart.



JOHN HEGGADON 1939 - 2012

It is with great sadness that I have to tell you that John Heggadon has died. He was a founder committee member of WDVTA and regularly attended meetings until his admittance to hospital. His quiet and very sensible advice was always welcome and he did much to enhance our reputation amongst the Parish and Borough councillors.

John did so much for the community of Shinfield. He worked tirelessly to preserve its rural character, fighting to prevent the proposed mini town at Grazeley. He was a Shinfield Parish Councillor for almost twenty years and chaired the Planning and Highways Committee for most of that time, steering the council through many challenging planning issues. He was equally concerned about the environment and represented the Parish Council on various environmental bodies. He was decidedly not party political, but his knowledge of local politics was so useful to all the groups he represented and he promoted trees whenever he could. He was also a governor at Ryeish Green School and did much in the (eventually futile) fight to keep the school open.



An accomplished musician, he played in jazz clubs in London in his youth. John was also passionate about Rugby. He played at County level for Kent until injury put a stop to his playing career. He continued his interest as a very active supporter of Saracens and, from his hospital bed, watched them beat Leicester to be crowned English champions for the first time in 2011.

John went into the Royal Berkshire Hospital for a routine operation, expecting to be there for 5 days. Complications and infections resulted in an 18-month stay. He never came out. He died there in July.

He was such a nice man, quiet, polite, intelligent and knowledgeable - a true gentleman, who felt a real and deep responsibility for his community. He will be sadly missed by so many people and we all extend our deepest sympathies to his family.

In the last issue we heard about the loss of woodland in Earley and there is much concern over the loss of trees and hedgerows in the Strategic Development Locations (SDLs) in Wokingham, especially at the Elms Field site. So it's nice to be able to relate a success story. Trees can be saved and, with all the building planned for the Borough, we need to be vigilant.

MEMORIES OF A CAMPAIGN TO SAVE AN OAK TREE (MRN 2802) IN THE 1960's

My involvement with the tree in question is slightly complex. When I moved to Westward Road with my family some 50 years ago, Woosehill as we now know it didn't exist. It was mainly farmland given over to a sheep farmer and the only plans the Council had were eventually to create Riverside Walk by the Emm Brook. Old Woosehill Lane stopped near that tree and a footpath continued from that point to Woosehill Lane at the location now known as Smith's Walk.



When discussions started on building houses on the land there was a lot of concern from existing residents, including those of us in Westward Road. Residents' Associations sprung up to monitor what was going on and when things started to gel, the Spine Road appeared on the plans with Old Woosehill Lane continuing as a straight line 'through' that tree.

I was the prime mover to have the road line altered to avoid damaging the tree. Representations were made to the planning committee and there was a lengthy Public Inquiry where I gave evidence; and the road line was subsequently altered as it is today.

Peter Harms

AN ENGLISH OAK AT THE HAWTHORNS

The Hawthorns Primary School is situated in the centre of the Woosehill estate on the edge of Wokingham town centre and was built on former farm land. One of the original field boundary hedgerows still stands on the back playing field although it now consists of individual Hawthorn trees as opposed to a traditional hedge. Within the school boundary there were two veteran oak trees - MRN 150 and 151. The school was built in 1981, but the two trees began life as early as 1812. The school setting has always been appreciated as a source of environmental education by pupils and teachers alike, but the two trees had for some time stood largely unnoticed as the school expanded closer to their roots.

In 2006 I became involved in the early stages of WDVTA and together with a small group of pupils we measured some of the older trees for the survey. Our photograph appeared in the Wokingham Times on 21st June. Interest grew and in 2010 some of our older pupils designed an interpretation board plotting a tree trail around our school grounds. The veteran oak closest to the school was chosen to be the first tree on the trail.

Unfortunately disaster struck in March 2011 when a tomogram tree survey commissioned by WBC identified a large area of internal decay and recommended that the tree should be felled. Adults and pupils were all disappointed to lose such an important land mark and habitat in our grounds. It was decided to use the loss of this tree to benefit the education of pupils and mark its place in a commemorative way. Pupils were invited to work on designs for a carved storytelling chair on the theme of native wildlife, and local sculptor Stephen Radford began working on the project. Stephen took ideas from several pupil designs and incorporated a jubilee crown and the school hawthorn logo into the final plan. It was a privilege to watch him work and the pupils really enjoyed asking questions as the project progressed.



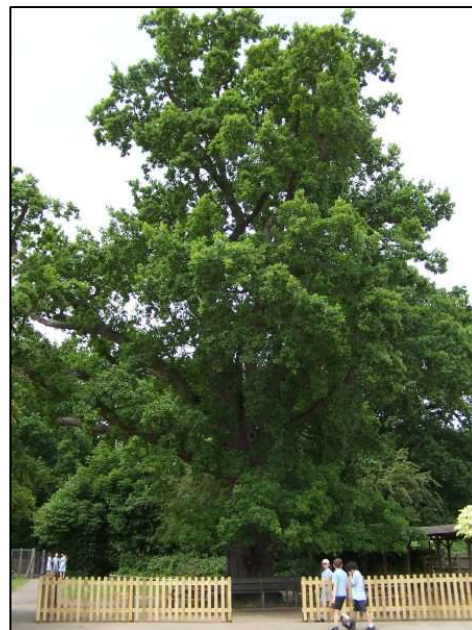
I observed the awe and wonder from my class of six year olds and they couldn't wait to touch and climb upon it. There was much discussion about the emerging creatures and why it was not possible for the deer to be a gazelle as it did not live in the UK. The chair was completed before the end of the summer term and we were able to make good use of it for story telling and as a base for environmental science activities.

On one particular day we enjoyed an afternoon of composing stories with some of the older children and the resulting telling session where two children worked together was worthy of a larger audience. On July 18th once again one of our trees featured in the Wokingham Times.

We may well have lost one of our most valuable assets but I hope the resulting educational opportunities it has created will inspire our youngsters to value their trees and grow up to plant many more!

Stephanie McKay

Steve sitting in his creation - you can see more photos and two of the children's designs via the web map - go to tree 151 and click on the "Related Documents".



MRN 151 was one of the first trees recorded - in March 2006

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



Several times in the last few months I've been asked: *"Please can I have a GPS and a tape?"* So far I have always been able to say yes.

However, I now have no spare GPS and only a few spare tape measures, so the next question is: *"When did you last use you WDVTA GPS and your WDVTA tape measure?"*

If your reply is *"not since last year"*, then please could you contact me and arrange to return the little used WDVTA kit to me. That way I will restock the 'spares' box and will have kit to loan out in the future, next time I am asked that first question.

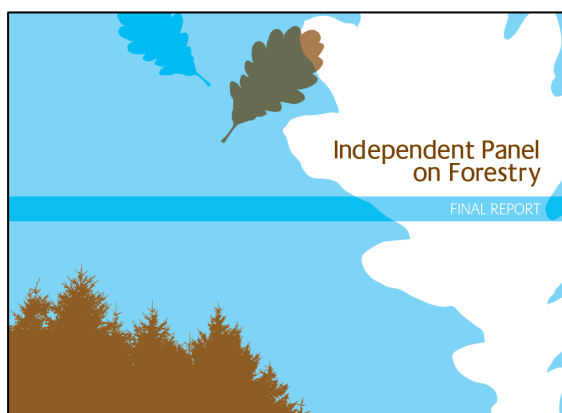
Alison Griffin equipment@wdvta.org.uk

FOREST SELL-OFF UPDATE

When they abandoned their plans to sell off forests, the Government set up an Independent Forestry Panel to review the situation. Its report was published in July and it unequivocally states that England's publicly owned forests are a national asset and should not be sold off. It recommends the creation of a charter so that the public forest estate would be "held in trust for the nation". The Environment Secretary, Caroline Spelman, responded by saying that the forests will stay in public ownership, but a full response to the report will not be issued until January 2013. The report's other recommendations include an increase England's woodland cover from 10% to 15% by 2060; an increase in access to public and privately owned woodlands; the protection of current funding for woodland management and creation; and ensuring that every child "has an element of woodland-based learning".

This report is clear, easy to read and makes some excellent recommendations - all of which is very different from some reports I've read recently! Here are some quotes:

- o "Local tree strategies and opportunity mapping should be mandatory for local authorities."
- o "... as a society, we have lost sight of the value of trees and woodlands."
- o "... our woodlands, managed sustainably, can offer solutions to some of the most pressing challenges facing society today."
- o "Put simply, the planting of trees and woods, their conservation and management are essential elements of our common life."
- o "We need a new culture of thinking and action around wood and woodlands, and a new way of valuing and managing the natural and social capital of our woodland resource, alongside the timber they contain."
- o "Our forests and woods are nature's playground for the adventurous, museum for the curious, hospital for the stressed, cathedral for the spiritual, and a livelihood for the entrepreneur."
- o "Our vision is of a landscape more richly endowed with trees, small woods, copses, hedges, larger woods and forests."



The report includes consideration of climate change and new pest and diseases as well as the management and funding of our woodland resources and the consideration that trees and woodlands should be given in planning policies.

I know that several of you are involved with Neighbourhood Plans and one recommendation is

- o "Integrate tree and woodland strategies into Local and Neighbourhood Plans."

With so much development planned for the Borough, it's worth listing some of the other planning policy recommendations:

- o "Reflect the value of ancient woodlands, trees of special interest, for example veteran trees, and other priority habitats in Local Plans, and refuse planning permission for developments that would have an adverse impact on them."
- o "Ensure woodland creation, tree planting and maintenance is part of the green space plan for new commercial and housing development."
- o "Encourage local authorities to look creatively, and across boundaries, at the use of S106 agreements, biodiversity offsets and particularly the Community Infrastructure Levy. These levers could produce green space schemes, including trees and woodland, that make a significant difference to the landscape as a whole."
- o Encourage local authorities to take professional forestry and arboricultural management advice where planning applications affect trees and woodlands."

The full report is available to download from the Defra website.

Another document that promotes the importance of trees is "*Trees in the Townscape - A Guide for Decision Makers*." It urges all Local Authorities to set tree planting standards for new developments. For instance, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council requires 3 trees per new dwelling and Thanet District Council specifies 10% cover of the development site area. Having set these standards, "commuted sum payments" can be demanded *in lieu* of tree planting where such planting is impractical. Let's hope WBC adopts such a policy.

[See recommended reading on page 11 for both reports.]

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - HOW DO I RECORD JUBILEE HEDGE TREES?

There's an on-line recording form on the Tree Warden page of our website. It's very easy to use and you can have a "trial run" first if you wish. Just answer as many of the questions as you can, so that we have as much information as possible.

We hope you will take photos of the hedge with its hedge trees and these have to be sent separately.

Send them to datamanager@wdvta.org.uk

The Hedge Tree database and photos are on the Yahoo site for any member to look at or download.



Hedge Tree Recording Form



WDVTA - Hedge Tree Record Form

Please complete as much as possible. Add any extra information or observations in the Comments field at the end of this form.

* Required

Your name *
Your name will be checked against our list of project participants before your record is added to the Hedge Tree database. If you'd like a trial run, without inputting any real data, use the name trial451.

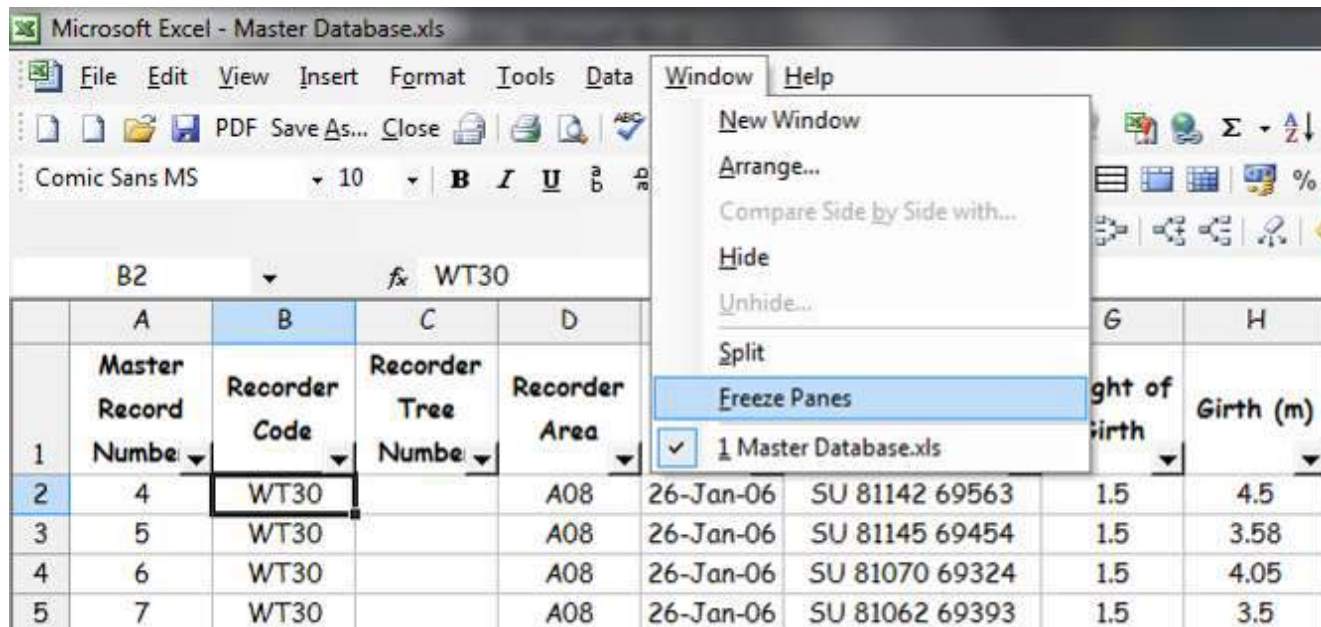
Your reference number for this hedge tree (optional):
This will enable you to add or correct information for this record if necessary.

Powered by Google Docs

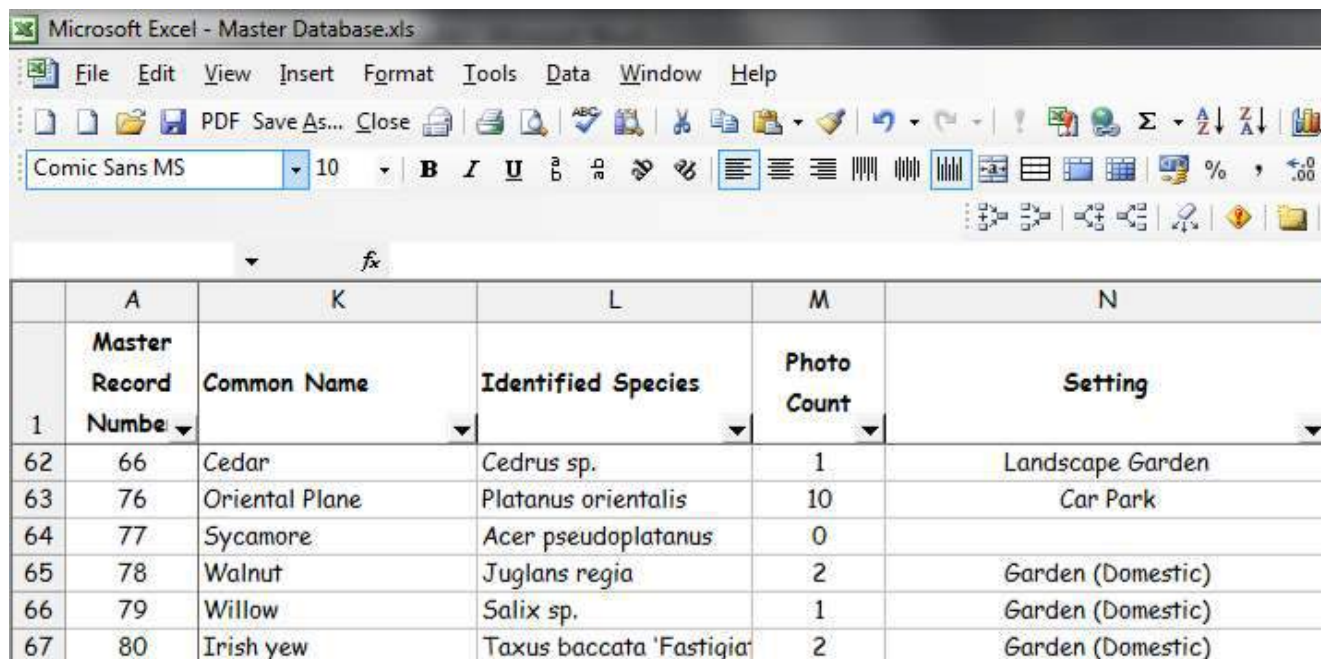
[Report Abuse](#) - [Terms of Service](#) - [Additional Terms](#)

EXCEL TIP FOR RECORDERS - Freezing Panes

This is a very useful feature. Our Master Database file has 28 columns (A:AB) plus 20 photo columns (AC:AW), and (currently) 5,138 rows. When you scroll down or across, you want the column headings and the MRN column to remain on the screen. To do this you use 'Freeze panes'. This is an option on the *Window* dropdown list - as shown below (for Excel 2003). This facility is available in later versions, but is accessed via a different menu.



Click on the cell below the row(s) you want as a heading and to the right of the column(s) you want displayed - this is cell B2 above. Then click Freeze Panes on the dropdown list. Subsequently, when you scroll, row 1 and column A will be displayed as shown below:



To remove (or change the position) you need to 'unfreeze' : - click on *Window* again and *Unfreeze panes* will appear on the dropdown list. Click that.

DID YOU KNOW? A PENNY HEDGE IS BUILT ON THE BEACH AT WHITBY EVERY YEAR ON ASCENSION EVE.

It's a tradition that dates back to 1159, when the Abbot of Whitby imposed a penance on three hunters and their descendants, for murdering a hermit. The three men, Ralph de Percy, William de Bruce and Allatson, were hunting wild boar. After a long chase, one boar took refuge in a chapel at Eskdaleside and the men killed it in front of the altar. When the hermit who lived there protested, the men attacked him. He was found by the abbot, but only lived long enough to forgive the men on condition that they performed a penance.

They had to use a knife costing one penny to cut wooden stakes in Eskdaleside, carry them to Whitby and make a short woven hedge before 9am and the hedge had to withstand three tides. Some sources refer to hawthorn stakes and others to hazel.

Local people continue the tradition, with a horn sounding when the planting is complete.



Some recommendations from the Yahoo Group:

WEBSITES: - in *Links > Tree Warden links*

- ① www.opalexplorenature.org/HedgeAwards - details about the OPAL hedge award scheme
- ① www.opalexplorenature.org/BiodiversitySurveyResultsMap - hedge awards interactive map page
- ① www.reading.gov.uk/residents/leisure/NaturalEnvironment/Trees/tree-wardens - Reading Tree Wardens

READING:-

- ① Letter of support to WDVTA-June 2012 - in *Files > WDVTA information*
- ① Independent Panel on Forestry-Final Report - www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel/reports
- ① Trees in the Townscape - A Guide for Decision Makers - www.tdag.org.uk/trees-in-the-townscape.html

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The views and opinions expressed in Tree Watch are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or the official policy or position of the Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association.

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

groups.yahoo.com/group/WDVTA

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