



Tree Watch

Issue 15

November 2012

On 26th November 2012 we had **6312** trees in our database and **7287** photographs

Welcome to the November issue of Tree Watch. This month we are enjoying some vibrant autumn colours and appreciating just how much trees contribute to our visual environment. This year it's the field maples that look particular vivid in this part of the world. In her new column on Tree Science, Fee Young describes colour change and leaf fall - see page 10. The winter landscape can be just as attractive - or more so - than the summer one as this photo demonstrates. It shows two English oaks (*Quercus robur*) in Arborfield: MRN 2693 with MRN 2692 behind it; (girths 4.87m and 3.65m respectively). The environment would be so much poorer without these trees.

Our jubilee trees will be planted soon (details on our website). They will hopefully grow to maturity and be some of the veteran trees of the future for our descendants to appreciate and perhaps record. I wonder whether anyone will look at our records in 100 years time.

The photo shows how important oak trees are in our landscape. Ash trees also contribute to our landscape, and we are of course all concerned about their future now that ash die-back has been found in native (non-nursery) trees (see page 2). We have 370 veteran ash trees in our database, but we don't have any good photos of ash trees in the landscape. Hopefully we will not lose our mature ash trees, but we think it would be a very good idea to record those we have now in case we do lose them. So if you know of any ash trees (veteran or not) please take some photos of them - both as individual tree and as part of the wider landscape. They will have lost their leaves by now, but their winter profiles can be captured and then you could photograph them again in spring. Send any photos to datamanager@wdvta.org.uk or upload them to our Yahoo site. There's an "Ash trees" folder there for this purpose.



With rather a lot about disease in this issue, I've had to delay some articles until February and there's no room for Excel tips or FAQ; but do let me know if there are any issues you'd like covered in future issues.

The next issue of Tree Watch will be February 2013 and the copy deadline is 31st January. All comments and contributions please to: Elaine Butler datamanager@wdvta.org.uk

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Events planned for *December - February*

Various Jubilee Oaks planting ceremonies - full details at: www.wdvta.org.uk/features.php#jubilee

Members will be circulated with events planned for 2013 soon.

For up-to-date information - see the events page on our website - [wdvta.org.uk/events.php](http://www.wdvta.org.uk/events.php)

ASH DIE-BACK

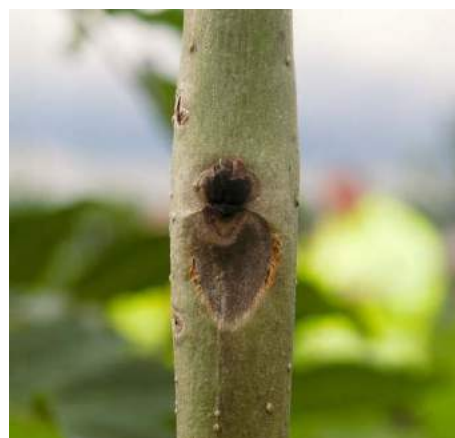
Ash die-back seems to be in the news every day, with constant updates on the situation. Up-to-date information can be found on Forestry Commission, Defra and Woodland Trust websites. We have already circulated our members with some details and contacts for anyone who wants to check suspected infections of local ash trees.

When I wrote about it in the last issue of Tree Watch in August it had only been confirmed in nursery stock. Since then of course, movement restrictions and a ban on imported ash trees have been imposed, following the confirmation of outbreaks in Woodland Trust and Wildlife Trust reserves in East Anglia and Suffolk. The source of infection for these outbreaks was wind-blown spores from Europe and not infection from imported nursery stock. It is obviously very difficult to stop the movement of wind-blown spores. No other European country has implemented a ban on imports and there are conflicting views on the effectiveness of such bans. You can read the opposing views at:

www.bsbi.org.uk/ash_dieback.html

www.floralocale.org/Ash+news

You might be wondering why we import ash trees from the continent when we have so many here. The nursery trade in Britain has declined over recent years, with many establishments closing, whereas on the continent it is a more thriving sector of the economy. Ash seeds collected in this country are sent to Holland to be germinated and grown there and sent back to the UK as saplings.



When the ban came into force on 29th October, infection had been confirmed in 14 nurseries, 12 planted areas and 3 native woods; 1000 inspections had been carried out and 100,000 trees been burnt. Since then of course there have been many more cases detected. By 21st November there were 222 confirmed cases: 17 on nursery sites, 84 in recently planted sites and 121 in established woodland and the wider environment. There are infections in several counties, including one case in Berkshire (near Maidenhead). These figures are published on the Forestry Commission website (www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara) and are regularly updated, together with a map showing the distribution of known cases (<http://tinyurl.com/ash-die-back-map>).

What should we do?

- » See our website for information and links.
- » Familiarise ourselves with the symptoms:-

For photos, descriptions and videos see:

www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara - the images shown here are from the Forestry Commission document that was circulated to members and



can be accessed from this webpage

www.fera.defra.gov.uk/plants/plantHealth/pestsDiseases/chalaraInfo.cfm

www.fraxback.eu - good information from a European perspective including photos and access to scientific papers

ASHTag is a phone app that helps identify ash trees suffering from dieback and lets you take a photo and GPS to report it.

- » Check local ash trees and report any suspected infections. We are very fortunate in having local experts, Glynn Percival and Jonathon Banks from Bartletts, based at Reading University and they are happy to check any trees that we think are infected; as too are members of WBC's Trees and Landscape team. Although infected material may need to be laboratory checked, we should not remove any suspect material, but report it and leave any sample collecting to them. Our website has the contact details - wdvta.org.uk/features.php#ash_dieback
- » Take sensible precautions to avoid spreading the disease. The risk of moving spores by boots is small, but it is worth taking the obvious precaution of cleaning boots and implements after visiting suspect sites. Do not remove any plant material from infected sites.
- » Take photos to show individual ash trees and ash trees in the landscape - now when they have no leaves and again in the spring with leaves. It would be good to have a photographic record of the landscape now, so that if the worst happens and we do lose trees, we will have a photographic record before and after.



This massive ash coppice stool (MRN 2199, above) is in Pearman's Copse, an ancient woodland in Shinfield. It has a girth of 6.18m at 0.3m, indicating an age of around 650 years. It could have been planted in the 1360s! The multi stem ash shown on the right (MRN 1861) is in Barkham. With a girth of 4.43m at 0.6m, it's probably 300 years old, a relic of an ancient field boundary. Both trees were measured in 2008.

Survey snapshot

Number of Ash trees recorded

370 = 6%

Number of ash tree maidens

118

Parish with most recorded Ash trees

Shinfield (107 = 35%)

Girth of largest Ash tree

7m

Girth of largest Ash maiden

5m

Number of Ash trees over 5m girth

37

Number of Ash maidens over 4m girth

11



Incidentally, although it's frequently referred to as *Chalara* or *Chalara* die-back, the disease is caused by *Hymenoscyphus pseudoalbidus*. When ash die-back was identified in Europe in 2006, the causative agent was described as a new fungal species, *Chalara fraxinea*. After further investigation and DNA sequencing, it was realised that *Chalara fraxinea* was the asexual stage of a known fungus called *Hymenoscyphus albidus*. However in 2010, after more detailed investigations, it was decided that the disease agent was not *H. albidus*, but a similar pathogen named *H. pseudoalbidus*. I expect it will continue to be called *Chalara*, but whatever it's called the effects are the same and potentially devastating.

OTHER DISEASES

Our trees are still threatened by other diseases. You might like to read a BBC news page "*Pest and disease threats to UK trees*" - www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-19197660



This rather attractive jewel beetle (*Agrilus biguttatus*) has been implicated in the spread of Oak die-back or Acute Oak Decline. Affected trees in the Woodland Trust's Bisham Woods in Berkshire are being compared with healthy ones growing nearby in an attempt to discover the exact role that this jewel beetle has in oak decline. A "decline", as opposed to a "disease" usually involves a number of agents acting together, either concurrently or sequentially. The net effect is loss of

health and vitality over a relatively short time. With Acute Oak Decline, death occurs within 5-10 years of the onset of symptoms, although it can be as short as 3 years. Chronic Oak Decline is a different condition and symptoms are developed over much longer time periods. It is particularly associated with root pathogens and poor root health. As well as these declines, there is Sudden Oak Death, a disease caused by *Phytophthora ramorum*. There is a good presentation describing these three conditions on the Forestry Commission website, together with a diagram of the life cycle of *Agrilus biguttatus*.

See: <http://tinyurl.com/oak-declines> and <http://tinyurl.com/oak-jewel-beetle>

Another "new" disease reported this month affects Christmas Trees. This one is called 'Current Season Needle Necrosis' (CSNN) and its cause is unknown as yet. Needles change colour and fall off. It's starting to cause serious problems to some British growers.

RALPH SPREADBOROUGH

It is with great personal sadness that I have to report the death of Ralph Spreadborough.

Ralph joined WDVTA about two years ago after being referred to Barbara from the local Volunteer Centre. He was looking for an outdoor activity and thought the Association might provide the ideal forum to carry out some work in the local countryside. He grew up in the countryside around Cove near Farnborough, and later moved to the Isle of Mull for a time before returning to the local area, and settling in Charvil.

Barbara and I met Ralph to talk over activities he could become involved with, and he immediately showed great enthusiasm for joining a range of local conservation projects, including becoming a popular and regular member of BBOWT's Mid-Week Team.

Earlier this year, he received a new camera for his 70th birthday, and as I knew our database needed photos of all of Charvil's veteran trees, I suggested he take this on as a project, which he took up with his usual enthusiasm. Unfortunately, his illness was diagnosed this summer before the project could be completed.

Ralph was resourceful, creative (artist, poet, and cook) and a very cheerful man, who remained steadfastly positive in outlook to the end of his life. He will be sadly missed by those who knew him.

Stephen Loyd

WOKINGHAM'S JUBILEE OAKS - VISIT TO BARCHAM TREE NURSERY - 20TH SEPTEMBER 2012

What a joy it was to be driven to Ely in a splendid silver car on a sunny day, and to be shown the huge variety of trees in Barcham's Nursery! With no hold ups on the M25, the three members of WDVTA arrived in good time and were joined shortly afterwards, by Jon and Corallie from Wokingham Borough Council. Our expedition was planned to see the 60 oak trees selected for planting around Wokingham Borough to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee.

We were welcomed by Julie who had worked at the nursery for 22 years, first planting seedlings and getting to know the 484 Varieties of trees that the Nursery grows, then working on every process of tree planting and care until she became one of the Public Relations and Sales Team. She gave an enthusiastic account of the history of Barcham Nursery which has grown to cover 300 acres of trees, set out in a central spiral plan, surrounded by blocks of species, planted in rows and covering a wide area. It has its own small reservoir to take care of the years when there is drought and the local Water Board says 'humans must come first'!



After a leisurely coffee, we climbed into two small buggies and were driven to see the Wokingham oak trees in their white bags, almost ready for transportation. They were about 20 feet tall and looked very healthy. The white bags are special containers, originally developed in Australia and adapted for use in the UK since 2003. The Barcham's tree guide explains that *"a muck and magic approach combined with years of practical experience is now being combined with science to create trees that stand a far greater chance of success to sustain our gardens, parks and streets for generations to come."* Black containers encourage spiralling root systems which they believe 'drastically reduce vigour and life expectancy of the tree after planting'. In white containers the root system grows vertically, thus avoiding spiralling and entanglement with other tree root systems. The roots can then explore the soil more effectively 'allowing rapid and sustained establishment'. We shall have an opportunity to see how this works out in practice with our 60 trees, now well established and growing straight and tall.



Our guides then took us on a journey around much of the nursery, pointing out the different species of trees and occasionally contesting with our own experts over recognition of immature and confusingly similar saplings. Finally, we were shown the 'conveyor belt' where the selected trees are trimmed and crated in additional nutrient soil for careful transportation to their destination.

Refreshed by a generous tea, we then came away with copies of their full and well illustrated catalogue and sped home before the afternoon rush.

Gill Hopkins

The photos (taken by Derek Oxbridge) show Gill and her companions (in orange jackets) inspecting "our" Jubilee Oaks. The first one was planted on 24th November. The rest will be planted in the following week. The planting ceremonies will be featured on a separate page on our website and there will be an article about them in the next issue of Tree Watch in February.

OUR FIRST JUBILEE OAK PLANTING

The first of our sixty Jubilee Oaks was planted at Shute End on Saturday 24th November. The planting ceremony was performed by Wokingham Borough Mayor, Bob Wyatt and Barbara Stagles, who I'm sure you all know was the founder of WDVTA and is the coordinator of the Jubilee Oaks project. Ray Stagles, our founder secretary, is behind Bob Wyatt in the photo below (taken by Alison Griffin & Angus Ross).



AMBASSADORS' JUBILEE WOODS

Two new Jubilee woods are to be planted in London this year, near Dagenham and Croydon, in recognition of the contribution of Team London Ambassadors to the success of the London Olympic and Paralympic Games. The 8,000 trees will only be 40cm high when planted, but will be tended until they are over 15m tall. A plaque will display the web link to a "hall of fame" where the names of Team London Ambassadors will be listed.

A MORE UNUSUAL JUBILEE OAK

"The Diamond Jubilee Fenland Black Oak Project" is turning a 5,000 year old oak tree into a 13m table as a "gift to the nation". The 13.4m (44') sub-fossilised trunk was found in Methwold Hythe, Norfolk earlier this year. Bog oak (which can be oak, yew or pine) is not uncommon in the Fens, but this piece is the largest found so far. It is thought to be over 5,000 years old. When the glaciers retreated at the end of the last ice age, sea levels were low and the Fen area was dry and wooded. With rising sea levels, 7,000 year ago, the Fen basin was flooded, trees died and were buried in the peat. They were preserved in the acidic, anaerobic peat bog and one or two resurface from time to time, often during ploughing. In 2009 dozens of large trunks, up to 12m (40') long appeared, giving rise to concern that peat shrinkage was accelerating in Norfolk. Bog oaks are found in other parts of the UK too.



Bog wood and boulders at the Stumpy Knowe near South Auchenmade, North Ayleshire.

Photo by Roger Griffith (2008)

PROFILE - FEE YOUNG

I'm delighted to include not only a profile of Fee Young, but four articles contributed by her. These promise to be the first of many - thank you Fee.

My love of nature started as a young child. My first love is astronomy with many a night spent looking upwards with the naked eye, large binoculars and later an 8" telescope. One night, whilst out observing, my second passion began - a hedgehog was snuffling through the garden plants. I learnt to understand their nocturnal lifestyle, eating habits and the difficulty of gender determination.

My family often took days out walking or cycling across the North & South Downs, the South Coast and many places in between. For me woodlands offered the greatest attraction: peace and tranquillity from the every day stresses of modern life. For me the best times to walk in a woodland is during or just after rainfall when the smell of decaying organic matter is at its strongest or during autumn leaf fall when the colourful leaves underfoot have a satisfying crunch.

Although I did not have the opportunities during my 'educational years' to study science at university, as an adult my continuing passion for science resulted in a BSc. in Natural Sciences, and a MSc. in Plant Taxonomy and Evolution.

My current research areas are:

- to contribute species data on small Neotropical Plant Families to the Species2000 and ITIS Catalogue of Life (www.catalogueoflife.org);
- to become the world's expert on those small families (www.lacistemataceae.org).

Joining the WDVTA in June 2007 on relocation to Winnersh, I agreed to lead the parish survey. My other roles are Woodley Tree Surveyor and a recent return to the Committee.

Fee Young



In the last issue, Peter Harms told us about the successful campaign to save MRN 2802. Now Fee relates the saving of another oak (MRN 6105), this time in Winnersh.

A VETERAN TREE'S STORY..... DESTRUCTION PREVENTED!

Whilst out scoping for 'how to split the parish into manageable areas' several people came and told the Winnersh Parish Coordinator of how this veteran tree survived after a developer lost their planning application (April 2003) to build 19 homes because the entrance to the estate (Locksley Gardens) through 41 Watmore Lane would have damaged the roots of a 400 year old oak. John Grimson (Winnersh Parish Councillor), Pat Rowell (Chairman of WRAP: Winnersh Residents for Action on Planning) and Wokingham Councillor Prue Bray backed locals to submit evidence. The developer, Linden Homes, finally received planning permission in January 2004 when the estate entrance was moved. 41 Watmore Lane was torn down to build two smaller houses thus moving the entrance to the estate out of the root protection zone.



The saved English Oak (*Quercus robur*) in Watmore Lane - MRN 6105 -- girth 6m

Locals thought they had saved the tree when in March 2006 Linden Homes placed advertising hoardings within the 12 metre root protection zone. John Grimson stated "the poles are fairly big so would have to go down quite a long way and there is a risk it has

damaged the roots". The WBC tree officer took a closer look and the developer relocated the sign outside the root protection zone the same day.

The moral of this story is urban veteran trees can be saved. Just get out there and make waves with your neighbours and local action groups.

Fee Young

Unfortunately not all trees are saved ...

SADLY DEPARTED - a fine eucalyptus in Finchampstead.

One of our new surveyors recorded this magnificent eucalyptus in Finchampstead on 14th August, but by the 24th - even before he had submitted the record - it has been felled!



MRN 6518 - girth 3m at 0.6m

But things could be worse...

Last month we heard that the Secretary of State had approved all three appeals by the University of Reading relating to planned developments in Shinfield (the 'South of the M4' SDL). Given the various discussions we have had recently concerning TPOs and how ineffective they are when the fines are so small for a developer who fells a protected tree, I thought you might be interested in one of the conditions attached to the appeal approval:

"If any retained tree is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies, another tree shall be planted at the same place and that tree shall be of such size and species, and shall be planted at such time, as may be specified in writing by the local planning authority."

I presume that this is a general condition and not specific to these cases.

400 TREES CUT DOWN FOR SPACE SHUTTLE *ENDEAVOUR'S* FINAL FLIGHT!

I never thought I would ever write a story that covered both astronomy and trees at the same time but...

In October, a two day, 12 mile journey transported the *Endeavour* from Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) to California Science Center, Exposition Park, LA.

According to Reuters News residents opposed tree felling but the planners working with the residents planned the route to "limited arboreal impacts" by removing small or sick trees, invasive species and those already damaging pavements and future construction of a light rail. No native species or 'heritage tree' were removed. A quarter of the trees were on the airport grounds. Other trees were manoeuvred around if possible.

Planning for this amazing spectacle took a year and meant that 100s of power cables, street lights and telephone cables had to be raised in height. Several cables were removed and replaced as the shuttle passed. In addition steel plates were laid to protect road surfaces and underground utilities from the tree-mendous weight!





Moving on its 160 wheeler carrier at 2 mph as opposed to 17,500 mph in orbit, *Endeavour* was slowly steered between the buildings, malls and house lawns. 1000's of people lined the streets for this once in a lifetime opportunity to see the shuttle pass through their neighbourhood. Many people were taking pictures and marvelling at the shuttle's immense size: five storeys high, 122 feet long, 78 foot wingspan and 76 tonnes (with transporter 80 tonnes in total).

The good news is that the 400 removed trees will be replaced with "boxed trees" that already stand 10-14 feet (3 to 4 metres) in height. There seems to be a discrepancy as to how many trees will be planted, figures vary from 500 to 1000.

Finally, if you wish to visit the *Endeavour*, it was open to visitors from the 30 October 2012. The future plan is for *Endeavour* to stand vertical on a replica external fuel tank with two original solid booster rockets. Part of the launch tower will also be replicated to give the impression of impending launch. Expect this exhibit to be awesome close up.



Fee Young

THE GREAT STORM - 25 YEARS AGO...15 MILLION TREES DAMAGED AND/OR FELLED

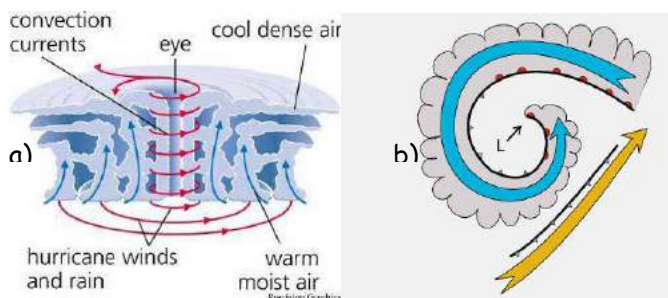
15-16th October 1987

Do you remember where you were on the Thursday-Friday night? I was in bed asleep and missed the whole event. I lived in Croydon at the time and the damage? To be honest I do not remember, there were only a few trees locally and they were all protected by surrounding buildings.

As this was a last minute contribution, I did not get the chance to do any research into the after effects in Wokingham. Do you want more on this story in the next issue?

Here are a few storm facts:

- the worst U.K. storm since 1703;
- this was not a hurricane (picture a) but a tropical storm known as a Sting Jet (picture b) where a weather front curls around the low pressure area of the system but does not enclose it;



- 951 mb (millibars) lowest air pressure, 'normal' is 1020 mb.
- maximum wind gust speeds: 115 mph (Shoreham-on-Sea, West Sussex), 94 mph (London) 50 mph (mean value across South East England);
- 18 people died in U.K. and 4 in France;
- thousands of homes were without power;
- travel infrastructure was blocked by debris.

Fee Young

Fee Young's TREE SCIENCE Column

I can already imagine that your eyes are glazing over at the very mention of science. But just bear with me for a few moments longer! As a scientist part of my role is to explain complex ideas in an easy to read way, I hope that this section will do just that. So for this first article two intertwined topical questions are examined:

Why do deciduous tree leaves change colour in autumn? What makes these leaves fall?

I will discuss leaf fall question first as imbedded in this answer is autumn colour change.

The abscission mechanism is a process where a plant part is shed and consequently falls to the ground, in this case tree leaves.

Abscission is controlled by two chemical messengers: auxin (technically a group of many chemicals not just one) and ethylene, both of which are plant hormones. As the young leaf opens auxin is produced in large amounts, ethylene level is negligible. While these levels remain constant abscission is prevented. As the leaf matures, auxin production decreases. This decrease is caused by many factors, but mainly environmental: temperature decrease, drought and decreasing daylight hours. Leaf damage also causes auxin reduction.

With the onset of these environmental changes the chlorophyll (green pigment) in the leaves is broken down chemically and stored within the tree. At this point the autumn colours become visible.

Flavonoids are responsible for autumnal leaf colouration. There are 8,000+ flavonoids and they are classified into at least 10 groups. For this discussion we will concentrate not on groups but on three different colours: red (anthocyanins), yellow (carotenoids) and brown (tannins).

At this point I will digress for a moment and discuss why scientists believe carotenoids and tannins are present in leaves throughout the entire growing season rather than during autumn only.

In spring as you have discovered not all young emergent leaves are green but pale reds and yellows. Certain trees do this to prevent insect predation. Tannins are known to be a natural pesticide and greater amounts repulse larger leaf eating animals. As for anthocyanins, they protect DNA* in young leaves from increasing levels of ultra-violet (UV) light and it is further hypothesized that they lower the freezing point of water within the leaf thus preventing frost damage.

So now we return to the abscission story. As stated earlier the auxin level decreases (autumn colours emerge) and ethylene production rises to a point where the abscission zone of the leaf stalk very close to the twig swells slightly. Inside this swelling, ethylene switches on the production of two abutting layers: the separation layer (next to leaf stalk) and the protective layer (next to twig). The protective layer prevents unwanted chemicals passing into the twig from the leaf. This blockage also prevents water loss and invasion from bacteria and fungi. The separation layer splits down the middle, the leaf hanging by a metaphorical thread. Wind or frost may cause the leaf to fall prematurely before the two halves of the protective layer have completely separated.

Finally a word about conifers. It is a fallacy that conifers do not undergo needle drop. In actual fact these trees drop needles all year round; it's just that we do not notice, unlike their colourful deciduous cousins!

Fee Young

* DNA stands for Deoxyribonucleic acid. DNA contains the genetic blueprint instructions to create a life form.

THE CASHMIR CYPRESS

In November last year, Patricia Green described her visit to the Cashmir Cypress in Italy (Issue 11 p4). Derek Belton (from Merseyside) read this and sent photos and a video of the tree taken in 2008 (Issue 11 p5). He now gives us a further update. His photo was taken at the beginning of September this year.

We have just returned from another holiday in Stresa and, of course, we had to visit Isola Madre to have a look at that famous cypress tree. I thought you might like to know how it is progressing. It looks very healthy to me and will now surely survive. The small areas of green at the base are actually two other small trees they have planted, presumably to hide some of the scars on the trunk of the tree. The tree is still held upright with wires. The red circular tubes and hanging platforms are an art installation called 'Playtime'.

There was a recent storm on 25 August 2012 which has, in the word of the locals, 'destroyed' the garden at Villa Taranto (presumably uprooted many trees). The garden is now shut for the remainder of the year. There is also tree damage and damage to stone works on Isola Bella, but the garden is still open.



Derek Belton

MORE ACRONYMS

Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) are being set up by the Government as a result of recommendations in its Natural Environment White Paper (published in 2011). Berkshire is one of 48 so far announced. The Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum (BNCF) was one of the first organisations to receive funding from Defra to create an LNP and its work is funded by Natural England (NE), the Environment Agency (EA) and Berkshire's six unitary authorities, including of course, Wokingham. Another outcome of this White Paper is the establishment of Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs), a new name for "Ecological Restoration Zones". In September the criteria for identifying locally-determined NIAs was announced. So far there are twelve NIAs, but none in Berkshire. Information about LNPs and NIAs can be found on the Defra website. Part of their function is described as helping to achieve "*the Government's national environmental objectives locally, including the identification of local ecological networks, alongside addressing local priorities.*" and "*to create a vision and plan of action of how the natural environment can be taken into account in decision making*". With so much development in Wokingham there is certainly a need to identify ecological networks that need protecting and enhancing. In Wokingham's four SDLs (Strategic Development Locations) - Wokingham North and South, Arborfield and Shinfield ("South of the M4") - there is particular concern about the retention of hedgerows as effective wildlife corridors. It is to be hoped that BNCF can help raise the profile of the natural environment within the planning process. Their website is www.berksbap.org

Suburbia is where the developer bulldozes out the trees, then names the streets after them

Bill Vaughan (1914-1977)

DID YOU KNOW? THERE IS A NEW TALLEST OAK

Of course this oak isn't new - it's the record that's new!

The tallest *Quercus robur* as recorded by TROBI (Tree Register of the British Isles) was measured this year by climbing it and is highlighted in their latest newsletter. It is 40.4m tall. It's one of a group of oaks at Stourhead National Trust property in Wiltshire and has a girth of 4.03m. There are 2 other oaks in the TROBI records with heights exceeding this, but they are both recorded with the comment "height is probably exaggerated"! The champion oak for girth, with a girth of 12.53m, is at Lydham Manor in Shropshire. There are three larger "historic" oaks on their list. The Newland Oak with a girth of 13.63m collapsed during a snowstorm in May 1955. The Cowthorpe Oak or 'Father of the Forest', with a girth of 14.45m, was still alive in 1911 when recorded by C Hurst ('The Book of the English Oak'), but is believed to have died in the 1950s. There is reference to it in 1768, 1794 and 1893. The largest English Oak in the TROBI records had a girth of 20.42m. It's the Damory's Oak, near Blandford Forum in Dorset. Apparently Gilpin reported that it was damaged in the 1703 storm and felled in 1755 for firewood. During the Civil War, an old man is said to have lived in the tree and sold ale from there.

The photos are of our largest maiden oak - MRN 2278 with a girth of 7.5m. It bifurcates at about 2m and is in Ruscombe.



RECOMMENDED WEBSITES & READING mentioned in this issue:-

- ① www.wdvta.org.uk/features.php#ash_dieback - our webpage with contact details and web links
- ① www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara - Forestry Commission page with details of ash die-back symptoms, including a video, links to other pages and a map showing the confirmed cases - regularly updated
- ① <http://tinyurl.com/ash-die-back-map> - FC map - distribution of confirmed ash die-back cases
- ① www.fera.defra.gov.uk/plants/plantHealth/pestsDiseases/chalaraInfo.cfm - one of Defra's websites with more photos, a video and links
- ① www.fraxback.eu - ash die-back in UK & Europe, with photos and access to scientific paper
- ① www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-20219650 - general overview of ash die-back (BBC)
- ① www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-19197660 - pest and disease threats to UK trees (BBC)
- ① <http://tinyurl.com/oak-declines> - FC presentation (pdf) about oak declines (AOD, COD & SOD)
- ① <http://tinyurl.com/oak-jewel-beetle> - the life cycle of *Agilus biguttatus* (the oak jewel beetle)

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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.