



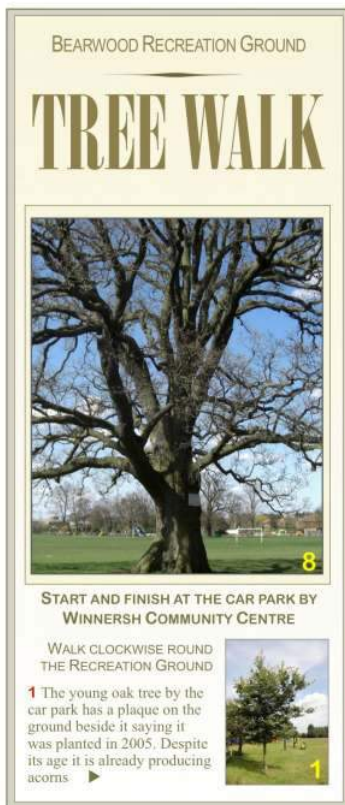
Tree Watch

Issue 22

August 2014

On 3rd August we had **7006** trees in our database and **8660** photographs

Welcome to the twenty-second issue of Tree Watch. I hope you all enjoyed the summer weather in June and July. Great weather for weddings, including my son's in July. Quite a change this month, with heavy rains and winds in the wake of hurricane Bertha, prompting this notice at a National Trust property in Warwickshire. Rain also affected our events (see page 2).



In the *Did You Know?* section this month, Alison refers to a tree trail in Bournemouth. Many towns have tree trails these days, but so far we have produced only one - that devised by Linda Martin in 2010 for the trees at Bearwood Recreation Ground in Winnersh - a great short walk and an excellent leaflet. With all the tree surveying we've done, we should be thinking about producing some more tree trails within our Borough. Surely there must be other places beside Bearwood where there are enough trees to create a short tree walk or perhaps we could produce some leaflets in combination with local history or walking groups.

It's good to see the importance of trees being recognised more widely these days. More surveys are being undertaken, some of which are mentioned on pages 4 & 5. Nearer to home, a tree survey is being initiated in Bracknell by Dan Carpenter, their Biodiversity Officer. One of the targets in the Bracknell Forest Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is the identification and mapping of 400 veteran trees by 2016. Unfortunately there is no mention of veteran trees in particular or of the specific importance of trees in general in the draft Wokingham BAP. Let's hope that omission is rectified in the final version; although of course we have already identified many more than 400 vets in Wokingham!

The next issue of Tree Watch will be November 2014 and the copy deadline is 31st October. If you have comments or responses to anything in this issue or contributions for future issues please send them to: Elaine Butler - datamanager@wdvta.org.uk

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Events - September - November 2014

- ❖ Tuesday 7th October 19:30 Emmbrook Room, Dinton Pastures - Tree Disease Update Talk by Dr Glynn Percival

Non-WDVTa events:

- ❖ Thursday 18th September - Reading Tree Warden Guided Walk at Englefield Park - booking essential - rtwn2011@gmail.com
- ❖ Saturday 27th September - Berkshire Recorders Event combined with Berkshire Local Nature Partnership conference - Thames Valley Park
- ❖ Wednesday 5th November - Managing veteran trees: Implications of ageing and decay - training programme Ancient Tree Forum

For up-to-date information - see the events page on our website - wdvta.org.uk/events.php

EVENTS

Our walk in Wargrave earlier this month, led by Steve Radford, was cut short by rain, but not until near the end and it was considered excellent by those participating. Unfortunately it clashed with the Earley Green Fair. We had rain at the Green Fair too - and some extra visitors to our stand - sheltering under the gazebo from the heavy downpours. The Green Fair is an annual event, well supported by various environmental/ecological groups including the Earley Environment Group (EEG), Berkshire Mammal Group (BMG), Berkshire Reptile and Amphibian Group (BRAG), Berkshire Geoconservation Group (BGG), Berkshire Ornithological Club (BOC), RSPB and BBOWT, as well as WDVTa of course. There are also stalls selling a variety of products and refreshments. It attracts people from outside Earley and brings our association to the attention of a wider audience. Put a note in your diary for next year's Green Fair - Saturday 1st August 2015. It's held at the Beech Lane end of Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve. Both are well worth a visit - and you don't have to wait until next year to visit the Nature Reserve. Whilst there, make sure to visit the Gemini oak - MRN 2815. If you Google "Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve" you'll get more information about the reserve and a self-guided walk (which includes the Gemini oak).

Our next main event is Glynn Percival's talk in October. If you were at his last talk, you'll know we can expect a very entertaining as well as informative session and we are all very keen to have an authoritative update on tree diseases. Before that there's Reading Tree Warden's guided walk around Englefield Park and the annual Berkshire Recorders Day, but now combined with the Berkshire Local Nature Partnership (BLNP) conference in the morning. Follow the link from our website for programme and booking details.

ASH DIEBACK

At a recent Tree Council Forum, it was emphasized that Ash dieback is everywhere and because of the large number of trees involved it is a major management issue, with considerable safety and cost implications. The Forestry Commission is treating Ash dieback as a 'quarantine' plant pathogen, which means they may use emergency powers to contain or eradicate it. This would involve the issuing of Statutory Plant Health Notices, requiring owners to remove and destroy affected plants by burning or deep burial on site. Some statistics illustrate the scale of the problem. There are an estimated 1,600,000,000 Ash trees and saplings in woods. Figures available for non-woodland Ash suggest

- 19.7 million Ash trees in hedgerows in the UK
- 4 million+ Ash trees on Highway Agency Land
- 5.5 million by the roadside in 11 Ash rich counties
- 2.2 million Ash trees in the wider agricultural countryside
- 400,000+ large Ash trees on Network Rail land
- 220,000 local authority owned and managed Ash trees
- 210,000 Ash trees in London

An estimated 61,453 miles of hedges and lines of trees are Ash dominated and about 4% of the trees in towns and cities are Ash.

About 7,000 of these trees are ancient, representing 3-6% of the UK's ancient trees.

THE VETERAN TREE SURVEY

If you've checked the number of recorded trees, you might be surprised to see that we have two fewer trees than we had in May! The database has been pruned.

Initially we set up our database to include veteran trees (defined as trees with a girth of over 3m) plus any significant trees. Now that we have established a separate database for commemorative and special trees, we can move smaller significant trees to that one. There's more pruning to do, but for some species it's difficult to decide when they should be considered as veterans.

So in May we had 7008 trees and 8577 photos in our database. In August we deleted 93 trees, but added 91 to give us 7006 trees and 8660 photos.

It is gratifying that we are mopping up trees in Wokingham Without that are on private land, and progressing with our survey in Woodley and Finchampstead. Some of our surveyors are also checking the species of our larger trees which have just been recorded as "Oaks" and getting photos of trees that currently lack them.

AGE ESTIMATES

It's nice to have confirmation of the equations we use to estimate the age of a tree. On a recent visit to Stowe I measured an Oak planted by Queen Victoria in 1845. It has a girth of 3.27m, which would make it 161 years old using White's calculations for an Oak growing in parkland conditions (see wdvta.org.uk/pdf/Estimating-the-age-of-trees.pdf). 1845 is 169 years ago, but I don't know how old the tree was when it was planted.

Veteran Tree Survey snapshot

Maidens
5290

Multi stems
1007

Coppices
357

Pollards
221

Stumps
131



COMMEMORATIVE TREES

I do hope you have had a look at our commemorative and special trees list - accessible via our website (wdvta.org.uk/commem.php).

If you do, you'll see that the area in front of St James' Church in Finchampstead is the site of four Jubilee Oaks. An English Oak (*Quercus robur*) was planted for the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887, but that has since died. Another one was planted nearby in 2002 to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. A Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*) was chosen for the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II in 1977. One of our own Jubilee Oaks was also planted there, commemorating of course Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee.

They are all across the road from "The Queen's Oak" pub, renamed after the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria.



There is no record of a tree being planted in Finchampstead to celebrate the Coronation of King George VI in 1939. The Royal Record for that event lists trees in Shinfield, Swallowfield, Twyford and Wokingham and these records have been added to our Commemorative list.



CROWD SOURCING

In case it's escaped your notice, crowd sourcing is very popular these days. Also called citizen science, it aims to get people involved in recording observations of the natural world. In many ways this is good, but I do wish there was more "joined-up-thinking". New projects are launched without any consideration of existing ones. I guess, as Oliver Rackham opines, it's easier that way!

One recently launched by the Natural History Museum, to coincide with the UN's "International Day for Biological Diversity" on 22nd May this year, serves two purposes. It's a tree identification app for the iPhone. Called Leafsnap, it's free and so if you have an iPhone you might like to download it from the AppStore and see how good it is. You just take a photo of a leaf and the app attempts to match it with its database of 156 tree species. As well as offering instant identification, the app also contains more than 2,000 images of tree features - flowers, fruit, bark and leaves and a fact file for each tree. Whenever users take and upload a leaf photo, the image and its location are added to a database with the aim of collecting information about tree species distribution over time. Unfortunately there isn't an Android version and so I haven't been able to check it out.

The Natural History Museum also has an on-line tree identification facility - which you can use whether you have an iPhone or not! There are a number of on-line tree ID guides. See our Yahoo site for links.

THE X FACTOR

The Woodland Trust launched another project this month. They want to find "*England's tree with the X factor!*" They want nominations for "England's Tree of the Year", the tree with the most interesting story in the country.

WDVTA will be submitting a nomination - possibly the Oriental Plane (shown here) adjacent to the Waitrose car park in Wokingham (MRN 76 - there's a document about it attached to the webmap record). Do you have other suggestions? Anyone can suggest a tree - so over to you. The closing date is 19th September. Please let me know if you make any independent nominations.



www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/england-tree-of-the-year

From all the nominations, one tree will be selected and that will be entered into the "European Tree of the Year" competition.

TRADITIONAL ORCHARD SURVEY

PTES (People's Trust for Endangered Species) has recorded about 9,000 orchard sites, but say this represents just over 20% of orchards in England and Wales. They are keen to find the remaining 80%!! You can see what sites have been recorded already on their Google maps (as described on page 6 of last August's Tree Watch). They have now released the "PTES Orchard Mapper" app, free and available for both Android and iPhone. They have several new orchard initiatives in the pipeline, including mapping local varieties. They define a traditional orchard as a collection of six or more old fruit trees; so if you know of such a group, do check to see whether they've been recorded and if they're not on the map - let them know.

See their website for more information: ptes.org/campaigns/traditional-orchards-wildlife

It is estimated that of the orchards existing in the 1950s, only 10% remain; and most of these are in poor condition. Like veteran trees, traditional orchards are particularly valuable for the wildlife that inhabits them, with some species, such as the noble chafer beetle living exclusively in old fruit trees.

ANCIENT WOODLAND IS IMPORTANT

The original ancient woodland inventory, initiated by the then NCC in the 1980s, only considered woodlands of 2ha or more. In the last 30 years technology has moved on and there's an increased accessibility to historic maps and aerial photographs allowing a more detailed and accurate map of ancient woodlands. Woodlands are under more pressure than ever before, and knowing where these sites are is invaluable for both developmental planning and nature conservation.

There is a new, revised inventory of ancient woodland being compiled across the country. That for Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire has been completed, and TVERC is currently working on one for Berkshire. They particularly want to hear from you if:

- You own/manage a woodland and would like to know if it's ancient.
- Would like to do some survey work.
- Have any information about, or want to research, historic maps or records relating to ancient woodlands.

Contact Helen Miller, Berkshire Biodiversity Officer at TVERC - helensmiller@oxfordshire.gov.uk

PROFILE - GRAHAME HAWKER

Many of you will know Grahame and his extensive ecological knowledge, but be unaware of his horticultural background. His profile makes fascinating reading. He certainly manages to fit in a lot of activities and is a valued WDVTA advocate.

Being called Grahame Hawker, it seems I was probably always destined to become involved in the field of conservation.

In primary school I was nicknamed "Nature Boy" because of to my fascination with the nature table. I was usually to be found scrabbling out on the hill and stream near my childhood home, watching the little red mites running over our coal bunker or "rescuing" woolly bear caterpillars from the impending doom of crushing feet as they crawled across the pavement.

As Biology was the only subject that I excelled in at school, it was inevitable that I would end up studying a related subject at university. At the time conservation courses were in their infancy, and as my other interest as a child was growing things, I chose to do a BSc(Hons) degree in Horticulture. This led to a 16 year detour into the world of horticulture before moving back into my true love of conservation.

The degree course ran for four years and included placements at the Lee Valley Glasshouse Research Station, the Edinburgh Botanic Gardens and a period at a nursery stock producer in Wisconsin, USA. After graduating I took a Masters Degree in Horticulture at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in America where I carried out research into Anthocyanin production in cranberries.



Following jobs in glasshouse work, exterior and interior landscaping in the USA, I returned to England and spent the next 8 years as Horticultural Officer for Norwich City Council. After moving to the South East I took the opportunity to transfer from horticulture to conservation by taking up a post as a voluntary officer with BTCV. This included a period of working in a voluntary capacity for Earley Town Council. The need for income led to a few years managing an interior landscaping company before securing the post of Senior Park Ranger at Earley Town Council, where I have been for the past 15 years.

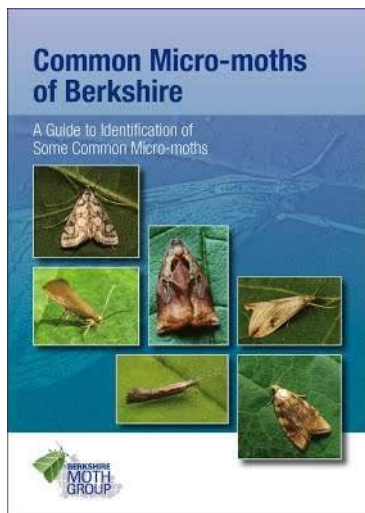
Managing Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve and a number of other open spaces has given me the opportunity to create new meadows, wildlife gardens, reed beds, ponds and school environmental areas. I have worked to eradicate invasive alien plants such as Himalayan Balsam, organised litter-picking events, recorded veteran trees, organised volunteers, and carried out woodland coppicing and hedge creation. I also sat on the Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum and now sit on the steering group of the Berkshire Local Nature Partnership and chair the Wokingham Biodiversity Forum.

During this period I have established the Earley Environmental Group, and in conjunction with a local residents group set up the EASI scheme (Earley Adopt a Street Initiative), where local residents sign up to keep their streets free of litter (we now have over 200 streets covered!). I have also been involved in setting up the Earley Local History Group, which has now written and published three local history books.

Away from Earley, my time has been spent setting up the Padworth Environment Group and the Berkshire Moth Group. I have chaired the conservation and recording committee of the Upper Thames Branch of Butterfly Conservation and am currently their Silver-Studded Blue champion. My spare time has been spent recording butterflies in my local 10km square, constructing a butterfly and bee garden in Brimpton Churchyard, moth recording, and developing wildlife-friendly habitats in my own garden. I have recently helped with the production of a new micro-moth book for Berkshire, which has now been published.

Grahame Hawker

MICRO-MOTHS OF BERKSHIRE



The book Grahame mentioned in his profile is available from the Berkshire Moth Group. See their website for more information and sample pages:

sites.google.com/site/berksmoths

COUNTRYSIDE WARDEN

Perhaps reading Grahame's profile has inspired you. If so why not consider becoming a volunteer Countryside Warden to work with the Shinfield Volunteers.



The initial brief is to identify areas of special interest and, with the assistance of other volunteers, lead efforts to manage, promote, and publicise Shinfield's wildlife heritage.



Eventually it is hoped to undertake detailed surveys of the local ecology, record sites of wildlife interest and monitor the progress of existing habitat management plans for local wildlife sites; but one step at a time.

If you have an active interest in local natural flora and fauna and are interested in developing this

rewarding role, or would like to assist, please get in touch with Phil on 0118 988 2804.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - Why can't I just say "holes"?

This question is of course in the context of our recording sheet. In the notable features columns there are drop-down lists of features, but you can also type into those fields to record features not on the list. The list includes features of interest to the Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Hunt, and we extract this information when we send our data to them. The computer program that does this extraction searches for specific terms and hence, for example, ATH uses the term "Holes or water pockets" and if a record just said "holes" that would not be registered in the ATH "Holes or water pockets" field.

You'll see that in some cases the record says "ivy, much ivy" - which looks rather clumsy; but the program searches for "ivy" within the comma separated list, so that these records can be correctly transferred to ATH. We can't just search for "ivy" as part of a list entry because someone might have entered "no ivy" !!!

With settings it's even more important to use items from the list. It would be impossible to make any sort of summary about settings if everyone described them in their own words!

The drop-down lists also make it easier for you, since you don't have to type the terms. Don't forget that there is a separate sheet in the spreadsheet files listing all the terms used and there is also a very useful "Feature combiner" sheet, where you can easily combine features and then copy to the recording sheet.

So please choose "Burred" from the list, rather than typing "burrs" or choose "Epicormic (twiggy) growth" rather than typing "epicormics".

This month's **A C R O N Y M**

CROW - Conserve Reading on Wednesdays

CROW was founded in 1986. Every Wednesday throughout the year, members undertake tasks, ranging from hedge laying and coppicing to scrub clearance and invasive species control, at sites in and around Reading, from Dinton Pastures in the east to Paices Wood in the west.



HOLIDAY TREES - TREE HEATHERS (*ERICA SCOPARIA*) OF TENERIFE

Apart from its size, tree heather is very similar to our moorland heather, *Erica cinerea*, but it can grow to a height of 15m. Tree heathers are native to the Canary Islands, Madeira, and adjacent areas of Europe and Africa, although it has apparently become extinct in Lanzarote and Fuerteventura. They are one of the major species of the Laurisilva, a remnant of the Tertiary forests of the Mediterranean basin, a subtropical cloud forest requiring high humidity and relatively constant temperatures. There



were originally two levels; a lower laurel forest, with a wax myrtle and tree heath forest above, but the tree heathers have colonised and replaced the laurel forest where that has been degraded - and that applies to large areas of Tenerife.



ABOVE: *Walking amongst the tree heathers of the Laurisilva in Anaga Rural Park, an extensive area covering the mountainous uplands of the north-east Tenerife.*

LEFT AND BELOW: *This specimen is growing at 920m by the Mirador de la Cruz del Carman in Anaga Rural Park. It has a girth of 2.15m at 1m.*



(Yes I do carry a tape measure with me on holiday!).

The heather was very important in the traditional economy of Tenerife. It was used as fodder for livestock; bedding for animals and humans and for charcoal production. All sorts of things were made from the wood, from forks to pipes, as well as stakes and fencing. It was also brewed into a herbal tea and used as a skin tonic.

HEATHER AS AN ENERGY SOURCE

Heather does not grow to tree size here, but it is a common colonizer of UK uplands, where it is frequently burnt to create feeding ground for grouse and livestock. A recent study (published in *Biomass and Bioenergy*) found that this burning releases energy equivalent to burning 36,000 tonnes of coal per year. If the UK's heather was harvested as a bio-energy crop, it could produce as much energy as 1.7 million tonnes of coal per year, accounting for 15% of the UK's 2020 biomass target, without taking farmland out of production. Currently elephant grass and short-rotation coppice are the most common bioenergy crops in the UK, but both use productive farmland, whilst heather grows on generally unproductive heaths and moors. In addition each hectare of heather could save 11 tonnes of carbon emissions per year. The heather referred to in this study is *Calluna vulgaris*, rather than an *Erica spp.*

"We have a large source of very efficient, low-carbon energy growing naturally on our uplands, but we're releasing all its CO₂ into the atmosphere without getting any energy from it. At the same time we're burning coal to satisfy demand, and that's a very dirty source of energy. Surely it would be possible to send the heather down the hill and stop burning the coal."

Professor Fred Worrall, Durham University (2014)

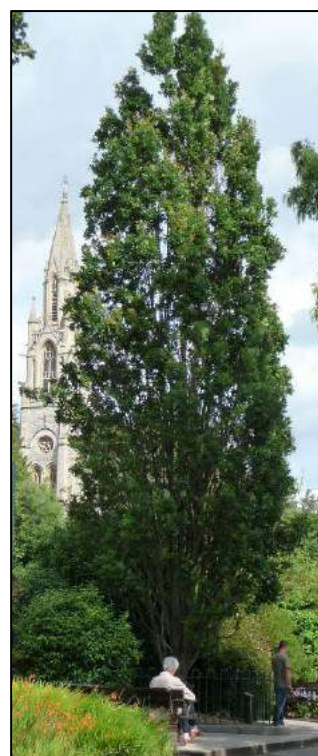
DID YOU KNOW? *I didn't!*

(This issue's *Did you Know?* comes from Alison Griffin)

If I asked you 'What trees can you always recognise from a distance of 100 yards?', I would expect the majority of answers would be a weeping willow and a Lombardy poplar. Well, in early May I was walking through the Central Gardens in Bournemouth with friends and saw a Lombardy poplar ahead, but when I was about 3 paces past it I stopped as I realised it had oak leaves! Some internet searching later and a second visit to take some photographs and I can confirm that oak trees can masquerade as Lombardy poplars! Fastigate or Cypress Oaks (*Quercus robur* 'Fastigiata') have all the characteristics of a normal oak except that their habit is very upright, as



you can see in the photograph. They are planted where space is limited. This one was planted as a memorial to Diana Princess of Wales. If you ever find yourself visiting Bournemouth, I can recommend the Central Gardens. They have some Victorian plantings, many commemorative trees and



plenty of unusual varieties. The council has a Tree Trail on their website, but there are many more interesting trees than are shown on the trail map.

www.bournemouth.co.uk/things-to-do/parks-and-gardens/tree-trail

We do have one Cypress Oak (Quercus robur 'Fastigiata') in our database. It's MRN 3366 and is in the Harris Gardens of the University of Reading. It's a Britain & Ireland champion for girth and county (Berkshire) champion for girth & height (with a girth of 3.36m in 2004; TROBI #106463).

PLANTS – FROM ROOTS TO RICHES

This is the title of an excellent series broadcast on radio 4 earlier this month. Consisting of 25 fifteen minute episodes, it's available to listen to or download from the BBC website - and is not time-limited.

www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/series/plantsfrtr

It's a brief history of botanical science and our changing relationship with plants, presented by Professor Kathy Willis, Director of Science at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

The episode on August 13th, entitled "An Ill Wind", was a good synopsis of what has been learnt about tree growth in the aftermath of the great storm of 1987 and includes current thinking about best planting practices - don't plant too deeply and don't stake.



WARNING

If you use Windows Explorer to add information to your photos (*.jpg* files), and you add a date to a blank *Date Taken* field, you might find that the file cannot be opened by some photo editing programs.

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES & READING

- ① wdvta.org.uk/pdf/Estimating-the-age-of-trees.pdf
- ① www.maidenerleghlnr.org.uk/walksg.htm
- ① www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/england-tree-of-the-year

On our Yahoo site

- ① [Files: 8 - Tree walks and site guides](#) (latest additions Bournemouth and Hinton Ampner)
- ① [Files: 6 - Commemorative plantings](#)
- ① [Links: Places to visit and tree trails](#)

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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.