



Tree Watch

Issue 23

November 2014

On 24th November we had **7241** trees in our database and **9111** photographs

Welcome to the twenty-third issue of Tree Watch. What a lovely mild and unexpectedly colourful autumn we have had. Leaf colour has been great this year, especially against a blue sky; as illustrated by this photo (right), taken during a verification session at Shinfield Park this month. The dead tree is MRN 431, originally recorded thirteen years ago by the arboricultural survey for the Shinfield Park development on the old met office land. The cedar in the background is MRN 7401 in the grounds of the ECMWF (European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts).



The Millennium Wood in Arborfield Park includes this avenue of 12 scarlet oaks (*Quercus coccinea*). It is one on the latest addition to our commemorative tree database - see the link on our website for more details and photos.

I hope it's not too early to wish you all a Happy Christmas. Last year we had a very pleasant Christmas walk and lunch, and it's being repeated this year, but at Pope's Meadow in Binfield. See page 2 for details. Earlier this year Barbara and Ray visited Pope's Meadow and were impressed by the veteran trees there. They sent me this photo of Ray with the caption "veteran meets veteran"



The next issue of Tree Watch will be February 2015 and the copy deadline is 31st January. 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

Main items in this issue:-

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|-----|---|
| p2 | Events | p8 | Acronyms: ASNW & PAW |
| p2 | Historic Trees along Footpaths | p8 | Biodiversity Action Plan |
| p2 | Tree Warden Activities | p8 | Reports on Redhatch Copse & Sonning Cutting |
| p3 | Tree Warden Forum report | p9 | Sadly Departed |
| p6 | Commemorative and Special Trees | p10 | Problems with grass cuttings |
| p6 | The Veteran Tree Survey | p10 | FAQ - Is ivy bad for trees? |
| p6 | Heritage Trees; Tree of the Year | p11 | Ivy - Friend or Foe? |
| p7 | Profile: Steve Radford | p12 | Rubber Tree |

Events - December 2014

❖ Saturday 6th December 11:00 Pope's Manor, Binfield - see below

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

DECEMBER EVENT

Kerry Clissold

Last December we had a really good day out when members gathered at The Savill Gardens on a glorious winter's morning. After our walk we enjoyed a convivial lunch at the Belvedere Arms nearby. Keen to repeat this successful event in 2014 we were pleased to find an open day at Pope's Manor Binfield on Saturday 6th of December. Meeting in the car park at Pope's Meadow we will enjoy a fascinating walk followed by lunch at The Warren Inn close by.

Winter landscape at Pope's Manor - Saturday 6 December

Enjoy the winter scenery within the private grounds of Pope's Manor, which is open just once a year, and learn more about its significant heritage links to Alexander Pope and its wildlife guided by a Ranger.

Uneven ground conditions - please wear suitable footwear. Meet: Pope's Meadow car park, off St Mark's Rd, Binfield, RG42 4AY. 11am - 1pm

Booking required as numbers are limited. Places will be allocated on a first come first served basis. Please contact Kerry by emailing honsec@wdvta.org.uk

HISTORIC TREES ALONG FOOTPATHS

Barbara Stagles

In September I gave a short presentation to the Thames Valley Network U3A Historic Pathways group study day at Henley entitled 'Historic Trees along footpaths'. I focussed on different tree forms especially maidens, pollards and coppices and considered how estimates might be made of their age. Then I questioned whether old trees might - or might not - indicate the history of pathways. This was followed by a visit in October by members of different U3As across the Thames Valley to Windsor Great Park, ably led by Bill Cathcart, retired Superintendent of the park. We saw many wonderful ancient trees and, we hope, raised many people's awareness of the importance of trees as part of our cultural and environmental heritage.

[For photos of the WDVTA visit to Windsor Great Park in 2009 - see <http://tinyurl.com/WDVTA-Windsor-Park-visit-2009>]



TREE WARDEN ACTIVITIES

Barbara Stagles

1. Jubilee Avenues, Wokingham Town

Wokingham Town Council has recently felled and pruned sickly red oaks in Connaught Avenue, one of the two avenues planted in 1935 in Joel Park to celebrate the 25th Jubilee of King George V. They have also planted new red oaks to replace those that are lost. Several years ago we produced a leaflet on the history of the avenues which now needs to be updated. Alison Griffin and I have been checking and revising the records of both avenues and, once we have been able to take a photo of the red oaks in their autumnal colours (very late this year), will be revising the leaflet.



2. St Paul's Church Tree Succession Project, Wokingham Town

This church/community project was launched earlier in the year to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the consecration of St Paul's Church. I have served as a community member of the Project team and Alison Griffin and Gill Hopkins have agreed to be part of the Advisory Group. Links have been made with an accredited Landscape Architect, John Platts, and the church has paid to commission him to seek quotations from consultants to produce an electronically generated site survey. An application for funding to the Wokingham Society has been successful and this first stage of the project is now being activated. The site survey will form the basis for an arboricultural survey and design and management plans.

The church also made a successful application to the Woodland Trust for 420 tree saplings, some of which have been planted along the boundary between the church and the railway embankment by volunteers. We are also planning to carry out a biodiversity survey and make management plan to improve wildlife habitats in the churchyard. Help has been offered by Wokingham Borough Council Countryside team and possibly also BBOWT. Progress is slow - but steady.

3. St Catherine's Church Winnersh

Linda Martin, WDVTA Coordinator for Woodley, and I have been working to complete the survey of veteran trees in Woodley, but recently turned our attention to St Catherine's Churchyard, Winnersh. At the Jubilee Tree Planting ceremony in Winnersh last year, the rector asked especially if the trees in this historic churchyard could be recorded. The Walter family was a very significant benefactor to the area in Victorian times and the family grave is in a prominent position in St Catherine's churchyard guarded by four Incense Cedars (shown in this photo). Three are in excellent condition but one is sickly and we are hoping to get advice as to how its condition might be improved. There are other interesting trees in the graveyard, especially a magnificent Atlas Cedar which can be seen in its full glory from Bearwood Road. There is possibly scope for a leaflet about this churchyard, including reference to other interesting specimen trees.



4. Hedgerow, Manor Road Play area, Wokingham Town

Last Autumn a small hedgerow was cleared and planted with Woodland Trust saplings by a working party drawn from members of EARA (Evendons Area Residents' Association). Subsequently a smaller working party helped clear weeds from the saplings, but this is something that needs to be done regularly - as well as replacing a few shrubs that have died or are in the wrong place. It hasn't been easy to recruit a continuing working party as the EARA organisation is not fully functioning at present. I will be working to get a list of names of local people who might come out to help. I suspect this is a problem that faces a lot of hedge planting schemes - enthusiasm to begin with but less interest in maintaining the hedgerow until it can look after itself with minimum management.



SOUTH EAST REGION TREE WARDEN FORUM SEPTEMBER 27TH 2014

Janet Firth

Once again I was invited to go in place of our Barkham Tree Warden, Derek Oxbridge and joined about 100 Tree Wardens in Kent. The Forum was held at The Friars, Aylesford, a Carmelite Friary. The friars rent out a large number of their buildings for a variety of courses and workshops and have a

conference room where we met. One important feature was the wealth of beautiful trees in their grounds.

To celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Tree Council (TC), the Kent Tree Wardens had laden two tables with home-made anniversary cakes and goodies, which were much appreciated!



The theme of the Forum was: *Making Trees Matter - 40 Years On*. Jon Stokes of TC spoke first. He explained that we would look both back and forward to ascertain what had been learnt from the past which might be relevant for the future. Firstly to look at the past: the Tree Warden project had come about as a pilot scheme as a consequence of that great storm in 1987. The first meeting was held in West Malling in Kent in 1989. The English elm population had been devastated by disease and other problems of the day included the degradation of gardens, particularly of hedges. According to my notes this wasn't explained, but may have been the number of hedges pulled out for arable agriculture, or the then popularity of planting cupressus hedges in gardens.

Next Hugh Milner, formerly a Forestry Commission Woodland Officer, outlined the changes across the twentieth century in our woodlands. First he noted the intensive cutting of oaks for WWI. In those early days all weeding was done by hand, lorries were hand-loaded and there were no chain saws, or tractors. Following this the Forestry Commission determined that woodland would be used more economically and planted pines, typically in straight lines and blocks; even ancient woodland had been planted with spruce. From 1919 to 1985 'productive' planting was carried out. On the island of Mull 1,000 acres were planted annually and similarly in the Scottish Highlands, and in England, for example at Keilder. The visual effect on the landscape was not considered [nor initially the effect on fragile archaeology]. Between the 1940s and 1970s much woodland had been removed, again with little regard to the appearance of the landscape.

After 1974 academics such as Oliver Rackham began to look at woodland differently. But by this time only 2.46% of the ancient woodland was left, although in the south of England the figure was more like 40%. The Forestry Act passed in 1967 covered the care of ancient woodland and hedges, and gradually things began to improve.

More recently local communities have become engaged. As an example Jon showed how a local group in the parish of Netley in Hampshire formed a Friends Group for an oak coppice. Holly had invaded and the group applied for and got £50,000 from Heritage Lottery; probably a record so far! They cleared the holly to let in more light, using horses to do the hauling. The photographs of those magnificent chestnut beasts working in the woodland were wonderful!

Jon Stokes then discussed some of the issues for the next 40 years, taking examples from the town environment of Copenhagen which he had visited recently. Here they had found that it was better to plant young trees in groups rather than singly, where there was room. The trees were a third cheaper and in the competitive atmosphere if well-mulched, the trees grew one third taller than trees planted singly! Watering is very important at this early stage, as well as sun and carbon dioxide. A small 30ml dose of fertiliser was given in spring and 50 litre water bags were placed next to the trees as part of a four-year experiment --- how the water was released was not explained. They looked rather quaint within the urban street scene, and apparently vandals had not punctured them.

Since tree diseases seem to be ever present nowadays, Jon's next example was very interesting. When lines of trees were planted in this town environment it was decided to put in trees of a similar age, form and growth pattern, but of mixed species. If disease struck, the whole line would not be affected, only those of the same species. The advantages of planting at all included a reduction of pollution. This has been proved apparently in Manchester, where pollution fell by 50% in six weeks.

Neil Strong from Network Rail (NR) gave a crisp presentation which I found an eye-opener as it was full of statistics and brilliant photography. There are 2,500 stations in Britain, over 21,000 miles of track, 6,100 crossings and 25,000 trains are on the move every day,. The track is bordered by 18,000 miles of fencing, which ideally should be 12m from the track.

What of the trees? NR's own tree survey showed that they own 2½ million trees with a diameter of over 6" (500,000 are ash). Infra-red aerial surveys are conducted over their blocks of mainly deciduous trees. If the result indicates a lighter colour than expected then it is time to inspect them as they may be diseased or dying. 1800 trees will fall over every winter, in spite of their programme of pruning; some will fall onto the track. It takes a train travelling at 125mph two miles to stop. He showed one or two slides which demonstrated the dreadful results to engine cabs when they do hit trees, which is so often in the dark and without warning. Fortunately the engine drivers in both cases survived.

Jon Stokes then asked the audience of tree wardens for a special favour. He has been asked to provide a cost figure to the Government for the felling of ash trees should they, having been infected by *chalara*, then pose a risk of falling onto public roads. This would be if, when under stress, they picked up an additional infection damaging their roots (a point clarified by Dr Glyn Percival after his lecture to WDVTA members in October). Jon hoped that some TWs present would carry out a parish survey of ash trees growing along public roads and in public places such as schools. He asked that they should be judged visually and be divided roughly according to girth, either baked-bean tin size (25cm girth) or sponge-cake size (70cm girth) or larger.

We have just finished doing this in Barkham. Added together the public roads, all B roads or undesignated, are only around 10km in length. We put multi-stem trees in the 'large' ash tree category and we created a separate category for ash trees growing on private land but which could fall on the road. We have 503 ash trees on public land and 71 in private gardens or fields, making a total of 574. This is considerably more than in the Kentish example we were given which included longer public roads. We have yet to finish recording ash trees on bridleways.

Back at the Forum in the afternoon we took part in two workshops. About twenty trees were placed in a circle and we were asked which of them would be suitable to be planted in a clearing amidst some magnificent Heritage trees. A very lively discussion followed; none of us chose ash! For the second workshop we were asked to record a Heritage tree in the grounds. It became evident that not all TWs do this as a regular routine. The variation on our usual practice was to create a verse or even a poem about our tree.



Finally we were taken to the magnificent woodland setting of Hucking owned by the Woodland Trust, where very young ash trees have been infected by *chalara*, as shown in these photos.

Although the circulated photographs are very good, there is nothing like seeing the effect for oneself. Most common was the vertical hanging of small branches and leaves turned black and the change of colour in the stems from a typical ash grey green to a bluey-purple. We saw only one tree with an approximate 6" diamond-shaped scar which was very soggy in appearance and this was on a slightly larger sapling. We scrubbed our boots in disinfectant as we left. My husband and I subsequently diagnosed ash-die back in a wood further east in Kent, along the North Downs Way.



The whole Forum was packed with interest and information with time to discuss with fellow attendees. I can heartily recommend it. It must soon be Berkshire's turn to act as host.

[The TW forum reports are now on the Yahoo site.]

COMMEMORATIVE & SPECIAL TREES

Latest additions to this database include two historically significant fruit trees, a rare wild pear in Shinfield and a white bullace plum in Barkham; as well as, in the unusual species category, a Wollemi Pine in Wokingham Town (see below). For more details: wdvta.org.uk/commem.php



THE VETERAN TREE SURVEY

In our latest update this month, we added 166 trees, making a total of 235 since the last issue; with new records from Arborfield, Barkham, Earley, Finchampstead, Shinfield and Winnersh.

But the great news this month is that the veteran tree survey has been completed in Barkham. This is a really great achievement. Well done to Janet and her team. The data will now be checked and a report will be compiled - more in the next issue.

As Barbara described on page 3, the trees in St Catherine's Churchyard, Bearwood Road, Winnersh, have now been surveyed and they include two County Champions for girth - MRN 7549 & 7558.

HERITAGE TREES

Work is progressing behind the scenes on the logistics of setting up a register of special trees, giving them protection similar to that afforded to listed buildings. The Woodland Trust has launched a campaign to get public support for such a register. You can read more about it and sign their petition at:

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/campaigning/campaigns/vitrees/england

Veteran Tree Survey snapshot

108

identified species

47

identified genera

27%

*identified to genus
level only*

25

unidentified stumps

21

unidentified trees



There's also a call for a "Nature and Wellbeing Act" proposed by the RSPB and Wildlife Trusts. See their Green Paper on the RSPB website.

ENGLAND'S TREE OF THE YEAR"

The "Major Oak" in Sherwood Forest was voted England's "Tree of the Year" in the Woodland Trust poll. It will represent England in the European Tree of the Year contest next February.

*"10,000 oaks of 100 years old are not a substitute for one 500-year old oak."
Oliver Rackham (1986) "The History of the British Countryside"*

PROFILE - STEVE RADFORD

Steve joined our committee this year, but is much better known to many of you for his wonderful sculptures. If you read "An English Oak at the Hawthorns" in issue 14, you will be particularly interested to read Steve's profile. See also the document attached to MRN 151 - "From veteran oak to story-telling chair".

Most of my life I've been involved with trees in one way or another and, from the age of 9, I had the freedom to roam the grounds of Bearwood College, climbing the Wellingtonias in the avenue, swimming in the lake, and canoeing, with a schoolmate whose parents taught there.

No mobile phones or computer games then, we had our bikes and knew we had to be home by tea time - and we knew it was tea time because we were hungry!

When I left school at 16, I wanted to work outside and the only job my careers officer could find me was a "trainee tree surgeon" - sounded ideal except I was only paid £20 a week. I learned to climb, using rope and harness, by following the tree surgeon and painting all his pruning cuts with "arbrex" - a very messy job. When I learned to use a chainsaw I was sent to ask the boss for an application form for a "chainsaw licence" - there was no such thing in those days and everyone had a good laugh, ha - who's laughing now!? PPE (personal protective equipment) hadn't been invented and steel toe capped boots were all that was provided by the employer.

My next career move was to Reading Borough Council, on a government scheme called: "work experience", which lasted 6 months. Then I was taken on full time when the "Tree gang" was born! What wonderful times. We used to burn all the brushwood until we got our first wood chipper, which pulled branches in at about 60mph - no feed rollers then - the smaller bits were pushed in with a broom, and many brooms got chipped.

The 1987 hurricane was incredible and we camped out at Coley nursery for several nights, sleeping on the potting shed benches in between call outs. No doubt many of the things we did then would be unacceptable in these days of risk assessments and health and safety!

The following year I spent working in Sweden.

Arboriculture was in its infancy there, and they'd just got Dutch Elm disease. Back home the Tree gang had folded and on my return I worked for a tree contractor. Then my former colleague was asked to start the Tree gang again, and he said he would if I would..... So we did.

Many more happy years followed at RBC. I gained my Arb. Association Tech. Cert. and helped several council departments with their tree management. Ultimately I became Tree Officer and years of effort with a small team to start a comprehensive tree survey using Arbortrack finally came to fruition. Then, after over 30 years total service, I left RBC.

Since then I've been happily self employed, trying to concentrate on chainsaw sculpture, but doing some tree work and hedge cutting too - and no more worrying about all those trees on stormy nights!



Steve Radford

This month's **A C R O N Y M / I N I T I A L I S M**

Ancient woodlands are areas that have been wooded continuously since at least 1600. There are two categories:

ASNW – Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

PAW – Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (also called ancient replanted woodland)

Natural England has an Ancient Woodland Inventory, which is currently being updated. The previous list only included woods over 2ha. This new one will include areas over 0.25ha. TVERC is currently working on the revised inventory of ancient woodland in Wokingham. It should be completed by next summer.

WOKINGHAM BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN (BAP)

The WBC BAP was officially adopted last June. It's on our Yahoo site (in the WBC information folder).

You may remember me berating the fact that veteran trees were omitted from the draft BAP. Unfortunately this has not been rectified in the final version. There is just one mention of veteran trees and that's just in a list of what might be found in our open spaces! However, although there are no particular aspirations or targets relating to veteran trees, I'm sure some of the more general ones could be used to help protect them. In making a case to the council it is always useful to refer to an aspiration from their BAP. Woodland is featured and long term aspirations includes increasing the total area of woodland in the Borough to 20% (from 14%) and increasing the broad-leaved woodland from 62% to 76% of the total woodland area within the Borough; as well as replanting all PAWS with native broad-leaved woodland.

Our Borough has 2550ha of woodland, with over 1000ha of lowland deciduous woodland and 190ha of wood pasture and parkland. It may come as some surprise, given that Windsor is in Berkshire, to realise that Wokingham is of "county importance" for its ancient woodland, but according to the BAP it is.

GOOD NEWS

You may remember the 'Sibly Saga' in the May 2012 issue of Tree Watch and concern for the ancient woodland of Redhatch Copse adjacent to Sibly Hall. Earley Town Council suggested that they take over ownership and management of this remnant of Windsor Forest and the University has agreed. So Grahame Hawker (profiled in the last issue) will now be looking after it.



BAD NEWS

Unfortunately we've had bad news too. There has been both press and TV coverage of the destruction of trees along the Sonning railway cutting (see below). We are very lucky to have Alistair Driver on board with this dispute. He has submitted proposals to Network Rail and is meeting with them on site

to discuss matters. He reckons we are dealing with the loss of 64 acres of 170 year-old native oak woodland, which, as he points out, is an England Biodiversity Strategy priority habitat; and its destruction would create "a very significant negative impact on the achievement of an important government Biodiversity 2020 target".

SONNING (TREE) CUTTING

Stephen Loyd

In September local residents were alarmed at the scale of tree and vegetation removal on the banks of the well-known railway location of Sonning cutting. The works were apparently in preparation for the electrification project and also to reduce leaf fall on the tracks. The issue was aired on the local BBC News, and after some on-site discussions that included a more tree friendly approach to the problem, further felling was suspended pending a review by Network Rail.

The background to this stems from last winter's extreme weather and transport disruption which led the Dept for Transport to urge Network Rail to develop a ten-year strategy to reduce line-side trees and vegetation. The DfT deemed as "inadequate" NR's current practice of clearing to a distance of 3-5 metres from the track. NR's arboriculturist says "one approach would be to only have big trees where the width of the estate allows for it, and to focus on low-growing species closer to the track".

Local residents were also concerned by a lack of communication about the work, and it is now hoped that NR will take its neighbours views into account.

The DfT also recommended that NR be committed to a programme of community replanting to offset the environmental impact of any clearances; - watch that space!!

SADLY DEPARTED - MRN 577 - an oak along the Finchampstead Road

This tree, with a girth of 4.88m, was the largest of the oaks along the Finchampstead Road and its demise has left a huge gap in the 'green' route into town. There's just a 10' monolith left now. It was felled on 18th November apparently because it was dangerous, but we haven't seen a report yet.

Since we began our survey, we know that 64 of our recorded trees have been felled, of which 18 were English oaks and 13 were



recorded as "just" oaks. In addition 14 trees have fallen, of which just a couple are oaks.

Although this felled total is less than 1% the total recorded trees, it is still a great loss.

IT ALL STARTED WITH A SIMPLE QUESTION...

Alison Griffin

Kerry and I recently gave a talk about our association at the AGM of the local CPRE group. At the end of the meeting one of the audience came up to me and asked a very simple question: 'Do you know if a build up of grass clippings around a tree can damage it?' The lady told me that she walks along a footpath in Earley and has noticed that people tip grass cuttings over their back fences and into this footpath and these have accumulated over some time very close to our recorded tree MRN 2945. Yes, she really did quote the MRN number to me, so I knew she was concerned and serious. I said I'd try to find out and follow up her query.

So, with help from a couple of association members, we got some photographs of the accumulated garden waste, identified that the path is Cutbush cycleway and the land is owned by WBC Parks and Open Spaces, so they received a request to investigate this fly-tipping. They went out to investigate and reported back: *"I have been out to this tree. It is a lovely specimen, in good health. No sign of decay, evidence of past work but healed fine. Good weight distribution. No work required. The tree has rotted grass cuttings around the base maybe 18"-2' deep on one side, but this is not causing a problem for the tree. We will letter drop people in the area regarding the tipping of garden waste over their fences."*



The only problem is I didn't get the lady's name at the CPRE meeting to let her know the outcome. Maybe she lives nearby and will get the Parks and Landscapes letter and realise it has come as a result of her question!

If you know of similar problems, there is a process on the WBC website to report fly-tipping - just search for 'fly-tipping' and you'll find the form.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - Is ivy bad for trees?



We've been having a lively discussion recently about the benefits or otherwise of ivy on trees. This was, initiated by an email from Gordon Davies who felt the advice on our website was somewhat misguided. See his article below. This question was also raised at Jill Butler's talk to the Reading Tree Wardens this month. Jill is the veteran tree advocate from the Woodland Trust. She was keen to point out that ivy is a wonderful plant for biodiversity, providing food and habitat for many species. However it can cause problems when it overwhelms a tree, and where ancient and veteran trees are concerned we should give priority to their needs. They are rare; ivy isn't! Deciduous trees have not evolved to withstand the wind sail effect of ivy in winter storms. Arboriculturists also point out that ivy growth impedes inspection and so is not desirable on many amenity trees.



Do you have any views about this? - Let me know if you have anything to add to this discussion.

Discussions about ivy tend to get split between those camps that don't like it and those that think it is of great benefit. It is quite right that ivy only uses the host tree for support and is not a parasitic plant such as mistletoe. Ivy's eventually dense leafy structure provides shelter for birds, bats and many other species. Its flowers provide a source of pollen loved by bees, moths and butterflies and the berries feed the birds. However, there is another side to ivy which is its darker side.

Ivy clings to a tree using tiny pads which are effectively glued to the tree at the ends of small tendrils that grow from the stem as it grows and advances up the tree. The plant is usually rooted in the ground at the base of the tree gaining nourishment from the soil like any other plant. As it grows it produces dense fibrous aerial roots between the stems and the tree. It is these roots that cause the problems to the 'host' tree as, given time, and it does take some time, as the ivy grows the girth of the lower stems increase, effectively forming a tight hold on the tree and trapping all manner of debris and detritus amongst the aerial roots and between the many offshoots that are continually sprouting from the main stems. This latticework of intertwined stems becomes a problem as all the crevices fill up with the decomposing leaf litter etc forming a damp 'poultice' where it is in contact with the tree. These damp patches, often saturated in winter, up against the tree bark quickly become home to invertebrates. Wood lice especially love the environment, dining on the tree bark. Over time, the constant dampness and detritus in close proximity to the tree results in the tree bark decaying and rotting, allowing the decay to penetrate the outer layers of the tree's woody tissue. It is the damage to the outer cambium layer beneath the bark that eventually leads to the death of the tree, especially where the ivy has completely encircled the tree trunk. It is quite ironic that it is the very success of the ivy that leads to its own demise with the collapse of the host tree.

Mr Cowan in his article* says that it is because the tree is ailing that the crown reduces allowing light to come through to the ivy and hence the ivy flourishes. This may indeed be true but it is because the ivy has caused damage to the outer layers of the tree that it can no longer sustain itself and starts to die back allowing the ivy to flourish and the bigger it gets the more likely it is that some of the weakened parts of the tree will snap under the strain, especially in high winds. One only has to do a check of a typical country roadside hedgerow to see how many ailing trees are covered with ivy and realise that there must be some correlation between the health of the tree and the existence of the ivy. Ivy doesn't choose an unhealthy tree, it will grow up anything.

One might like to consider on the other hand, that trees also provide shelter, nesting sites, flowers, fruit and berries and indeed leaf litter to help promote a whole new ecology at ground level, whereas ivy is an evergreen plant and so when the trees have gone so have all the benefits they provide, even the support for the ivy. A tree entwined with ivy and its foliage is much more susceptible to the ravages of winter storms.

So, a bit of a conundrum. Friend or Foe?

Without adequate management the ivy is undoubtedly an eventual killer of its host, as can be witnessed by observation of many trees which have ivy on them in hedgerows and woods around the country. Stripping out sections of ivy on a tree and preventing complete encirclement of the trunk can prolong the life of the tree and allow the two to exist in some harmony but ivy once established, grows quickly and can soon gain a strangle hold on the tree with the ensuing problems described above. Also, not many people have the time or inclination to manage this plant to the degree needed to promote a healthy co-existence and so it is the ivy that usually wins out in the short term, but the woodland loses out in the long term with the destruction of the arboreal habitat.

* www.arborecology.co.uk/articles/pdfs/ivy_friend_or_foe.pdf - there is a link to it on our website.

This and other references about ivy are on our Yahoo site in the '*Other useful information*' folder.



HOLIDAY TREES

Graham Green sent me this photo of an Indian Rubber Fig, *Ficus elastica* 'Roxb ex Hornem'

It was taken on a Bangkok University campus and as Graham says those aerial roots are quite impressive!

It's the same rubber plant used widely as a houseplant in the UK, but this one is about 40' high.

Also known as the rubber fig, rubber bush, rubber tree and Indian rubber bush, the rubber plant is a native of NE India, Nepal, Bhutan, Burma, China (Yunnan), Malaysia and Indonesia. It's in the banyan group of figs and not to be confused with the rubber tree that produces latex for rubber making. That tree is called the Para rubber tree or sharinga tree - or of course the rubber tree! This "real" rubber tree is *Hevea brasiliensis* and belongs to the family Euphorbiaceae; whereas the ornamental rubber plant belongs to the Moraceae family.



RECOMMENDED WEBSITES & READING

- ① www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/campaigning/campaigns/vitrees/england
- ① www.rspb.org.uk/joinandhelp/campaignwithus/act-for-nature
- ① www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/england-tree-of-the-year

On our Yahoo site: in Files: A - Other useful information - Ivy

- ① [Ivy on trees - is it a problem](#) - Chiltern Woodland Project
- ① [Ivy - friend or foe](#) - Andrew Cowan (A & E ArborEcology)
- ① [Ivy on trees and as a ground cover weed](#) - RHS

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

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:

<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/WDVTA/info>

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.