



On 9th May, we had **7,518** trees in our database and **10,714** photographs

Welcome to the latest issue of Tree Watch.

I expect you have all been enjoying the lovely weather we've had recently, although it has been too hot for some people. The warm weather, following so much rain, has meant a sudden explosion of growth. The hawthorns, in particular, are looking spectacular; so I couldn't resist including some recent photos of them here, along with a photo of those lovely hawthorns (MRNs 152, 153 & 155) in the grounds of the Hawthorns School (where we held our AGM this year).

The AGM in March was very successful, although perhaps the venue put some people off. We plan to hold it at a more central location next year. See Alison's description on page 4. Kerry always includes a summary of the events of the past year and this is also on our website; but I thought you might like to read about some of them here, including the recent Wargrave walk in March (see pages 7-8).



The next issue of Tree Watch will be August 2018 and the copy deadline is 31st July. If you have any 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 - June-August 2018

❖ WDVTA Tree Forum Monday 16th July 19:30 - The Rose Room, Swallowfield Parish Hall

Non-WDVTA events:

❖ Saturday 7th July, from 13:00 - Yeldall Manor Open Day - a chance to visit one of the Wellingtonia Avenues in the Borough on private land

www.yeldall.org.uk/support-yeldall/forthcoming-events/

❖ Wednesday 25th July - 18:00 RTWN AGM, followed at 19:15 by evening walk at Clayfield Copse, led by Michael Keith-Lucas, looking at significant trees and the effects of Ash dieback - details will be posted later on www.readingtreewardens.org.uk/upcomingevents.htm

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

NEW COMMITTEE

At the AGM in March, Jane Sellwood stepped down as Vice-Chairman and, as there were no nominations for this position, it remains vacant. Apart from that, the existing committee was re-elected:

Officials: Chairman: Alison Griffin; Secretary: Kerry Clissold; Treasurer: Derek Oxbrough

Committee members: Elaine Butler, Cathy Harris, Sarah Hanson, Martin Haslam, Stephen Loyd, Linda Martin, Stephanie McKay, Steve Radford, Michael Rae, Coralie Ramsey, Maggie Sanderson, Jane Sellwood, Barbara Stagles and Liz Wild.

MEMBERSHIP DETAILS AND DATA PROTECTION.

As mentioned in the last issue, we have been asking members to re-affirm their details and give permission for us to contact them. Thank you to everyone who has replied. We had a membership list of 244, but some of those will have joined 10 years ago and have perhaps changed their contact details without notifying us. Others, sadly, may have died. The deadline of 25th May is fast approaching and so far we have 116 members who have replied positively to our GDPR request. Reminders have been sent out to those people who have not replied. If you haven't sent in your form, please do so. On May 24th anyone who has not replied will be removed from our membership list and their details will be destroyed.

WDVTA TREE FORUM MEETINGS

Alison Griffin

We are changing the structure and frequency of our meetings. Committee meetings will now be held three times a year rather than four and will focus on managing the association. Alternating with committee meetings will be new style Tree Forum meetings. These will also be three times a year and will replace the Coordinator and Tree Warden meetings which we previously held every six months.

Forum meetings will focus on surveying, tree warden projects and tree issues for each parish and town. These meetings are open to any member. Coordinators and tree wardens will automatically be included in the circulation list but if you would like to be included please let Elaine know and you will be added to the list.

The first Tree Forum meeting will be in The Rose Room at Swallowfield Parish Hall on Monday July 16th at 7.30pm.

"New planting will not replicate veteran trees and the wildlife that goes with them. Veteran trees are rare, not because of a shortage of young trees, but because middle-aged trees have not been allowed to grow on. The future of veteran trees depends on not felling middle-aged trees when they start to decay."

Oliver Rackham (2006) "Woodlands" p441

TREE WATCHING FROM MY CHAIR

Alison Griffin

I hope you all enjoyed the glorious weather over the early May bank holiday weekend with the wonderful vibrant pale greens of the early tree leaves. The old saying about March winds, April showers and May flowers implies a smooth progression through from Winter to Spring. I think you will agree that it has been far from smooth this year, especially in April. The first snow we had was accompanied by strong winds so unusually there was no snow on the trees but plenty on the ground. The second snow fall flattened and buried our daffodils, but they were very resilient and all recovered. It felt as if Winter was much longer than normal and the tree bud-burst was late, but our local oaks were only a week later than last year and if anything, the local ash trees were earlier.

As usual I have just re-read the last Tree Watch and appreciated the contributions that were sent in and especially Elaine's editorship. Each edition warrants re-reading and there are a number of topics from February to mention again.

Mistletoe

In looking for rookeries I commented that I had seen some mistletoe and Angus sent this photograph of a couple of trees at Bisham Abbey. This resulted in an email exchange to see if people thought mistletoe is increasing. Several of our tree experts think it is. Also by being aware that there is more, means we notice it more. It is a mixed blessing, providing food for birds but probably adding to the stresses on trees and once it is growing in an area it does spread easily.



Television tree documentaries

In the last Tree Watch I mentioned the documentary with Dame Judi Dench and Tony Kirkham. I hope you managed to watch the recent tree documentary with Sir David Attenborough and the Queen in the grounds of Buckingham Palace. It was fascinating to hear about the Commonwealth Canopy project. We are hoping one of these four illustrious people will come to give us a talk later this year, but I don't expect hats and curtsies will be involved!

European Tree of the Year

The winning tree this year was The Whistler Cork Oak in Portugal, thought to be the largest cork oak in the world. The English entry, the Gilwell Oak in Essex, came 5th. (See links on page 12.)

Meeting WBC

In March, Kerry, Stephen and I met Norman Jorgensen and Peter Baveystock at Shute End. We discussed the need for a Tree Strategy for the borough, the ISS contract and the impact of developments of trees as well as explaining our survey and various tree warden initiatives.

Components for a tree strategy are in existence, but we need to wait for the current WBC reorganisation to be completed before we will hear whether there are plans to assemble a single strategy document.

So far this year I have not heard of any issues with ISS cutting grass too close to trees or strimmer damage. Do report any that you become aware of.

I mentioned the initiatives that are beginning to quantify the benefits of trees. Patricia Green reported in the last Tree Watch that Jon Stokes from the Tree Council had included this topic in a talk that she attended. As well as Treezilla that Jon mentioned, there is an organisation called Treeconomics that I have been in touch with who are working with local councils to measure and value the benefits of local trees. For example, the air quality improvements, carbon dioxide reduction and storm water control can be quantified. Given the unusual situation for WBC where the WDVTA data has so much information about

local trees, this may be a significant opportunity for WBC to develop not just qualitative assessments but quantitative valuations of local tree stocks. (See links on page 12.)

As well as explaining our hedge tree project, we also discussed a new initiative that was suggested by Jill Butler at our Anniversary Report launch, naming significant trees. Winnersh Parish council have expressed an interest in this and plan to name two significant oak trees on Bearwood recreation ground. Linda Martin is liaising with the parish council and voting on a shortlist of names is planned for the June parish fete. If you have a significant tree near where you live that you think would benefit from being named, I have a press briefing that you could send to your local town or parish council.

Anniversary Report follow up

We are continuing to sell copies of the Anniversary Report and have three talks to external groups arranged so far and a few more enquiries in hand. I'll repeat what I said last time, the report and giving talks are excellent ways to market ourselves, become more widely known and attract new members.

Please can you help?

Local parish, town or school fetes and events - could you organise a stall? We have display material that can be used and we can ask other members to help you.

Local groups who might like a speaker - do you belong to or know of any local group where we can come along to give a talk?

Are there any local outlets near where you live that might display and sell our report?

Please get in touch if you can help or have any ideas.

AGM

We had four short talks at the AGM at the Hawthorns School in March. The first was a group of children from the school who talked enthusiastically about their Forest School lessons which are delivered by Stephanie McKay, our Tree Warden coordinator. Elaine gave a talk about the ancient trees that were described in the last Tree Watch and Stephen and Kerry gave updates on Tree Warden projects and the Events in 2017 and those planned for 2018.

We also had a table for people to bring books about trees for people to browse. This was very successful and extended to three tables once everyone had unpacked their bags. Few people had enough time to look at all the books brought along, so we will repeat this idea at a future event or AGM.

Surveyor Training - Charvil April 28th



I was watching the weather forecast for April 28th as it was one of those weeks with heavy rain showers. We had to send out a message the night before the planned training for people to bring wellington boots. I should also have said gloves as well! I arrived in Charvil very early and went around the playing fields where we planned to measure and survey some trees. The only other people out there were dog walkers who looked a little surprised at me walking around



with a clipboard. I was delighted to hear a cuckoo calling as I don't hear them at home in south Wokingham, and yes the ground was very wet. I knew that there was a declining veteran oak (MRN 534) along Park Lane,

near the village hall, but you can see from these photographs how much it has declined in the six years between the photographs.

We had six new members being trained and one member coming for some refresher training, and after a presentation from Elaine on the data we record, they went out in small groups to try recording for themselves and the morning ended with a discussion and an answering questions session. Many thanks to Elaine and Malcolm for organising the presentation and equipment, Barbara, Linda, Maggie and Derek for coming along to take the trainees out and give them practical experience and to Claire and Maggie for bringing along refreshments to help everyone warm up again.

There will be a follow-up training session later in the Summer, so if you have questions about surveying, would like to refresh your training, or are a new member that would like to be trained, please let me or Elaine know and we will let you know where and when the next session will be held.

Tree Loss in Cantley Park

The winds in April brought at least one local tree down, MRN 12, one of our earliest recordings, a splendid 5m-girth maiden oak in Cantley Park. It was partially uprooted in high winds in April and has had to be felled. Thanks to Ruth Cleary for alerting us to this loss and sending some photos. The tree has been cut into logs but the ground is too water-logged for vehicles to get in to take the logs away. I went to see the tree on my way back from the Charvil training session



and took more photographs including this one of a horse chestnut sapling growing undisturbed right at the edge of the crater.

If you know of any other recorded tree that has fallen in the winter storms, please send details to Elaine so the record can be updated.



Flora Locale

We receive emails from time to time from this initiative and have posted on our website details of courses they have organised that were local and of interest. I had an email in April to say that they will be closing down later this year but want to publish a report on the impact they have had. If you have had contact with them, or been on one of their courses, could you respond to this request?

'Our aim is to compile and publish a record of the impact we have had, working with you, over the last 20 years. If you have a project that benefitted from our knowledge either through training or through the information available in the Restoration Library please make contact with a word document (250 words) and photos to: s.clarkefloralocale@gmail.com.'

Ash dieback and Oak Processionary Moth

There has been some more publicity around both of these tree issues recently. There is ash dieback in the Borough, but we have not been told of this problem for any of our recorded trees - yet.

The coverage of the oak processionary moth infestation is expected to extend this year and as the hairs from the moth can cause severe breathing difficulties, we all need to be aware of the potential problem.

If you see cases of either of these issues, please use the Forestry Commission links (page 12) for reporting the case and let us know too please.

DID YOU KNOW?... JUST TWO SPORES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ASH DIEBACK?

DNA sequencing has revealed that ash dieback in Europe is caused by the descendants of just two spores which crossed with each other. This means that, in spite of its success as a pathogen, the genetic diversity is very low. A survey of just one wood in Japan (its native habitat) showed a genetic diversity eight times greater than that in Europe. Should another spore reach Europe, the pathogen's genetic diversity will be increased here, making control even more difficult.

JUBILEE TREE #11- ASHENBURY PARK, WOODLEY

Barbara Stagles



In August 2016 Stephen Loyd, WDVTA Tree Warden Coordinator reported concerns about the health of Jubilee Tree 11. Oliver Ward of Heartwood Tree Surgery found that it had lost its leaves and appeared stressed but was still alive. He recommended leaving it a while to see if it recovered. In May 2017 Linda Martin, WDVTA Woodley coordinator, reported further concerns about the tree's condition. In September Dr Glyn Percival of Bartlett Tree Research laboratories looked at the tree and recommended replacement. He thought it might have been in poor condition when bought. There a number of wounds at the base of the trunk which had become infected. He also thought the tree was planted too deep but this may have been a problem in the original pot. Dr Percival recommended contacting Barcham Tree Nurseries, the original providers, who were very helpful. They agreed to replace the tree at no cost even though the guarantee had run out. In March 2018 Heartwood Tree Surgery planted the new tree in a different location in Ashenbury Park, agreed with WBC officer Ann Ballard. The tree (shown left) now completes a triangle with Jubilee trees 12 and 13, both of

which continue to flourish (see below). In years to come these three trees should make a splendid feature in the park. [Photo right shows the original planting of #11.]



EVENTS REVIEW 2017

Kerry Clissold

Throughout 2017 we organised the usual mix of talks, walks, visits and training. Our first event was a walk around Waltham St. Lawrence and into Shottesbrooke Park led by our lead Tree Warden, Stephen Loyd. Afterwards we enjoyed a very welcome pub lunch at The Bell in Waltham St. Lawrence.



At the beginning of September we had a visit, postponed from June, to Dr. Glynn Percival's University of Reading Research site in Cutbush Lane, Shinfield. Glynn has presented papers on his work at the International Society of Arboriculture, Arboricultural Association annual conferences and the International Society for Horticultural Science, 1st International Symposium on Urban Tree Health. He is the author of over 100 scientific papers. He has given talks to WDVTA on several occasions, bringing us up to date on the latest spread of tree diseases and research work that his group is conducting to combat these threats. It was the first time we have visited their laboratories and test sites and we were also grateful to his PhD students who gave up a morning to explain their research results. It was a really informative visit and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the splendid hospitality laid on for us.

In October (as described in the November issue) we arranged a launch event for our 10th Anniversary Report and were pleased to welcome Jill Butler from the Woodland Trust amongst many other invited guests and members. Jill was kind enough to refer to our Association in her speech as 'the premier group of its kind in the country' which was very heartening. *[The photo shows Alison Griffin with Jill Butler.]*



We were lucky enough to have Ted Green come along to give a talk on Tree Archaeology. Ted is always an entertaining speaker with a wealth of knowledge to share. He is one of the country's leading authorities on Ancient Trees, woodland fungi, forest soils and associated micro-organisms. He received the Royal Forestry Society's (RFS) Gold Medal for Distinguished Services to Forestry shortly after he addressed WDVTA. He is credited with doing much to bridge any gaps between forestry and conservation and has influenced the debate in forestry and arboriculture for more than 50 years. Over his long career, Ted has put forward theories on the importance of managing the whole ecosystem. He was the founder member of the Ancient Tree Forum in 1993 and has been honoured with an MBE.

A new departure in 2017 was to represent WDVTA at Wokingham Arts Trail where we mounted a display of tree paintings by famous artists (photo on next page).



We hope you've enjoyed some of our events already and that you can join us for more to come. Later in 2018 we are hoping to be visited by Tony Kirkham, Head of Arboretum, Gardens & Horticulture Services, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. We have a visit planned for Saturday 6th October to Wytham Woods in Oxfordshire, the country's most scientifically researched wood. As well as these special events, we will be running training sessions for new surveyors and local walks where you can see our Borough's trees and get to know other members.

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Our first event after the AGM this year, was a walk in Wargrave, again led by Stephen Loyd. It was on March 24th, during one of the wetter periods of this spring - hence the wellies! We started at the Wargrave Chalk Pit, the local nature reserve where we had planted three trees in memory of Penny Miller (see last issue page 7). The chalk face there is a Local Geological Site, and to



Veteran Tree Survey snapshot

WEeping
WILLOWS

24

trees in our
database

9%

of recorded willows

20

maidens

2

pollards

4m

largest girth
recorded

60%

parishes have none
recorded

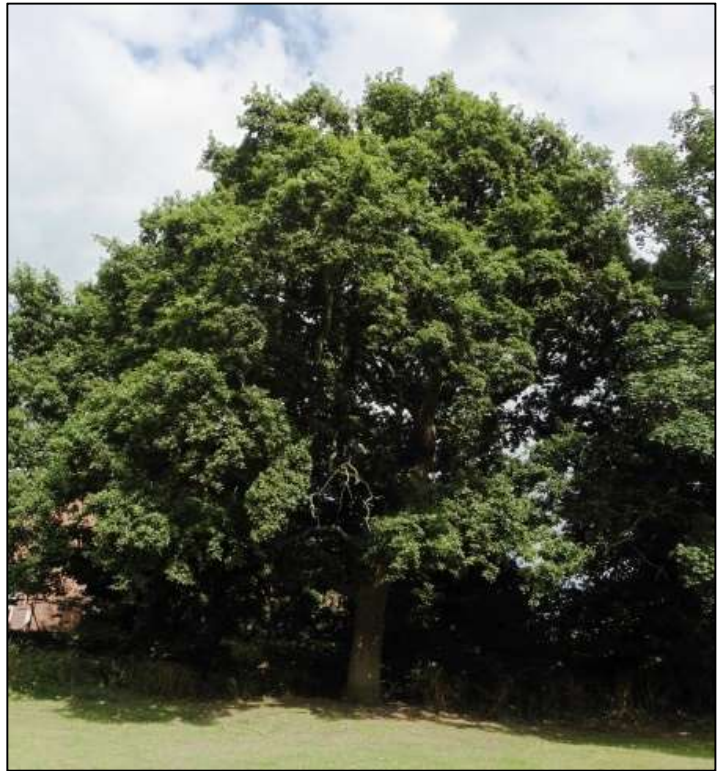
make it more visible, several self-sown ash trees were cut down recently by Steve Radford, who then used some of the wood to make a sculpture. It's a lovely addition to the reserve. In one of the photos below you can see the stumps through the sculpture, and in the other Stephen is standing beside it.

The walk continued to Mumbury Nature Reserve and ended with lunch at The Bull in Wargrave. Altogether a very pleasant day - and the rain held off until the afternoon!



ANOTHER SADLY DEPARTED - MRN 7848

As well as the three oaks featured in the February issue; MRN 7848 was also felled as part of the Elms Field development in Wokingham Town



PLANTING TREES ON A GRAND SCALE - IN KENYA

There has been massive deforestation in Kenya recently, a result of logging for charcoal and land clearance for agriculture. An estimated 5.6 million trees and shrubs are cut down each year according to the Green Africa Foundation. One man is attempting a re-afforestation project. Teddy Kinyanjui is emphasising the importance of trees for food, shelter, fuel and crop protection. He is co-founder of 'Seedballs Kenya'. A seedball is a single seed coated in a charcoal shell to prevent it being eaten before it germinates. Experiments have shown that native tree species such as acacias grow stronger, with a more extensive root systems, from these charcoal seedballs compared with trees grown in pots and then transplanted. The charcoal coat is washed away when the rains come and the seed has a good chance of germinating. They are being distributed in small and large-scale projects; from schools, where pupils use the seedballs as ammunition in a fun catapulting activity, to distributing them across large areas from helicopters.

Deforestation has other consequences. IUCN gives the loss of their forest habitat as the main reason for the declining population of giraffes in Kenya and their re-classification as 'vulnerable to extinction'. Teddy hopes the seedball project will also provide an income for local people. *"Eventually we would hope to pay farmers to grow trees for their seeds, much the same as the coffee trade,"* he says.

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

SOAR - Save Our Ancient Riverside

SOAR was set up to oppose the joint Reading and Wokingham Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) plans. Following objections from SOAR and several other groups (including the Environment Agency, BBOWT and Tesco), revised plans have just been released; (see recommended reading on page 12). Amongst other changes, it now proposes the loss of 36 (instead of 53) individual trees and 22 (instead of 30) tree groups. Allegedly, 77 new trees will be planted. *Remember Oliver Rackham!*

SPECIES IN FOCUS – WEEPING WILLOW (*SALIX X SEPUCRALIS* 'CHRYSOCOMA')

10 miscellaneous facts about the Weeping Willow

1. This iconic riverside tree, originates from dry areas of northern China.
2. It has been cultivated in Asia for millennia, symbolising renewal and immortality; but in Chinese poetry and paintings it is often associated with sorrow and separation. The tree became famous on willow pattern porcelain first produced in England in the 1700s. Both Chinese porcelain and the tree itself were traded along the Silk Road from Asia to Europe.
3. The original Weeping Willow was *Salix babylonica* 'Babylon' and was introduced to England in 1748; but this species has now almost disappeared from the UK, because of its limited frost hardiness. A few descendants survive at their original site in Radnor Gardens, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham.
4. *Salix babylonica* was described and named by Carolus Linnaeus in 1736. He chose *babylonica* because he mistakenly thought it was the tree described in the Bible (Psalm 137). The trees referred to there are not willows, but Euphrates poplars. A recent version of the Bible, published in 1978, replaced "willows" with "poplars".
5. More than 400 varieties of Weeping Willows exist world-wide, but in the UK today nearly all Weeping Willows are *Salix x sepucralis* 'Chrysocoma'. It is an artificial hybrid between the white willow, *Salix alba* 'Vitellana', providing the characteristic yellow stems and frost hardiness, and *Salix babylonica* 'Babylon', from which it gets its weeping habit.
6. This cultivar was created in Berlin in 1888 by Franz Ludwig Späth at the family-run Späth nursery; famous in the 19th and early 20th centuries and responsible for introducing many new cultivars.
7. It is a short-lived tree, with a maximum age of 50-75 years. After 30-40 years it starts to shed branches.
8. The largest recorded by TROBI was at West Kingsclere, Newbury (#44136) with a girth of 5.4m (at 1.5m) in 1987, but it had disappeared by 2007. The largest extant specimen has a girth of 4.43m (#18784) and is in Westgate Gardens, Canterbury.
9. Two weeping willows (MRNS 8257 & 8258) were added to our database this month. They are near the Horseshoe Bridge in Earley. Both were to be felled as part of the Reading Mass Rapid Transit Plan, but the slightly larger one has had a reprieve. Unfortunately, the lovely one shown on the right is destined to be felled "to facilitate development proposals".
10. The tree shown at the top of this page is one of the earliest trees recorded in Earley (in April 2007); but with a girth of 2.28m, it was removed from the Veteran Tree Database when the Commemorative & Special Trees inventory was set up. It's #W062, in the 'Significant visually' category. It was planted between two houses on Roman Way in 1966 as a requirement of the planning permission for the estate. The 6' sapling cost 7s 6d, the cost being shared between the two house-owners, who jointly own it.



FAQ: CAN I USE MY SMART PHONE TO GET AN ACCURATE GRID REFERENCE?

There are several phone apps that give grid references. This is great for surveying trees because it means you don't have to carry a separate GPS around with you and the screen is larger. On my android phone, I use GR [Grid Reference by Arthur Embleton]. It's free, accurate (as accurate as our eTrex GPS units), very easy to read and you can save the grid reference directly to other apps if you want to.



WHERE IS IT?

Do you know where this tree is? Answer in the next issue.



It's very famous and not too far from Wokingham.

From the last issue:



I'm sure many of you recognised this one. It's the pollarded Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) in the Old Vicarage in Wargrave and is the largest tree in our database, with a girth of 10.4m. Standing in front of it are Penny Miller and the gardener.



.... *And to make you smile:*

"John Sequoia, also known as John Redwood"

Since John Redwood is the MP for Wokingham, I was amused to find that Gmail uses these names as the example for their email alias.

Example: John's primary email address is sequoia@prettygoodtrees.com. He also has the email alias redwood@prettygoodtrees.com. If John includes redwood@prettygoodtrees.com as a recipient of a message, the message does not appear in his inbox. However, if John sends a message to his primary account (sequoia@prettygoodtrees.com), then the message appears in his inbox.

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES & READING

www.econetreading.org.uk/photos/WargraveCPOctober2013.html - Creating the wildlife pond at Wargrave Chalk Pit in 2013

<https://berksgeoconservation.org.uk/lgs.php> LGS in Berkshire - Wargrave Chalk Pit is number 18

www.forestry.gov.uk/pestsanddiseases - information about pests & diseases of British trees

www.inyourarea.co.uk/news/controversial-mrt-traffic-plan-in-reading-changed-to-save-trees/ - and follow links there for more details of the MRT plans

<http://planning.wokingham.gov.uk/FastWebPL/detail.asp?AltRef=162325&ApplicationNumber=&AddressPrefix=&Postcode=&KeywordSearch=Mass+Rapid+Transit&Submit=Search> - MRT planning application

Some sources used in this issue: all web pages accessed 10-05-2018 (unless stated otherwise)

p3: Tree watching: www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/tree-of-the-year/; www.treeoftheyear.org/; www.treecouncil.org.uk/Press-News/Treezilla-The-Monster-Map-of-Trees; www.treeeconomics.co.uk/

p5: Ash dieback & OPM: www.forestry.gov.uk/opm; www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara; www.forestry.gov.uk/treelert

p6: Did you know?: [BBC radio4 Farming Today 25-04-2018](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/44044267); www.earlham.ac.uk/newsroom

p9: Kenya: www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-44044267

p10- Species in Focus: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salix_babylonica; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franz_Ludwig_Sp%C3%A4th
www.britishmuseum.org/the_museum/museum_in_london/london_exhibition_archive/archive_china_landscape/plants_in_china_landscape/weeping_willow.aspx; www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks_and_open_spaces/find_a_park/radnor_gardens;

<http://friendsofthepublicgarden.org/2018/01/17/meet-the-trees-the-weeping-willow/>; www.treeregister.org/ (database accessed May 2013)

p12: <https://support.google.com/a/answer/1703601?hl=en>

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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: You can download a pdf version of our 10th anniversary report from our website - but you can also access an extended version of it, with links to the trees mentioned:

wdvta.org.uk/report10.php

Details of all trees in our database are available via the web map pages: wdvta.org.uk/WDVTS

The inventory of commemorative and special trees can also be accessed via our website:

wdvta.org.uk/commem.php

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