



On 7th May, we had 7847 trees in our database and 11672 photographs

Welcome to the latest issue of Tree Watch.

To quote an apocryphal Chinese curse "May you live in interesting times." I do hope you are all keeping healthy and not finding the necessary restrictions too onerous. Asimov fans will no doubt have been reminded of Solaria.

Of course, all our activities have had to be cancelled or postponed, but that is hardly important. Our health is so much more important. We are lucky that the trees will still be there when this is over. In the meantime, many people are appreciating their immediate environment, such as the footpaths in Lower Earley, as shown here in a photo sent by Jane Sellwood.

With this lockdown, 'zooming' seems to have become the new generic term for video conferencing, and many of us will be grateful for such facilities as Hangouts, Skype and Zoom (other platforms are available) that allow us to keep in visual contact with our friends, children and grand-children and in some cases our exercise classes and society lectures. Our committee meeting this month will be "zoomed". Alison and Kerry talk about the effect of lockdown on our activities and there's a lovely account by Sarah Swatridge ([page 6](#)) that will lift your spirits.

This issue is slightly longer than usual because I've had some really nice contributions. Thank you to everyone who's sent in articles. It does add to the variety of topics. The items in the contents list at the bottom of this page are now links, so you can just click on one, rather than scrolling through to get to the page you want.

If you are looking for things to do during the lockdown, there are suggestions on pages [2](#), [5](#) & [8](#) of ways you can help us. Barbara Stagles suggests a book for you to read ([page 9](#)) and the web recommendations on [page 15](#) are short films and radio programmes which I hope you'll find interesting as possible substitutes for some of those cancelled lectures.

The next issue of Tree Watch will be August 2020 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 - May - August 2020

❖ All events currently cancelled or postponed

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

EVENTS IN COVID TIMES, A REFLECTION

Kerry Clissold & Martin Haslam

As mentioned in the last issue, it was a still and pleasant morning on Saturday 8th February when a group of 27 assembled to enjoy a walk through Fox Hill Woods in Wokingham led by Stephanie McKay, one of our tree warden coordinators. We ambled along enjoying the trees and catching up with different people along the way. After an interesting morning hearing about potential threats to this piece of woodland we headed to a nearby hostelry, 'The Dog and Duck' in Emmbrook where a large table had been prepared for us. We sat side by side eating our lunch and enjoying a conversation with friends new and old. How could we have known just how much the world would change within a few weeks. Just look at the social distancing in the photos, that's right, what social distancing? The pub was even cosier, squeezed in together. We couldn't have guessed how much we were about to lose. Something we took for granted, such an ordinary event for us, gathering together, car sharing to get there, all gone, for now at least. I think that most of us who have participated in WDVTA events anywhere, a walk, a visit or perish the thought sitting close, side by side, in a large hall for an interesting talk, little realised just how we took those freedoms for granted.



All is not lost! We had invited Councillor Gregor Murray, Executive member for Climate Emergency, to speak at our March AGM before it had to be cancelled because of lockdown. He has agreed to give his talk at a future date when this is possible.

Another planned talk, due to be held in May, was to be given by Mike Saynor and Barbara Stagles 'Managing a Woodland - Holt Copse and Joel Park'. This talk is also just postponed and will be rescheduled.

We have kind offers of two more local walks to be led by Linda Ashwell over in Remenham and Barry Andersen in Charvil. These are both areas that will be new to some members and will be held when possible.

One event you could enjoy helping us prepare for is 'A Favourite Tree Evening'. We ran a similar event several years ago at Dinton Pastures and we would like to repeat this. Members offered a short talk of just five or ten minutes with a slide or two telling those present about a local tree, a tree discovered on holiday or perhaps a tree they grew up with. Last time we heard about trees as diverse as Frankincense in the desert, a Pohutukawa, the spirit tree clinging to the edge of New Zealand, local trees in Wargrave woods and much more. Just let us know if you'd like to be involved. (See Derek's contribution on [page 13](#))

There will be visits again. We've enjoyed so many good days out at High Park Blenheim, in Savernake Forest, Kew and Windsor Great Park. Why not suggest somewhere.

We will look forward to you joining us at some of the events noted above as and when this is possible again, until then stay safe, stay well, stay kind to each other.

TREE WATCHING FROM MY CHAIR

Alison Griffin

We all have needed to adapt our lifestyles and activities with the arrival and impact of COVID-19. Given the statistics that we hear on a daily basis, I expect several of you will have been ill over the last few weeks, but I hope, if you have, that you didn't need hospital treatment and are well on the way to full recovery. Many of you will be self-isolating and I hope that you are not finding the impacts too onerous. Maybe by the time you are reading this there may be some reduction in the limitations.



For us, the immediate impact of the lockdown was the cancellation of our Forum meeting, the AGM and the talk booked for later in May. Thank you to all of you who replied to our electronic AGM. I had replies from 30 members, more than the quorum required by the constitution, so we have met the formal requirement. I trust the AGM next year can be back to our normal face to face meeting.

Last Tree Watch

Thank you to everyone who sent in photographs and articles for the last Tree Watch making it another varied and very interesting edition. Thank you too to Elaine for all her editorial work.

Sarah's article about identifying trees in winter included a photograph of the bark of white poplar trees 'resembling a cheese grater'. This reminded me of our visit to the Ankerwycke yew and the avenue of grey poplar trees, recognisable in winter from their tree bark described in my Collins tree book as: *'largely silvery white or pale cream with horizontal lines of black diamond-shaped pits'*. That's a lengthy but quite accurate description as you can see here.



On a 'daily walk' last week, I went to see the oak near Ludgrove school that was pictured in the last edition after it had spectacularly lost the top two thirds of its height in Storm Chiara. It is some way off the school drive but the huge top section that snapped off is still in the field and I am fairly certain that the branches attached to the residual trunk are sprouting new growth. Next time I'll take binoculars or a better camera to see more clearly. As you will read later, we have had two more large oaks that have succumbed to the winter weather.

In the last Tree Watch I included some photographs of tree MRN 1959 in Emmbrook. Completely independently, Malcolm Inglis included photographs of a group of Corsican pines in Montague Park. Both were comparisons before and after the development of the area. Malcolm and I prepared another couple of examples of 'Then and Now' for a display at the AGM. MRN 8590 in Keeppatch was used in our Anniversary Report as an example of good tree protection on a development site and the tree now has a lovely setting at the entrance to the development (as shown below).



May 2017



March 2020

Several of you may remember the response we made to the Borough Council to request the realignment of the new road junction with Toutley Road in Emmbrook to prevent the felling of MRN 1965. It is now well away from the road and has plenty of space, although I can't understand why the additional gate and stile were added to the green verge. The photos below were taken in July 2008, December 2016 and March 2020.



Please let me know of any other examples of trees where a 'Then and Now' comparison would make a good display image.

Daily walks

Frequently my observations on trees are made whilst I'm sitting in the car in traffic, but not these last two months. Instead it has just been close encounters with the local trees along the paths where I can walk from home. One real benefit of walking the same routes quite frequently has been seeing the spring changes evolving sometimes very slowly and sometimes surprisingly quickly. In the space of the first five weeks since the start of lockdown we had gone from just a little early tree blossom, through the blackthorn blossom which came and went, to be followed by hawthorn 'May' blossom. There are quite a few large oak trees on my regular walk and initially it was peak oak catkin time, but



they too died back quickly. I did get this photograph (right) of a particularly prolific tree. Watching the oak bud burst across sequential days was a bonus on the walks. Whilst the local oaks burst within a week of each other, the ash tree bud burst has been much more spread out. Some burst almost before their neighbouring oaks and others have still hardly 'greened' at all. I am always surprised by the very odd look to the ash bud burst and managed to capture it (photo left).



At the top of our road where it links to a footpath, a large oak (MRN 2338) stands staking its claim 'to have been here first' whilst the narrow footpath has to take a very constrained detour around the trunk (photo left). It has a very large hole in the trunk and I keep looking for any evidence of birds or bats using the cavity. Kerry has suggested we might like to suggest our favourite trees and at the moment this one would be high on my shortlist as depending on whether the day's walk is 'clockwise' or 'anticlockwise' it marks the start or the end of the daily exercise.



Trees in the media

You may have spotted our article in the Wokingham Paper as part of The Wokingham Society's sponsorship of a monthly column. The theme was trees as part of the history and legacy in the area. The editor also contacted us for comments on an article they included on the loss of the Luckmore Drive oak (MRN 1031).

The Tree Council now send out their newsletters more frequently and I hope all of you who are registered as tree wardens are finding them as informative and interesting as I am. National publications also continue to cover tree topics more often. Rather than include details of many of the articles I have recently seen, I will just include links to them that you can follow and read if you are interested.

Olive trees: The devastating impact of the bacterial disease *Xylella* on olive trees has been reported before, but the latest news is quite alarming and has led to the UK restricting the importation of not just olive trees but also other plants that could bring the bacteria into the UK.

Oak trees: Oak processionary moths are becoming active again and the Tree Council's update for April includes a map showing sites around London, including some within Wokingham Borough. Acute oak decline and chronic oak decline are both continuing to spread. Recent research suggests that high nitrogen levels may be a contributory factor. We have recently heard of some trees in Finchampstead that are suspected to have acute oak decline.

Ash dieback: We all know about social distancing, but can it also help trees? There is some interesting new [research](#) which discusses potential reasons for some ash trees being badly impacted and others hardly affected at all by the infection. BBOWT had an interesting article about ash die-back in their [spring magazine](#).

Tree Planting: On a more positive note, there are many articles now discussing tree planting as a major contributor to combating [climate change](#). Factors that need to be considered include [species mix](#), [conifers](#), and where not to plant trees.

Tiny Forests: A splendid title for a new initiative. The environmental charity 'Earthwatch' is promoting this scheme and the first 'tiny forests' in the UK was recently planted in Witney, Oxfordshire. Around 600 native trees have been planted in an area about the size of a tennis court. I know Cllr Murray is following up this idea already.

Whilst our surveying activities, group conservation work and meetings cannot take place as normal, do please continue to look at your local trees and report any issues such as pests and diseases that you see. If you have run out of lockdown activities and have time to offer, do get in touch. I just hope you all keep well and that we will be able to resume our normal lives soon.

WDVTA COMMITTEE

There are no new committee members and one resignation (Cathy Harris).

Officials:

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

Committee members:

Barry Anderson, Elaine Butler, Sarah Hanson, Martin Haslam,
Stephen Loyd, Linda Martin, Stephanie McKay, Steve Radford,
Michael Rea, Coralie Ramsey, Maggie Sanderson, Jane Sellwood,
Barbara Stagles and Liz Wild.

WDVTA FUNDRAISING

Derek Oxbrough - WDVTA Treasurer

In mid-June 2019 the treasurer approached each of the seventeen Wokingham Borough Town and Parish Councils for a small grant to bolster our funds and support our work with trees. The main aim of this fundraising project was to assist our work in the following areas:

Replacement of IT equipment that is now 12 years old.

Purchasing a gazebo and some banners to help us with publicity at fairs and fetes.

Assisting WBC with the formulation of a "Tree Strategy" within WBC.

Purchasing small saplings for future tree planting projects.

All of the Councils have now responded, and we have either received or been offered grants between £50 and £250 that now total £1,600. We would like to sincerely thank all the Councils as this will greatly assist our work in recording, protecting and planting Trees in Wokingham Borough.

APPRECIATION FROM THE WDVTA SIDE LINES

BARBARA STAGLES

I would like to thank the Officers in particular for keeping WDVTA functioning during a very busy year. This has been no small task given the background of the climate crisis and related projects such as the development of a WBC Tree Strategy and Tree Planting projects; the Parliamentary election; the COVID-

19 crisis and the accompanying cancellation of meetings and associated projects. It would be very good if we can find amongst us a Vice Chairman to support their excellent work. I should also like to pay a special tribute to our Data Manager who has kept our tree survey in wonderful order so that we are in a position to work towards completion or near completion in 2021. She needs the continuing support of our loyal tree surveyors to achieve this. Especial thanks too are needed for the editor of Tree Watch, our first-class quarterly e-magazine, full of fascinating tree news and information. Finally, I am sure all members will be extremely grateful to our Web Manager who has run our website so efficiently, making it an important vehicle for publishing Tree Watch, our findings and activities and reports on trees in general. We can all be very proud of WDVTA's window on the tree world.

REFLECTING ON TREES

Sarah Swatridge

This year, despite everything, we have been blessed with some glorious weather. It has been a real treat to go for a walk. Certainly in Charvil, the roads have never been so quiet. Everywhere you go, you can hear birdsong.

The pace of life has slowed down, there's nothing to rush around for. We can 'stop and smell the roses'. We can take time to appreciate the world we live in.

Trees in particular are a real pleasure. Whatever the season, they'll be something of interest. Not so long ago there was a wonderful display of cherry blossom. Then, as you walk you are filled with the smell of bluebells and fragrant lilacs. I'm sure they used to be out in May, but then the weather this April has been more like early summer than spring.

If anyone ever doubted the value of trees and hedges, all they need to do is to walk around The Hawthorns (a 1980s smallish housing estate). There is a hive of activity. Blue-tits flitting around, a charm of goldfinches, hedge sparrows and today we counted seven kites circling above.

The Hawthorn blossom was delightful. A while ago I challenged myself to learn how to identify one new tree a month. I am by no means an expert, but I am better now at wandering around my neighbourhood and thinking, that's a lime, that's an ash...and so on.

Helen Babbs recently wrote, 'But, as with human relationships, an unnamed tree essentially remains a stranger.' So, it's been good recently to see the same trees, now with buds and leaves, so I can confirm its identification or indeed, solve a mystery.

With a clear diary, apart from the odd Zoom 'meeting' it was good to have a purpose when I was reminded to go and check on the five White Elms (W098) planted the winter before last in Charvil Water Meadows, as part of Project Hairstreak. It's been so dry recently they were in need of a good water, but thankfully all have grown and are producing new leaves. Two are above the protective netting, so I hope the deer won't be tempted.

In these times of uncertainty, it's good to know you can rely on a tree. It's dependable. Many have lived through wars and plagues, and survived.....as I'm sure we will. Stay safe. Hug a tree!

SEED BANKS AND THE PINEOSAURS

Patricia Green

Having survived since the age of the dinosaurs, the Wollemi pines were not to be destroyed by the wildfires in Australia this year. The fire service determined to save them, and succeeded. These 'pineosaurs' are featured in the recent issue of 'The Garden', the RHS journal, which some of you may not have seen. An aerial photograph shows the two hundred or so trees completely filling their deep gorge in the Blue Mountains, where plants on surrounding higher ground are severely burnt. As fires blazed nearby, water was dropped by helicopters and hoses were laid to keep undergrowth wet.



Information board at Kew Gardens



Two Wollemi Pines are listed on our web site, in the Commemorative and Special Trees Inventory. The one in the Harris Gardens at Reading University (W050) stands in front of the ring of about thirty cultivars of Lawson's Cypress. This photo was taken in June 2015, when it was about 2m tall. It's now about 3m tall and looking very healthy with its plentiful long green cones. The Harris Gardens are free to visit any day, although unauthorised parking is severely restricted to Saturday, Sunday, and after 6 pm until dusk.

The RHS article notes that the destruction caused by the wildfires has emphasised the significance of seed banks for preserving a future for trees. There is a renewed urgency to collect as many seeds as possible from Australia's 25,000 plant species. Botanists are assessing the impact of the fire on all species and plan to monitor recoveries and losses for some years. In New South Wales it is estimated that at least 3 billion trees were destroyed. At the same time, severe fires in Queensland destroyed over 1000 acres (440 ha) of tropical rainforest. Measures need to be adopted to cope with climate change. It is impossible not to wonder at the 'climate emergencies' the Wollemi Pines have survived.

"We can build a future where our cities can be filled with trees."

David Attenborough, "How to Restore Our Forests"

DID YOU KNOW?... There are 59 "Tree Cities of the World" and 6 are in the UK.

They are Birmingham, Bradford and the boroughs of Barking & Dagenham, Camden, Ealing and Welwyn Hatfield. The other 53 are distributed across 16 countries, with just the USA and Canada having more than the UK. USA has 27 and Canada has 10. It's easy to see where this initiative originated!

To become a "Tree City of the World", 5 criteria must be met:

Establish Responsibility - The city has a written statement by city leaders delegating responsibility for the care of trees within the municipal boundary to a staff member, a city department, or a group of citizens—called a Tree Board.

Set the Rules - The city has in place a law or an official policy that governs the management of forests and trees. These rules describe how work must be performed. This includes citing best practices or industry standards for tree care and worker safety, where and when they apply, and penalties for noncompliance.

Know what you have - The city has an updated inventory or assessment of the local tree resource so that an effective long-term plan for planting, care, and removal of city trees can be established.

Allocate the Resources - The city has a dedicated annual budget for the routine implementation of the tree management plan.

Celebrate Achievements - The city holds an annual celebration of trees to raise awareness amongst residents and to acknowledge citizens and staff members who carry out the city tree programme.

Surely these are not too onerous.

Surely Wokingham should meet these criteria and qualify as a "Tree City of the World".

THE VETERAN TREE SURVEY

With the COVID-19 situation, we have been forbidden from going from our homes for any unnecessary activity since March 23rd, and this of course includes tree surveying. It is very gratifying that so much progress had already been made in completing our survey and I want to thank everyone who's helped with this. Since the last issue we've added 49 trees to our database, with many parishes nearing completion. I'm still getting reports about trees that members encounter on their local walks, a spectacular example being the collapse of MRN 1031 (see page 10). The slightly relaxed restrictions coming into effect on May 13th could allow some of us to continue surveying.

When you do go out, **let me know** if you happen to spot a veteran tree that isn't on our database already or one that is no longer there, having fallen in a recent storm or been felled. Whilst at home, you could help by looking at our [webmap](#) and checking the records for errors (there's a contact form associated with each record, making it easy to send me any comments). **Let me know** if you see a marker where there is no tree on the map (the grid reference is probably wrong). If you are familiar with the area, check that the information about the trees is correct. If there is a local tree without a photo, please take one of it. **Let me know** if you identify an area that you think hasn't been surveyed.

MRN 3773 - THE IMPORTANCE OF A PHOTO AND A LOCATION DESCRIPTION

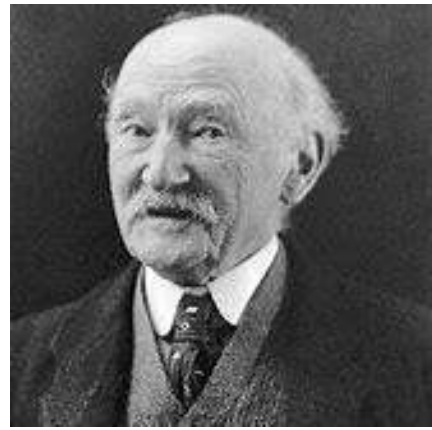
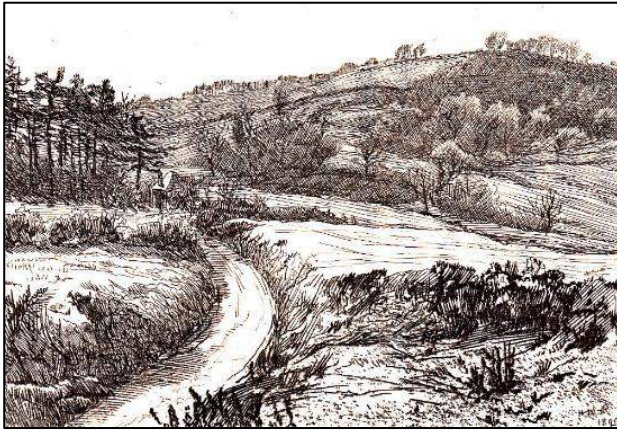
MRN 3773, a Lombardy Poplar (*Populus nigra 'Italica'*) with a girth of 5.95m was recorded in 2008, but there was no photo and the original recorder had moved away. The comment said it was a "landmark for Heathrow". The grid reference placed it in the middle of a field, no-where near a tree; but the location description said it was at the footpath end of the garden of Island Cottage (which wasn't in the middle of a field). These early records of trees in Charvil did not have any photos and a few years ago, a couple of members went out to photograph the recorded trees, but could not find this one. Had it existed and been cut down? We didn't know. I gave a talk to the Charvil Ladies Group last November and mentioned this tree because it was the largest tree recorded in Charvil. A lady in the audience told us it was in her garden and her much-loved tree had fallen down overnight in February 2014. Sarah Swatridge has now obtained a couple of photos. You can see it was a dominant feature in the landscape.

It was a casualty of Storm Tini (known as Storm Darwin in Ireland and some other countries because the storm coincided with Charles Darwin's 205th birthday).

With a girth of 5.95m this tree qualified as a TROBI champion, but was not recorded as such. The Britain & Ireland Champion Lombardy Poplars for girth in 2013 had girths of 5.5m in 2008 (in Purley-on-Thames TROBI #189327) and 4.49m in 2010 (in Drumnadrochit, Scotland TROBI #119008). There were two Berkshire Champions, the Purley one and MRN 1907 with a girth of 5.19m in 2008 (TROBI #206563).



The Woodlanders by Thomas Hardy



The Woodlanders was said to be Thomas Hardy's favourite of his own novels and it proved a very refreshing lockdown re-read when our own local woodlands were out of bounds

Published in 1887, it is set in an area of woodlands and orchards in Wessex, Hardy's imagined county based on the English West Country where he grew up. It is infused with acute observations of the natural world through the seasons based on his own experiences as a man *'who used to notice such things'* as he wrote in his poem *'Afterwards'*. It also describes the lives of those who worked in the timber and cider making industries, bringing nineteenth century rural society into sharp focus.

As with his other well-known novels, *'The Woodlanders'* is a romantic and poignant tale of love, pleasure, heartache and sadness among people who worked in the woodlands and orchards as well as their managers and *'superiors'* in the local gentry. Hardy's subtle accounts of the powerful effects of social class distinctions at the time on his different characters is salutary and moving.

However the highlights for those interested in trees and everything associated with them must be Hardy's accounts of the life and work of woodlanders such as sawyers, hollow turners, journeymen and others. The novel opens with Marty South *'with a bill hook in one hand and a leather glove much too large for her on the other'* making spars for thatching out of spar rods, or hazel rods.

Later we read of Marty planting fir trees with Giles Winterbourne, a central and sympathetic character, in a spot that had been cleared by woodcutters and where holes had been dug. Winterbourne spread *'the roots of each little tree in a sort of caress under which the delicate fibres all laid themselves out in their proper direction for growth. He put most of the roots towards the south-west; for, he said, in forty years' time when some great gale is blowing from that quarter, the trees will require the strongest holdfast to that side to stand against it and not fall'*.

As the novel progresses, we come across vivid descriptions of the barking of oaks, the felling of trees, the making of cider with a travelling apple mill and press and the marketing of woodland products. There are accounts of a Christmas party and Midsummer Eve revelries as well as numerous passing references to trees and woodland wildlife. These include the tall elm tree that frightens Marty's sick father, the noisy owls in the woodlands in winter mornings and evenings and the walking stick enjoyed by timber merchant, Mr George Melbury, and remembered by him as a living branch.

Many people will have read *'The Woodlanders'* for the human story, but it is well worth a reread to enjoy again the wealth of fascinating references Hardy makes to the ways in which trees in the past have played an integral part in the lives and livelihoods of country folk.

SADLY DEPARTED - MRN 1031

This was a much-loved **English oak** in a triangular area between Luckmore Drive & Betchworth Road in Earley (SU 74364 71438). When surveyed in 2007, this pollard had a girth of 4.9m (at 1.5m), giving it an estimated age of about 320 years, meaning it germinated around 1700.

It was situated near and to the east of what was, in 1883, Home Farm (the Bowling Club in Beech Lane is a remnant of this). At one time the line of the old Beech Lane, then known as Maiden Erlegh Lane, passed to the east side of the Bowling Club, but this was altered in the 1800s, during the Enclosures, to the present-day route of Beech Lane, exiting at Wilderness Road.

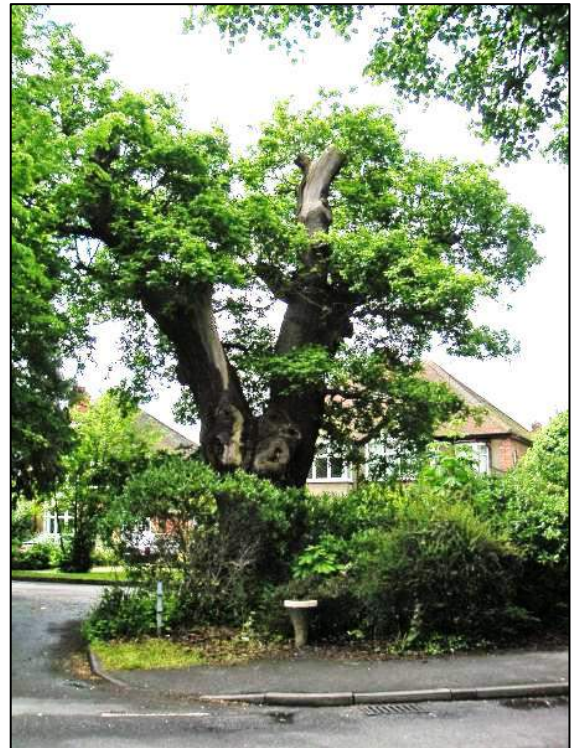
The tree fell in the early hours of Easter Monday, 13th April. Neighbours were woken at 2:30am by 'an almighty thud' and went outside to find that the 'grand old oak' at the end of the road had fallen over. Fortunately there were no people or cars underneath it, but it did completely block the end of Luckmore Drive.

One local resident wrote: *"No longer will we be able to give directions into Luckmore Drive from Wilderness Road, by saying 'turn right just before the old oak tree'. Overnight Easter Sunday to Monday, in what was not really a very strong wind, our beloved and well cared for oak tree finally succumbed to its age."*



The base was rotten, infected by 'Chicken of the Woods' fungus (*Sulphur polypore*) also known as cubical brown rot.

Despite the lockdown the Borough Council emergency services were on the scene early Easter Monday morning. It took nearly 3 hours, but they were able to cut an escape route for trapped residents. They cleared a double path and piled everything up. Residents then cleared up and many a log pile was enhanced! The council's Climate Emergency plans include planting 250,000 trees over the next few years and some of these should be replacement street trees at sites, like this one, where a significant tree has been lost. We'd also like the wood from the tree to be used effectively, possibly to make a sculpture to be placed in the nearby Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve.



SCULPTURES FROM FALLEN/FELLED TREES

Below: the Duck and the World in Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve - MRN 1188; the Storytelling Chair at Hawthorns School - MRN 151; and the Deer Bench in Old Forest Meadows in Emmbrook - MRN 1966.



Steve Radford (above) will be using some of the wood from the trees felled in Elms Field to produce a bench and some sculptures (including a chrysalis and a caterpillar).

Do you know of any other similar sculptures?

This month's

A C R O N Y M S / I N I T I A L I S M S

COVID-19 - Corona Virus Disease 2019 - caused by **SARS-CoV-2** - severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2

SAGE - Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies

NERVTAG - New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Advisory Group

SPI-M - Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling

SPI-B - Independent Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Behaviours

The above 3 groups produce consensus documents fed to SAGE

DELVE - Data Evaluation and Learning for Viral Epidemics (Royal Society group-reporting on face masks)

RAMP - Rapid Assistance in Modelling the Pandemic (Royal Society group)

ONS - Office for National Statistics

NRS - National Records of Scotland

DHSC - Department of Health and Social Care

All 3 contribute to the Coronavirus UK map

sri models - used for modelling the spread of infections - the population is divided into 3 groups: - **s**-susceptible; **r**-removed (recovered with immunity or died); **i**-infected

PCR = polymerase chain reaction - method used in testing swabs for SARS-CoV-2. PCR tests can detect as little as one viral genome amongst the DNA of over 50,000 host cells.

††† - test, track, trace;

††i - test, track, isolate

DNR - "Do not resuscitate"

PPE - personal protection equipment

si - self isolating

wfh - working from home

SPECIES IN FOCUS - WOLLEMI PINE (*WOLLEMIA NOBILIS*)

12 miscellaneous facts about the Wollemi Pine

1. Only known from fossils until discovered in 1994.
2. An evergreen conifer, but not a pine. It's in the family *Araucariaceae*, closely related to *Agathis spp* (Kauri Pines) and *Araucaria spp* (Monkey Puzzle, Norfolk Pines).
3. The *Araucariaceae* had a world-wide distribution in the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods (200-65 million years ago), before the domination of the flowering plants. The last fossil record of a Wollemi Pine is about two million years old and so it was thought to be extinct. Hence it is known as a dinosaur tree, living fossil or Lazarus taxon.
4. The only species in its genus, it's named after Wollemi National Park and David Noble. David Noble, an amateur botanist, was in a group exploring the area for new canyons, when he came across trees he didn't recognise. [Allegedly, the two other members of the discovery party questioned the naming, but were informed that *nobilis* referred to the trees being noble in structure and not to David Noble.]
5. Wollemi National Park, only 93 miles from Sydney, is the only known place where they grow in the wild. Two populations were found in 1994 and another in 2000. Together there are fewer than 100 trees. Their exact locations are kept secret. The canyon is very isolated and difficult to access.
6. They are wind pollinated and monoecious (bisexual), with the long male and round female cones developing at the tips of separate branches of the same tree. When mature, the female cones fall apart (*photo right*), releasing winged seeds. [A helicopter is used to collect the seeds from the tree-tops.]
7. Extremely long-lived, the oldest living Wollemi Pine, 'King Billy', is possibly over 1,000 years old.
8. Most trees are multi-stemmed and may have a connected root system. All specimens tested so far are genetically identical.
9. Its distinctive bark is dark brown, and knobbly, resembling coco-pops.
10. The trees are susceptible to *Phytophthora cinnamomic*, a virulent water mould; and this was introduced to the site in November 2005 by unauthorised visitors.
11. Now sold in many garden centres and by mail order. Very easy to grow and does well in a wide range of conditions. A grove of Wollemi Pines planted in Inverewe Garden, Scotland survived temperatures of -7°C in January 2010.
12. Kew has several specimens. The first was planted in 2005 and protected by a steel cage (see [video](#)). The photos here are of one planted near the Orangery in 2009. In 2015 it was about 12' tall. By this year it was over 19'.
The tallest tree in Wollemi is 126'.



THE MIGHTY KAURI

Derek Oxbrough

Because of the wide variety of climate in New Zealand, Sub-tropical to Alpine to Fjords, there is a huge variety of tree species. Whereas we have about 30 tree species in the UK; New Zealand has 260. One tree species that has a particular and unique importance to the people of New Zealand is the Kauri (*Agathis australis*). The Maori people worshiped the Kauri trees and replanted any they felled for house or canoe building.

Kauri forest once covered most of the North Island, but because of its value as a hardwood to the new settlers, these forests have been decimated in the last 170 years. About half the trees were burnt down during land clearances for farming and the rest were logged with a value in 1900 of about 20 pence per tree. It is now estimated there is only 4% of the original pre-settler volume of Kauri trees left standing. As a result, since 1975, the Kauri tree has been protected and so cannot be logged. It now has a national museum dedicated to its history.

The largest Kauri tree is Tane Mahuta ("Lord of the Forest" in Maori) on the northern peninsular of the North Island. It's 51m high with a girth of nearly 14m and is estimated to be up to 2,500 years old.

Kauri wood is so valuable because of its dense, even and straight grain. It is a slow growing tree with a life of 1,000 - 2,000 years, but it has an unusual growth pattern. Its initial growth in the first 40 years is similar to a pine tree, fast growing, covered in branches, a triangular profile, and reaching a height of about 30m. After this initial period the trees do not grow much taller, but gradually lose their lower branches and slowly grow in girth. Eventually the trunks become branchless for the lower 20m with a large even girth and somewhat resemble a baobab tree of Africa with branches only at the top.

The Maori use of the Kauri: Other than house building the Maori's main use of the Kauri wood was for war canoes which were the main means of transport and defence. Large ceremonial canoes could hold up to 100



people. To make the hollowing out process easier, one side of the trunk was often left in water to rot for many years. The Kauri tree can bleed

large amounts of gum which was used for chewing, fire lighting, tattooing pigment and as a lacquer/sealant.

The Settlers use of the Kauri: The Settlers soon realised the value of the Kauri trees because of the quality of the wood. Initially this use was confined to replacement spars and masts on the many sailing ships that transported the early settlers to New Zealand. Then as the population increased the wood was used for just about any purpose from house building and shipbuilding, to furniture and ornaments etc. It's popular with boat builders because of its very long straight lengths, and relative light weight. It planes and saws very well; holds screws and nails without splitting because of the tight grain; and it does not easily crack or warp. It darkens with age to a rich golden-brown colour and has a beautiful appearance with a high sheen when oiled or varnished. Because the trees now mainly exist in protected forests the trade in new Kauri wood has almost died out.



Swamp Kauri: Ancient trees that fell into the water of peat swamps were preserved for up to 50,000 years. It is thought that the mature trees fell over because of their bulk, shallow root system and the swampy nature of the soil. The ancient Kauri wood was not petrified or turned to coal because it was sealed from the air. Sometimes there are several layers of these huge tree trunks laying one on top of another in deep swamps. During preservation process the wood often takes on a variation in colour that increases its value and use in decorative furniture etc. The ancient Kauri wood holds the distinction of being the oldest workable wood in the world by a huge margin. If authenticated by carbon dating 50,000-year-old Kauri wood has a value similar to some semi-precious metals. Today there is a high value industry in locating buried ancient tree trunks. Sometimes the logs are easy to find during the summer when the ground is drier and the logs leave brown scorch marks on the grass indicating their size and the direction they are laying. Due to the increasing value and scarcity of the ancient wood, ground radar is often used to locate the logs. Mechanical diggers are then used to carefully excavate the soil from around the log. Once removed from the ground, each log is assessed before being sold and transported to a sawmill for drying and then machining into workable sections.



Ancient Kauri gum also has a high value and, similar to amber, it is used for jewellery and ornaments. It is said that the city of Auckland was founded mainly on the export of Kauri gum with an average of 5,000 tons a year being exported. Gum-digging was the major source of income for settlers in northern New Zealand, and in the 1890s, 20,000 people were engaged in gum-digging, with 7000 working full-time.

In conclusion New Zealand has huge variety of indigenous trees and bush plants and even now bush and forests cover wide areas of the countryside. Two trees of note that are prominent in the

landscape are the Tree-Fern (the national symbol) and the beautiful Norfolk Island Pine both of which are not indigenous.

But the king of New Zealand trees must be the Kauri for its sheer size, importance and history.

REMARKABLE TREES



Alison Griffin took this photograph of a row of linked horse chestnuts in September 2019, "on a lovely walk down from the Vienna Woods into the city outskirts".

Of course, the Kauri is also a remarkable tree, and so are the entries for the 'European Tree of the Year' competition. There are some stunning [photos](#) of the winners in the Guardian. Do have a look and enjoy!

Several people have told me about the Guardian's

tree coverage. They have a '[Tree of the week](#)' series, which started in December last year as their Christmas appeal to celebrate our trees. Readers are asked to [nominate](#) their favourite tree. Brian Hunt particularly liked the one for 16th March, an [oak](#) in Darley Park, Derby, with the caption 'I looked at this oak one day, and saw a face looking back at me'.

Veteran Tree Survey snapshot – Documents associated with MRN records



48 Entries (*documents & links*)

686 Associated *records*

MRN 3366 & MRN 1031 *Latest documents*

MRN 80 and all Irish Yews *Latest link*

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES – AUDIO AND VISUAL

This month's recommendations are short audio or visual presentations which are not only informative, but entertaining, encouraging and in some cases, uplifting as well. Do take a look at them all over the next few weeks. [Some of the link addresses are long and so just the hyperlinks are included here. The links are listed on the last page along with the other references.]

“BIRMINGHAM TREE CITY OF THE WORLD”

This edition of Radio 4's Open Country features the treescape of Birmingham, including its status as a 'Tree City of the World', the work of Tree Wardens, wilding part of the Botanical Garden, and the importance of street trees. It stresses the maintenance requirements of street trees and the necessity of using mature trees as replacements for lost established trees.

“HOW TREES TALK TO EACH OTHER”

Watch or listen to this TED talk by Professor Suzanne Simard, who studies the complex, symbiotic networks in forests.

“TOP TEN ATTRACTIONS AT KEW GARDENS”

Unfortunately, we can't visit Kew now, but you can watch some videos on YouTube as well as several **“VIRTUAL TOURS”** on the Kew website.

“ANCIENT TREES VIDEOS”

The National Trust has a series of short videos about some of the ancient trees in their care, including the Ankerwycke Yew. They are described by Brian Muelaner, NT ancient tree advisor, and you can see him inside the hollow Tolpuddle Martyrs' sycamore (don't try this at home!).

“MAJESTIC PHOTOS OF THE TALLEST TREES ON EARTH”

This short slide show is one of National Geographic's "Your Weekly Escape" recommendations.

“HOW TO RESTORE OUR FORESTS” – David Attenborough

and if you want something longer, **“OUR PLANET – FORESTS”**, a 50-minute film narrated by David Attenborough, is a Netflix documentary, one of a series you can access for free during lockdown.

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

In March, one email spam checking company notified its clients that, to avoid consternation, they had changed the subject of their spam alert emails from "Quarantine Alert" to "Email Quarantine Alert".

Certain celebrities are posting information (often false) about coronavirus, leading to the response "They should be encouraged to practice social (media) distancing."

Some sources used in this issue: all web pages accessed 09-05-2020, unless stated otherwise

p2- Tree Watching: <https://www.wokinghampaper.co.uk/the-wokingham-society-heritage-matters-wokinghams-trees-our-roots-our-legacy/>
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p6: Reflections: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ycR60SbSytnO3Ut94sjd9QdXziFZV15ns6-773-t8Q0/edit#gid=0>
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p7: Quote: <https://www.ourplanet.com/en/video/how-to-restore-our-forests/>
p7: Did you know?: <https://treecitiesoftheworld.org/> <https://treecitiesoftheworld.org/directory.cfm>
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p8: MRN3773: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyclone_Tini <http://www.treeregister.org/> (database accessed May 2013)
p11: Initialisms: <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/scientific-advisory-group-for-emergencies-sage-coronavirus-covid-19-response>
p12 Species in Focus: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uX1Qbztryds> <http://www.rbgekew.org.uk/plants/wollemipine.html>
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<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/series/tree-of-the-week>
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p15: Recommendations: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000hghz>; <https://www.ourplanet.com/en/video/how-to-restore-our-forests/>
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<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/ancient-trees-videos>
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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.