



On 15th August, we had **7,970** trees in our database and **11,905** photographs

Welcome to the latest issue of Tree Watch.

I do hope you are all keeping well and not suffering too much from the impact of the current Covid-19 crisis. There are some positives. Many people are becoming more familiar and more appreciative of the countryside within Wokingham Borough. The new **SANGs** are proving a god-send. Where would we be without this EU designation? We are definitely indebted to the Dartford warblers of the Thames Basin Heaths, without which we would have no SANGs! The photos here are of MRN **8670**, one of the new trees added to our database this month. It has a girth of 6.18m at 1.5m and is isolated in a field which will become part of West Court SANG in Finchampstead.

Internet resources and video conferencing have been instrumental in relieving the isolation and allowing lectures and committee meeting to continue. We do live in an "internet age" and I wonder how people without computers or smart phones are coping. There are a lot of interesting on-line resources, many of them free. I hope you enjoyed at least some of the recommendations in the last

issue. See page **13** for more recommendations. All these links will lead to more if you want to follow them.

There are of course so many negatives (not all links lead to interesting features). Our health is of course most important, but many people are suffering, especially children and students and those with jobs they can't do from home. I expect many of you have had to cancel planned holidays. As I write this, I should have been in Yellowstone; but missed holidays are a small price to pay for our health.

There's mixed news about our trees. The Coombes woods has been registered as Ancient Woodland; we've added several more trees to our database; but Charvil has lost several of its much-loved trees.

The next issue of Tree Watch will be November 2020 and the copy deadline is 31st October. 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



Main items in this issue:- (click on title)

p2	Events; Tree Watching from my chair	p8	Acronyms/Initialisms
p4	Carbon storage; RTWN	p9	Survey - Update on MRN 1031
p5	Network Rail Clearance Work	p9	The Charvil VJ tree - W106
p5	The Coombes - Ancient Woodland	p10	Sadly Departed in Charvil
p7	Sadly Departed-MRN 3836	p11	Watering newly planted trees.
p7	Did You Know? - Albino Trees	p12	Species in Focus - Monterey Cypress
p8	Chafer Beetle Infestation	p13	Recommended reading and viewing
		p14	Remarkable Trees

Events: August - November 2020

❖ Tree Forum meeting Tuesday 3rd November - 19:30 - venue to be decided, possibly via zoom.

❖ All other events currently cancelled or postponed

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

TREE WATCHING FROM MY CHAIR

Alison Griffin

Although we are clearly a long way from resuming normal lives again, I hope that you have been keeping well and as lock-down and shielding have eased, you have been able to meet up with friends and family and make some trips away from home.

The last edition of Tree Watch was produced before we knew how exceptionally warm and dry this year's spring would be. That drought, on top of the two last hot summers, has had an impact on local trees. I have seen one mature horse chestnut in Hampshire that started to come into leaf and then just died and the whole tree is left with just small reddish unfurling leaves at the tips of twigs. It seems to me that more than a normal number of mature trees are visibly stressed with sparse canopies or some twigs dying back. Derek noticed that one of the Barkham Jubilee oak trees was not looking healthy too, but he has been giving it a lot of care and water and it has revived well.

Summer so far has been kinder weather for the trees, without extremes of heat, drought or deluge. I hope you have been enjoying your local trees. Do tell us about any interesting features or changes you have spotted this year.

Then and Now.

In the last Tree Watch I described a display that Malcolm Inglis and I had prepared for the AGM, with photographs of trees before and after significant development work had changed the tree's surroundings. I asked members to send details of any examples near their homes and Brian Hunt sent details of the oak tree at Bulmershe Leisure centre, MRN 8123, which was hard against a fence but has now been given plenty of space and become a feature for the new development. Do please send in any other examples you come across.



MRN 8123 taken in July 2017 and June 2020

WDVTA Activities

Although we cannot yet organise any events with the continuing restrictions on numbers of people who can meet together, there has been plenty of activity within the organisation over the last few months. Some members are surveying and this is helping with our aim to complete the survey in as many of the parishes and towns as we can by next spring. Clearly surveying should only be done either where the people are part of the same household or part of the same 'bubble', or where all current Covid-19 restrictions are observed with social distancing, not travelling in the same car and not sharing any equipment.

We have not yet been able to have a video meeting with Cllr Murray to discuss the proposed tree planting as part of the Borough's Climate Emergency plans. I read in the local paper this week that the plans were presented and approved by a full council meeting on July 23rd. We look forward to hearing more details

and having this discussion with Cllr Murray during August.

You will know that all our survey data is sent to both TVERC (Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre) and to the Woodland Trust for their Ancient Tree Inventory (ATI). Elaine has been aware for some years that some of our data has not been loaded onto the ATI, but we are now delighted that they are actively working on this issue.

For the time being we are holding our committee and Tree Forum meetings by Zoom. On the whole these are working out very well with occasional glitches with video or audio dropping out, just the same as we see and hear with current TV and radio interviews!

Tree Forum meeting

The recent Forum meeting was a busy agenda and notes from the meeting have been circulated. These are just a few of the points that may be of interest to all members:

- There were a couple of messages about tree pests and diseases. The first was from Dr Glynn Percival whom you will know from the talks he has given us. He is interested in diseased trees, particularly ash die-back. If you know of local examples please get in touch as Glynn may be able to treat them as part of a research project.
- The other request we have had over diseased trees is from a PhD student at Reading University who is researching the impact of woodland tree diseases on birds. She is particularly interested in acute oak decline. If you know of a local woodland area with AOD, then please get in touch and we can pass the details on to the student.
- Barbara has been working on the topic of dead trees on new developments with particular focus on Montague Park and Hatch Farm developments in Wokingham and Winnersh respectively. The aim is to make contact with someone in either the development company or with the specific planning officer for the development to bring their attention to the specific issues on their sites. If you live near any of the other large local developments and are able to help with this new approach, please get in touch.

Trees in the Media

I see or hear articles about trees at least once every week and these are four that you may not have heard about.

As reported by [The Wokingham Paper](#), during the full Borough council meeting discussing the Climate emergency plans on July 23rd, an amendment was raised and agreed for a Covid Memorial Wood to be planted. This will honour the residents of the Borough that have died during the current pandemic. As it has only just been adopted as a Borough policy, there are no details at the moment.

The latest TVERC news update email included a [report](#) on calculations made by Dan Carpenter, their projects manager, for the carbon sequestration and annual carbon dioxide absorption from the atmosphere for the Priority habitats across Oxfordshire and Berkshire. The figures are impressive, 1.1 million tonnes of carbon storage and 65,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide sequestered annually. [See page 4.]

[Research](#) in Australia has looked at whether there is a difference in how efficiently young trees and mature trees absorb carbon dioxide converting it into tree growth. They identified that although the mature trees absorb more carbon dioxide and convert it to sugars, there is often a lack of sufficient nutrients in the soil for the tree to utilise it all and the excess is used in the soil by bacteria and fungi and quickly recycled back into the atmosphere. This research is particularly important for Australia where much of their soil is low in phosphorus.

We are rightly very proud of our near 8,000 veteran trees surveyed across the borough, but I recently read about a phone app that identifies the location and species of over 700,000 trees across London. I haven't looked at the phone app but they have a [website](#) which looks very interesting, especially if you ever want to plan a tree walk tour of part of the city.

Finally, a government consultation on a '[Tree Strategy for England](#)' was launched in June and will run until the middle of September. You can make a personal response. The Tree Council have published their [response](#) with suggestions of how you can get involved. We hope to compile a response from WDVTA itself and if you can spare a little time to help us with this, please get in touch.

I'll close with the same message as last time. 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 like pests and diseases that you see. If you have run out of lock-down 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.

CALCULATING THE VALUE OF TREES FOR CARBON STORAGE AND SEQUESTRATION

Expanding on Alison's reference to the TVERC [report](#), the data only relates to designated priority habitats (see page 8) and of course there are a lot of assumptions made in the calculations. There are many areas of woodland not included in the priority categories.

Of the priority habitats, woodlands account for almost 90% of the annual carbon sequestered and 77% of the total carbon stored.

PRIORITY HABITAT	ANNUAL CARBON SEQUESTERED (CO ₂ TONNES PER YEAR) <i>and % of all habitats listed</i>		TOTAL CARBON STORAGE (TONNES) <i>and % of all habitats listed</i>	
Lowland Beech and Yew Woodland	10,145	15.5%	65,298	5.6%
Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland	39,717	60.9%	648,983	56%
Traditional Orchards	-	-	103,391	8.9%
Wet Woodland	2,364	3.6%	36,722	3.3%
Wood-Pasture and Parkland	6,217	9.5%	33,901	2.9%

Which ever way you look at it, woodlands are very important when it comes to carbon metabolism and it's relationship to climate.

READING TREE WARDEN NETWORK

RTWN held their AGM via Zoom last month. Their planned events are of course curtailed, but their achievements for 2019-2020 are very impressive. They took part in the review of Reading Borough Council's new Tree Strategy; the revised Environment Agency proposed flood scheme for Caversham and North Reading; and Network Rail's line-side vegetation management plans for the Wokingham-Reading line. The latter resulted in the first ever public drop-in consultation in September 2019 (see [Tree Watch #43](#):p3).

They are heavily involved with tree planting. After the felling of trees in Chestnut Walk, they obtained the concession of 11 replacement street trees to be planted in an area with low tree canopy, currently scheduled for this autumn. In November last year, to mark the launch of their 'Trees for Reading' project, they planted a sessile oak in Prospect Park to replace a lost Verdun oak (see [Tree Watch #43](#):p12) and a red maple (*Acer rubrum*) near the Thames Lido, in Kings Meadow. They made a successful application to 'Trees for Cities' and received £2,000 for 10 trees in the Tilehurst area: 3 Norway maples at Blagrove Recreation Ground; 5 ornamental pears and 2 dawn redwoods at Norcot Road/Links Drive. They managed to plant them just before the coronavirus restrictions were imposed. Since their inception in 2011, Reading Tree Wardens have planted a total of 284 trees, which is nearly 10% of the 3,000 planted by Reading Borough Council in the last 10 years.

Last year, as well as the plantings, they organised five walks, a public lecture on the "Wood Wide Web" and installed plaques for the two Reading verdun oaks (see [Tree Watch #44](#):p6).

Future plans, Covid permitting, include plantings, walks and a lecture on the latest research in effective tree planting by Glynn Percival.



WDVTA congratulates RTWN, and especially Anna Iwaschkin, on their excellent work.

The photo above shows Anna with the Mayoress of Reading at the planting of the replacement verdun oak in Prospect Park (see *Tree Watch* #43:p12).

NETWORK RAIL CLEARANCE WORK

You may recall that Malcolm Inglis is taking a series of photos to show the effect of this clearance on the track-side vegetation. They are taken from the footbridge leading to St Paul's Churchyard, looking towards Reading. The photos below were taken in October and November last year (top) and in March and July this year (bottom). They show how quickly the vegetation has regenerated.

Details of the work and more photos are on our [website](#).



THE COOMBES WOODLAND ADDED TO THE ANCIENT WOODLAND INVENTORY

Ancient woodlands are defined as woods that have existed continuously since 1600 and cover approximately 2.6% of England. There are two categories: ancient semi-natural woods (ASNW) with predominantly native trees and shrubs, and plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS), where the natural tree canopy has been felled and replanted with plantation species. PAWS are valued because they retain interest and can be [restored](#) back to semi-natural woodland. Ancient Woodland is protected under the National Planning Policy Framework which gives planners guidance on how to consider ancient woodland and veteran trees in development decisions.

The Coombes was not classified as ancient woodland, although three much smaller adjacent woods, Bignell's Copse, Bears Copse and tiny Little Copse, had been on the Ancient Woodland Inventory for some years. It's possible that The Coombes, being a wooded common or wood pasture, was overlooked because tree densities can vary on historic maps and this type of ancient woodland has been inconsistently included in the inventory in the past. The area was already designated as a Local Wildlife Site and subject of an area Tree Preservation Order. Part of it is also a Local [Geological](#) Site.

However, part of The Coombes in the north-west, in Arborfield and Newlands (the rest is in Barkham), had been auctioned off in small plots with the impression that they would be suitable as building plots. This practice is happening all over the country as a means of enticing people to pay more than the going rate for ordinary woodland. We've reported on a similar situation at Fox Hill Woods; (see *Tree Watch* #39:p4). The purchasers then feel entitled to do whatever they want on their acquired land, whilst the local authority and interested residents are faced with a bombardment of planning applications and appeals.

It was felt that it would further help to resist the pressure, if the area could be officially recognised as Ancient Woodland. To achieve this, a small group of residents local to The Coombes and passionate about protecting it as a wildlife habitat, set about collecting the evidence needed to present a case to Natural England. Having seen the documentation, I'm impressed by the amount of research and work done by this small group.

Looking at all the map [sources](#), The Coombes is named between 1871 and 1990 and the area is shown to be wooded as part of the larger Bare Wood Common on earlier maps, such as the 1761 map of John Rocque. The 1595 Windsor Estate map shows the general area to be wooded and named Bearewood, part of the Forest of Windsor. Map evidence therefore shows wooded continuity of The Coombes area from 1761 and indicates wooded continuity from 1595.



wood anemone, wood sorrel, ramsoms, wild service and, of course, bluebells, for which The Coombes is renowned.

Planning applications for the woodland plots began to appear in November 2018 and so the task of assembling the evidence for the Ancient Woodland application was seen as an urgent matter. It was completed in December. Unfortunately, the group involved in this work had experienced growing hostility from the new landowners (directed at all who had opposed their numerous attempts to develop their land) and so it was decided not to publicise their part in it. Instead, it was agreed that Barkham and Arborfield and Newland Parish Councils would submit the application jointly in their names. The completed form and supporting evidence was submitted to Natural England on 3rd January 2019. That speed was not maintained and there followed eighteen anxious months until June this year.



MRN 7666, a veteran oak beside a bridleway at the edge of the newly defined Ancient Woodland area. Above: May 2010, during a WDVTA walk, and below, in Nov 2014, during a BGG walk.



Amongst the evidence collected was the identification of five ancient woodland species:

On 8th June this year a document was sent from Natural England to the Parish Councils to say that the criteria had been met and The Coombes (SU 775 676) was now recognised as an ASNW and had been added to the Ancient Woodland Inventory. This 50 hectare site is one of over 53,000 ancient woodland sites mapped on the Natural England [website](#).

Whilst this is great news, the sad part is that an area once enjoyed by so many people is now off-limits. I've been told that "wise people don't go near there now."

Derek Oxbridge has been doing excellent work, helping to complete our veteran tree survey. He recently recorded some trees in The Coombes (in Arborfield and Newland) and put this endearing comment on his recording form "Splendid tree (my grandchildren used to play horsey on the low branches)." It's MRN 8653 (photo right), and is well within the newly defined Ancient Woodland.



SADLY DEPARTED - MRN 3836 - IN THE COOMBES

This multi stem sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) was recorded in July 2008 with a girth of 5m at 0.5m. It's in the Coombes woodland in Barkham, but outside the designated Ancient Woodland area.

It was felled in July this year, following a regular inspection of trees on bridleways and other public rights of way.

One large stem had split and was hanging over the bridleway and, on closer inspection, the base of the tree was seen to be weakened, with included bark pushing the other two stems apart. There was a very good chance that other stems would fail, presenting a risk to members of the public using the bridleway, as well as to the adjacent landowner.



DID YOU KNOW?... There are albino trees!

About 400 **albino redwoods** (*Sequoia sempervirens*) exist in some old redwood forests in California. They are healthy, in spite of having no chlorophyll and hence being unable to photosynthesise. Some are 20m (66') tall. Such trees can't survive alone. They get their nourishment from neighbouring trees through root networking and mycorrhizal relationships; often from a parent tree from which they've sprouted. Sap exchange through roots is a general phenomenon amongst redwoods. Their roots can graft onto the roots of nearby redwoods. Other conifers seem to lack this ability, and so albino mutants of other species don't survive to become sizable trees.



When Michael Rea and I were recording trees near the Winnersh Bypass in June we noticed that the English oak MRN 4886 (see photo right) looked decidedly pale and sickly from a distance. When we took a closer look, it seemed as if the earlier leaves had been attacked by some creature although new leaves were beginning to shoot. Michael took a close-up photo (below) of these leaves and just managed to capture a beetle among them. All the other oaks in the area seemed to be in good shape, although we did find one smaller oak some distance away that had been attacked in the same way.

We sent our photos to Coralie Ramsey at

Wokingham Borough Council and, after consulting a colleague, she diagnosed a possible Chafer beetle infestation. She didn't think this was anything to worry about, but alerted other colleagues to the problem. She also sent us an excerpt from Bartlett's Technical Report describing the possible effects of Chafer beetles and their grubs.

Adult beetles eat the leaves and flowers of many deciduous trees, shrubs and other plants. They do not generally cause significant damage to trees in the UK, unless very large populations are present. Whilst adults can be problematic, chafer grubs do the majority of damage by feeding on plant roots. Most of the beetle's 3-4 year lifecycle is spent in grub form. During this time they feed on live roots, especially those of grass/turf but on occasion those of trees.

How fortunate we are to have such speedy expert help with tree problems from Coralie and her colleagues at the Borough Council. Their advice has been much appreciated.



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

BAP – Biodiversity Action Plan: there are **BAP priority species** and **BAP priority habitats** – identified as the most threatened, requiring conservation action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (**UK BAP**)

HAP -Habitat Action Plan: For all habitats on the original priority habitats list, produced between 1995 and 1999, a HAP was created. By 1999, 45 HAPs had been created. This was replaced by the Priority Habitat **Inventory**, as designated by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) Section 41 habitats of principal importance.

SAP – Species Action Plan: The latest update was published by Natural England in May 2014, with 943 species. Priority species **data** now includes 2,888 species, of which only 942 currently has action plans. There are 613 vascular plants (153 have action plans). Only a few trees are included in this list: the Plymouth Pear (*Pyrus cordata*), *Juniperus communis* (and *Juniperus communis* subsp. *hemisphaerica* found on the Lizard peninsula) and 20 *Sorbus spp* (whitebeams eg Bristol Whitebeam).

JNCC – **Joint Nature Conservation Committee**: the public body that advises the UK Government and devolved administrations on UK-wide and international nature conservation.

Wikipedia provides a list of species and habitats of principal importance in England.

THE VETERAN TREE SURVEY

With the relaxation of restrictions, we've been able to do some more surveying and since the last issue, we've added 123 new trees and 233 new photos; which is pretty good going considering the current circumstances. In the year since last August, there's been an increase of 324 trees and 759 photos.

UPDATE ON MRN 1031

This much-loved English oak fell in April. (See *Tree Watch* #45:p10 or the [document](#) associated with our tree record.) After much discussion and debate about ownership, the remnant of this venerable oak, weighing nine tonnes, was moved to Dinton Pastures in the early hours of 5th August. It had to be delivered to Dinton before it opened to the public. Hence the tree surgeons started work by 6am. No chainsaws were used and noise was kept to a minimum.



It's now next to a path around Black Swan Lake (SU 77835 72080), where it's been erected as a habitat monolith (a habilith), as shown left.

The photo right shows what's been left behind. We hope a replacement tree will be planted at this site.



Thanks to David Choppings and Anne Lambert for the information and photos.

COMMEMORATIVE AND SPECIAL TREES - THE CHARVIL VJ TREE (W106)

Sarah Swatridge

This August is the 75th Anniversary of VJ Day. Any celebrations will have to conform to the current Covid-19 government guidelines. When Charvil celebrated the 50th Anniversary of VJ Day in August 1995, an oak tree was planted in the grounds of Charvil Village Hall. It commemorated the end of World War II in Japan in August 1945. A Charvil resident from Cheviot Drive, who was also a Burma Veteran, planted the tree, alongside members of the parish council. One of the councillors, Margaret Gimblett, organised the ceremony. The Pavilion in East Park Farm is named after her. I am glad to say the oak tree remains and is looking healthy. However, the plaque has not survived!



SADLY DEPARTED IN CHARVIL

Several trees have been felled to facilitate house building on the old Jubilee Hall site in Park View North. In 1952, St Patrick's Church was built on this site, but it was closed and deconsecrated in 2011 because of low attendance. It was owned by St Andrew's Church in Sonning and at that time the church authorities decided not to sell the land for housing, but to retain the building for use by the community and rename it 'Jubilee Hall'. However, it was subsequently sold for building and in 2019 Jubilee Hall was demolished.

The felled trees include three trees covered by TPO-0223-1983 and a commemorative tree (W103), a Rowan planted in 2002 to commemorate the Queen's Golden Jubilee. I'm reminded of the Bill Vaughan quotation I used in Tree Watch #15 "Suburbia is where the developer bulldozes out the trees, then names the streets after them". In this case they named the hall and then cut down the jubilee tree. The Rowan replaced an oak (W105) which was planted on the site in June 1995 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of VE day and was subsequently felled to facilitate building work at the church.

The TPO covered four trees: Norway Maple, London Plane, Scots Pine and Horse Chestnut. The maple, pine and chestnut have now been felled.

The site was bought by one builder who assured the Parish Council that the trees would be retained and this was stated in the planning application, which included clear comments from WBC that all the trees on site were to remain. The site was then sold to another builder, who wanted the trees felled.

Following an inspection by WBC, the application to fell the Norway maple (TWA 200453) was refused in February this year, the reasons for refusal being:

"The tree is a prominent visual feature in the streetscene and provides significant amenity value. The submitted supporting information is inconclusive and the Council consider that the associated Tree Hazard Report does not provide an accurate representation of the trees condition. Moreover, no consideration has been given to remedial pruning options that would enable the retention of the tree. In addition, no indication of size, species or location of the proposed replanting has been provided within the application."

The Parish Council and local residents were delighted by this decision and by the acceptance of the value of the tree; but that was short-lived.

Another application (TWA 200695) to fell the Norway Maple was made, and in May, following two more inspections by WBC, permission was granted to "Fell to ground level, grind out stump (ensuring the roots of adjacent trees are not effected) and replace." The reason given was "Health and safety issue", quoting the report submitted by the builders in February.

I'm told by the Parish Council that permission was given to fell the Scots Pine and Horse Chestnut because they were (now) too close together. (In which case, why do both have to go?) However, as I write this in the middle of August, the permission to fell these two trees is not on the Protected Tree Map. In fact, the current tree works application (TWA 200696) attached to all three trees is for "Install RPA fencing around trees at Jubilee Hall. Install post"; which of course gives the impression that the trees will not only remain, but be protected. The permission to fell the maple is there as an historic application, but that doesn't apply to the other two trees.

All this has led to a lot of confusion and concern about apparent contradictory decisions. I've gone into a lot of detail here because some residents are still unsure of the details; and as a warning to others who are concerned about trees on proposed development sites. As well as the distress at the eventual loss of these trees, much time has been wasted on enquiries about assumed illegal felling.

The Protected Tree Map is a great resource, just don't rely on it to being up-to-date.

When trees covered by a TPO are felled, they must be replaced. In the case of the maple, the replanting conditions state that a minimum of one replacement tree must be planted in the area in which the tree was located. The replacement tree must be a Sweet Gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) of "standard" size (2.5-3m tall) at time of planting. It should be planted in the planting season, November 2020 to March 2021, but container-grown trees can be planted outside this time. I'm not sure whether that means a container-grown tree can be planted after March 2021. A replacement maple is not recommended because of potential *Phytophthora* issues. *Liquidamber* is relatively tolerant to most *Phytophthora* species.

I hope to report on the replacements for all three trees in a future issue.

WATERING NEWLY PLANTED TREES



- Water in the early morning or evening.
- Water trees for the first three years after planting.
- Where possible, water should be sustainably sourced. Rainwater is best, but bath water or water used for washing up is also suitable.
- If the tree has a watering pipe, half the water should be poured down the pipe and the other half poured on to the surface of the soil. If it has a watering bag, then fill that.



Although this might seem a bit late for this year, it's a timely reminder to plan for the maintenance of any trees planted this autumn.

Last month, an 'Arborists' Question Time' discussed **tree establishment**, and how we can best achieve tree establishment rather than just tree planting. A Q&A session follows three five-minute presentations, the second of which particularly mentions watering street trees. The two quotes below particularly resonate with us:

"Tree planting has been high on the public and political agenda for some time and is often misrepresented in the media as an easy solution to the climate crisis."

"Instead of talking about tree planting, we should perhaps be talking about tree establishment. Instead of focusing purely on

"In nature, nothing is perfect and everything is perfect. Trees can be contorted, bent in weird ways, and they're still beautiful."

Alice Walker

Veteran Tree Survey snapshot

THE COOMBES AREA (not just the ASNWs)

61
trees in our database

54%
in Arborfield

46%
in Barkham

19 (31%)
Sweet Chestnuts
(all in Arborfield)

15 (25%)
English Oaks
(all in Barkham)

8m
largest girth -
coppiced Lime

SPECIES IN FOCUS - MONTEREY CYPRESS (*HESPEROCYPARIS MACROCARPA*)

12 miscellaneous facts about the Monterey Cypress.

1. Found naturally only in the central coastal region of California, confined to two small relict populations in protected sites at Cypress Point in Pebble Beach and at Point Lobos both near Carmel.
2. One of several species of cypresses endemic to California.
3. About 10 years ago, based on DNA analyses, the western hemisphere cypresses were separated from the eastern hemisphere ones, with a new genus, *Hesperocyparis*, being created for them; but it is still widely known as *Cupressus macrocarpa* (including in our database).
4. Widely planted around the world and introduced to Britain in 1838.
5. It's susceptible to cypress canker (*Seiridium cardinale*), a devastating fungal disease first recorded in California in 1928. By the 1970s it had spread world-wide.
6. Highly sought after as a decorative and building timber because of its fine colours and durability; it can be used outdoors without any preservative treatment.
7. Introduced to New Zealand in 1860 and planted as shelter breaks. Lines of windswept macrocarpas often indicate the position of long lost and forgotten homesteads, as these near Slope Point, South Island.
8. It's toxic to pregnant cows, which can abort after browsing the foliage.
9. Monterey Cypress is one of the parents of the fast-growing cultivated hybrid Leyland cypress, *Cupressus* × *Leylandii*, the other parent being Nootka cypress, *Cupressus nootkatensis*.
10. The species name 'macrocarpa' means "with large fruit" (shown below).
11. Where conditions are favourable, the trunks can become very large, leading to the assumption that individual trees may be up to 2,000 years old; but examinations suggest they live for less than 300 years. One specimen in Auckland, New Zealand has a girth of 14.6m (at 1.4m) and may be the largest in the world. It was probably planted in 1878, when the homestead was built, or soon afterwards. Growth rates of 6-7cm/yr are usual in the west of Britain. The largest TROBI Britain & Ireland Champion for girth is in Co. Cork in Ireland with a girth of 12.65m (at 0.3m) in 2010.
12. We have seven in our database, two of which are the TROBI Berkshire County Champions for girth - MRNs 2559 & 687 (photo right). However, three of our recorded trees have larger girths. MRN 1249, in Pages Croft in Wokingham, had a girth of 4.4m (at 1.5m) when measured in 2008. The photo at the top is MRN 7230, a landmark on the prominent ridge of Pearmans Glade in Shinfield. Its girth is 3.5m (at 1.5m).



LOOKING FOR SOMEWHERE NEW TO WALK?

Colin Wilson has produced an excellent series of [Blackwater Valley Nature Walks](#) of varying lengths; or you could take the opportunity to wander around Swallowfield Park, and perhaps survey some of the trees there that are yet to be recorded.



RECOMMENDED READING AND VIEWING

Most of these recommendations come from the Arboricultural Association, which has posted a lot of free webinars during this pandemic crisis. There are many more not listed here. Most are 90 mins long, but you can stop and re-start or skip uninteresting bits. One of the advantages of seeing them on YouTube is the list of related videos that appears at the side of the screen - and there are no adverts.

“TREE OF THE BEST” - Three talks from past Arboricultural Association conferences.

The first by Tim Smitt stresses the need to rediscover natural philosophy *“..you used to be a hippie if you talked about rewilding, actually you were probably a hippie until about 18 months ago, until it started to become government policy; and isn't it amazing that once government starts to think it's a good idea, everybody thinks - I thought about that all the time.”*

The second, by Vikki Bengtsson, is about **“Veteranisation - using tools instead of time”**.

The third, by Mark Roberts, is *“Trees in a Changing Environment”*.

“TREE PESTS AND DISEASES”

Paula Shrewsbury, Andy Tipping and Ana Pérez-Sierra discuss which tree pests and diseases we should be most worried about in the UK at the moment. This is the last in a series of six Arborists' Question Times. On the brighter side, there's encouraging news about ash die-back in an article entitled *“Out of the Woods”*.

“TREES TO MAKE YOU HAPPY, TREES TO MAKE YOU HEALTHY”

The first presentation is great fun, if you like pruned trees! [NB: A tanzlinde (German for dance linden) is an artificially formed linden/lime tree]. The second is informative and includes the question *“Is our destruction of nature responsible for Covid-19?”* You might like to read a couple of articles related to that question, discussing [the link between zoonotic diseases and degraded environments](#) and [what we can learn from the pandemic to prevent environmental catastrophe](#).

“THE WISDOM OF THE ANCIENTS”

Learning from ancient forests & trees with Jill Butler and Kamil Witkos-Gnach.

“ICONIC TREES AROUND THE WORLD”

Another collection of photos from National Geographic, including a [tree](#) near St. Pancras Old Church, which has headstones piled up in front of it. Apparently, they were placed there by a young railroad employee - Thomas Hardy (see *Tree Watch #45:p9*). It's now a stop on literary tours of London!

“CAN GENETIC ENGINEERING BRING BACK THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT”

A description of this once ubiquitous tree and one man's attempts to save it.

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

Sarah Swatridge sent me the **quote** used in this issue and she's on the look-out for weird and wonderful trees to photograph. Why don't you do the same? - and send me your photos. Here's one from an earlier issue of Tree Watch - 'The Crooked Forest' of pine trees in Poland, sent to us by Angus Ross (#17:p12). We've also featured a 'Welsh Dragon Tree' (#33:p10). The contortions can be natural or artificially induced. In Derbyshire, growing willows are fashioned into **tables and chairs**.



If you haven't had enough of social distancing, you might like to read about trees doing it!!

A National Geographic **article** describes how many forest canopies maintain mysterious gaps, called crown shyness, that could help trees to share resources and stay healthy.

REMARKABLE TREES

This rather unusual narrow-leaved ash (*Fraxinus angustifolia*) is beside the Syon Vista at Kew Gardens - not far from the Palm House. Does it qualify as one of Sarah's weird or wonderful trees?



Some sources used in this issue: all web pages accessed 22-08-2020 (unless stated otherwise).

Links embedded in the text are not repeated here. Email me if you want a list of them.

P12: Species in Focus: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/trees-in-the-rural-landscape/page-3>; <https://register.notabletrees.org.nz/tree/view/963>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cupressus_macrocarpa; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cypress_canker; <http://www.treeregister.org/> (database accessed May 2013); Mitchell, Alan (1974) 'A Field Guide to the Trees of Britain and Northern Europe' ISBN 0 00 212035 6;

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: 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.*