



On 11th February, we had **8,275** trees in our database and **12,708** photographs

Welcome to the latest issue of Tree Watch.

Still in lockdown, but I hope you've been able to enjoy some of our local countryside. Jane Sellwood sent me this photo of the Lower Earley woods in the snow of January 24th. I must admit, I enjoyed looking at it, rather than walking in it, but the children enjoyed building snowmen. In contrast, Anne Booth sent this photo of hawthorn blossom and berries in October. We've had many reports of unusual or early flowering in our colder months, as Alison has mentioned.



If you want a feel-good factor - Perseverance landed successfully on Mars. Apologies if this doesn't excite you!

This issue is longer than usual because of the various local contributions I've had. We've got good and bad news to report. You can read about several tree plantings, but also the felling of mature trees. Thank you to everyone who sends me articles or suggestions. I've had to omit some items I'd planned to include, but hope to include them

in a future issue. There is so much interesting information about trees in general.

The next issue of Tree Watch will be May 2021 and the copy deadline is 30th April. 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 - March - May 2021

❖ Tuesday 30th March 19:30 - AGM and talk by South East Rivers Trust (Zoom) - see below.

Non-WDVTa events:

❖ TVERC on-line Recorders Conference 26th & 27th March - See their [website](#) for details.

❖ Urban Tree Festival 15th- 23rd May. See their [website](#) for details

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

EVENTS

The Events Team

In January we had a very informative, virtual walk around Charvil. Thanks to Barry and Claire Andersen and Sarah Swatridge, we were invited to walk the waterside and woodland paths in and around Charvil.

Following on from the very interesting Zoom talk by Dr Glynn Percival during National Tree Week back in November, we are pleased to have been able to arrange a Climate Emergency Talk by Councillor Gregor Murray, the Executive Member for Climate Emergency at WBC, this month. Both presentations are on our [website](#). Future meetings:-

Annual General Meeting - our AGM will also be held via Zoom and members will be sent the usual documentation and Zoom link nearer the time. It's on Tuesday 30th March at 19:30. The AGM will be followed by guest speakers Dr Sam Hughes and Dr Nick Hale from South East Rivers Trust, who will tell us about their work, including the regeneration of the Emm Brook.

My Favourite Tree(s) - a members evening of short talks, hopefully in May. We want to repeat a very pleasant evening where members offered to tell others about their favourite tree or group of trees. On the previous occasion we saw slides and heard stories about several trees including a very special Beech tree in Wargrave and a Frankincense tree in Oman. We finished the evening with the Pohutukawa tree on the very edge of Cape Reinga, New Zealand, where Maori spirits travel down the roots to get to the sea and return to their ancestors.

If you have a tree that has special meaning for you - perhaps you played on it as a child or were awestruck when you happened upon it - please offer to share it with us in just five or ten minutes, with a photo or slide or two. Your audience will be other members, not a panel of experts from Kew, so please don't be put off if you aren't used to delivering a talk. The event was very well received last time and we're sure it will be again. Please let us know now if there's a special tree you're reminded of. Use the booking form on our [web site](#).

We hope you can join us for these events and that we can get back together for live events before too long.

TREE WATCHING FROM MY CHAIR

Alison Griffin

A year ago, in the February 'Tree Watch' we had a write up about the walk in Fox Hill woods, little knowing what changes were just about to happen. We have been really pleased that so many of you have joined our Zoom events; the talk by Dr Glynn Percival in November, the delightful walks around Charvil at the end of January and Gregor Murray's talk on our Climate Emergency. At the committee meeting in January, we agreed we would try to organise Zoom events about once every 4 to 6 weeks, at least through this winter and into spring while we are in lockdown-3.

I hope if you have had Covid you had the milder symptoms and are recovering well. I continue to hear of more friends who have had the vaccination than I do of friends who have caught the virus which is the better way round of course.

Last year Covid dictated a rather different AGM format and we used emails, but this year we will hold it through Zoom on March 30th. We will be using the Zoom options for you to vote 'yes' or 'no' to the various proposals. We will send details in advance and talk you through what to do on the night.

Like most voluntary organisations, we run with a small group of members taking on the majority of the



work involved in keeping the association functioning. We would welcome offers to help with this growing workload. Do contact me, or any committee member, to talk about what help you could offer. If you are also able to join the committee that would be very welcome and the nomination process details will be sent out with the invitation to the AGM in early March. Without offers of additional support we will have to reduce the number of projects we can become involved with.

Last February I wrote about one of my favourite tree sights at this time of year, hazel catkins. This year I saw the first ones in the hedge in front of our house just before Christmas, earlier than normal. The trees also retained some of their leaves into mid-January. They are difficult to photograph as they constantly move even in the slightest breeze but I managed to get this picture.

In the last 'Tree Watch' I described how we chose the 8000th tree for our database, MRN **8670** in Finchampstead. There will be a celebration in May to mark this special milestone and when details are available we'll put them into the Events section on the website.

There was also a request for everyone who lives near one of the 60 Diamond Jubilee oak trees to look at the wooden supports for the plaques as many are beginning to rot and we are having discussions about how to replace them or relabel the trees. Please let us know

if you are able to help with a tree close to you. You can see where the Jubilee trees are by looking at the Jubilee Tree [map](#). Barbara Stagles is coordinating this.



On the November front page Elaine had several wonderful photographs of different fungi and in December I was sent this photograph by Rod Bird, an ex-work colleague of mine. Some of you may remember he led a training course on photographing trees in 2013. The tree is in Burnham Beeches and he thinks it's an ash. He sent the photograph to Penny Cullington, secretary of the Buckinghamshire Fungus Group and this is her reply:

"It looks to me as if your photo is of a species of Pholiota (Scalycap) though obviously the one thing we can't really see is the cap! The genus has rusty gills and spores and I can just see enough of one cap to see that it's this genus. I don't think it's P. squarrosa which is probably the commonest species because the bit of cap one can see looks slimy and not very scaly, so it's likely to be P. adiposa but there are other possibilities. It's unusual to see it so high up in a tree because they usually form tight clusters at the base of the trunk. But that would be my best guess!"

The Buckinghamshire Fungi Group [website](#) is worth remembering as they have good photographs and an identification page.

Arboricultural Association Award for Jill Butler

Many of you will remember Jill Butler. She gave us an inspirational talk in Wokingham Town Hall in October 2007 and very kindly came to talk to us at the launch event for our Anniversary Report. In December I read that she had been awarded the 2020 Arboricultural Association Award. This [link](#) includes a video of the award being given to Jill and her acceptance speech in the splendid, socially-distanced, Covid compliant, setting of Windsor Great Park. As we know Jill reads 'Tree Watch', we all send her our congratulations.

Trees in the Media - I have had a number of articles sent to me recently that may interest you.

Rescue of rare lichen

Jane Thomas sent me a [link](#) to an article about work the National Trust have done to save a rare lichen, the tree lungwort, *Lobaria pulmonaria*. In the Lake District this frilly, greenish-gold lichen only survives in a few sites. One veteran oak tree in Borrowdale had the largest single community of this species in

England. The oak was struck down in one of the storms last winter and in order to save the lichen over three square metres has been translocated to over 100 suitable trees across Borrowdale.

Other National Trust headlines

One good news piece was the planting of thousands of saplings across the hillsides of Cranberry Clough in the upper Derwent valley in the Derbyshire Peak District. The species planted include sessile oaks, silver birch, rowan, hawthorn and hazel and are part of the trust's aim to plant 20 million trees by 2030.

Another article reported that the Trust has had its worst year for ash dieback with the warm dry spring leaving the trees more susceptible. They don't give the figures for trees they lost last year, but do repeat the estimate that nationwide 75% - 95% of ash trees will be lost over the next 20 to 30 years.

On a different topic, I spotted that the National Trust have created some **images** for people to use as their background in Zoom meetings. Most are of rather splendid libraries and author's writing rooms, but one is the view of trees and hills from William Wordsworth's house, Allan Bank, near Grasmere.

Are Native Plants the best choice?

I have to thank Malcolm Inglis for pointing out this recent **article** in the New Scientist.

Although the article heading is aimed at garden plants, the arguments are equally applicable to all landscape planting. We assume that native planting is always the best option, but is it, or rather is it always? Native implies that the plant or tree has been growing here for thousands of years which means that the plant species grows well in our soil and climate. Native also implies that the species fits well into the ecosystem and supports a wide range of other species enriching the local biodiversity.

However, species that grow well in our climate can become invasive and overwhelm natural ecosystems causing havoc. Think of something like bracken. There is also the issue of defining the cut off point for when a species started to grow or be grown here. Is that cut off the end of the last ice age, or does it include species the Romans brought here that have flourished, such as the sweet chestnut?

The article's conclusion is that the term 'native' is a useful pointer but is not sufficiently nuanced. The species needed for new planting are those that will grow well in our current (and future) climate and which will sustainably support and enhance local eco-systems and enrich the biodiversity. 'Native' is not really the best term for this definition.

Forest Research Launches Climate Change Factsheet Series

Sarah Hanson forwarded this press release to me. Forest Research has launched the first in a series of factsheets exploring the effects of climate change on our trees and woodlands. Aimed at practitioners, the factsheets showcase the breadth of research carried out by Forest Research, sometimes over decades, into how trees and forests are facing the challenges of climate change, and actionable insights into how trees and woodlands can help mitigate the effects of climate change.

The first four factsheets are:

- **Climate Change and Forests:** How do woodlands and forest affect the climate?
- **Climate Change, Flooding and Forests:** How can forestry help reduce flooding?
- **Peatlands, Forestry and Climate Change:** What role can forest-to-bog restoration play?
- **Climate Change and Biodiversity:** Can biodiversity help our woodlands in a changing climate?

The full factsheet series can be viewed or downloaded from the Forest Research **website**. Future editions in the series will be published throughout 2021.

Advantages of letting trees reseed themselves to restore and increase woodland

Barbara sent me a link to this **article** in 'The Guardian' in December

Whilst multiple grants and funding schemes have been established to support the ambitious government targets for tree planting, there are none that specifically target support for natural regeneration. Allowing tree seeds to fall and grow naturally brings many benefits including avoiding the carbon cost of the nursery and planting process, avoiding soil disturbance during planting and allowing species which are already growing in the locality to multiply - the right species in the right locations.

Clearly this solution will not work where new woodland is planned too far away from existing tree seed dispersal areas, but for extending woodland close to existing trees and woods, this 're-wilding' approach deserves to be specifically added into the mix of approaches proposed.

Ten Golden Rules for Tree Planting

Helen Briggs a BBC Science Correspondent summarised many of the points in the articles I've highlighted above with a **list** of ten golden rules for tree planting. These are:

- Protect existing forests first.
- Put local people at the heart of tree-planting projects.
- Maximise bio-diversity recovery to meet multiple goals.
- Select the right area for reforestation.
- Use natural forest regrowth wherever possible.
- Select the right species that can maximise biodiversity.
- Make sure the trees are resilient to adapt to climate change.
- Plan ahead e.g. for sourcing seeds and trees.
- Learn by doing e.g. initial small-scale trials.
- Make it pay - to be sustainable the re-planting must provide appropriate incomes for participants.

OPM WARNING

You should all be aware of the problems of oak processionary moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) infestations and the danger to human health. See the Forestry Commission **website** for details. Survey work within our Borough is being carried out between 1st February and 12th March. The contractors performing the survey are Acres Wild Woodlands and they will be wearing Forestry Commission branded hi-vis vests. They are using timber markings with different symbols for infested and non-infested trees. This year the paint colour used is orange. They are surveying areas that have possible sitings of OPM.

There have been public reports of OPM in:

- Remenham - Henley area between White Hill Road and Marlow Road
- Twyford/Ruscombe/Hurst area - north of Whisley Green
- On the western boundary with Bracknell around the A329M
- In the south-west, just outside the Borough west of Little Sandhurst

and speculative reports in:

- Shinfield and Earley (between M4 and A329M)
- Woodley
- Just south of the Borough in Bramshill

PLANTING FOR SUCCESS - TREE MANAGEMENT

We've heard several talks from Glynn Percival over the years and they are really interesting. He's always got something new to say, whilst at the same time stressing the importance of mulching, the use of biochar and consideration of planting sites. He doesn't actually say "*The answer lies in the soil*", but that's his message.

We had two more talks from him before Christmas, via Zoom of course. His one to us was on a fascinating topic "*The role played by endophytes in protecting trees from disease*". If you missed it or want to watch it again, it's available via our **website**.

The second one was to The Reading Tree Wardens "*Planting for Success*". This topic is particularly relevant since we are trying to encourage good practice with all the tree planting on new developments. I was very surprised that more WDVTA members didn't join this session and so I'll summarize some of the points here.

Soil quality is the key to tree survival and longevity. There are some easy checks that anyone can do to check a potential planting site. Is the soil compacted? If you don't like digging it, roots won't like growing in it. Every spade-full of soil should have at least two worms. Worms are an excellent indicator of soil fertility and biological activity. Do a simple drainage analysis. Dig a hole and see whether it fills with water. Most trees don't like being water logged, exceptions being alder, birch and willows. The optimum

pH for most UK trees is 6.2-6.5, but some trees, such as birch, prefer an acid soil.

Aftercare is obviously just as important as choosing a good site. Only apply fertiliser if needed. It's worth getting the soil analysed to find out if there are any mineral deficiencies and only apply those nutrients that are deficient. Mulching with wood chip is very beneficial, and as Glynn has explained in previous talks mulches made from different species have different characteristics and hence benefits. For instance, willow mulch can protect against disease. Deciduous wood chips are better used fresh than composted, whereas coniferous ones should be left for several months. For



larger trees the mulch should be 5-10cm deep and ideally, spread to 1m beyond the dripline. For whips, the same depth and a least 30cm radius of the tree. Biochar stimulates immune responses in the trees and the wood chip mulch should be put on top of the biochar.

Obviously, watering is important and water bags are good, as long as they are not vandalised.



It's important not to plant too deep, a mistake that Glynn says is all too often made. Planting too deep means compacted soil. The root flare must be flush or several inches higher than surrounding medium. Trees shouldn't look like poles sticking out of the ground. Glynn sent me these two photos (left), adding "I do, sadly, have many more". I must admit that after his talk I noticed many of these, what I think of as telegraph pole or lamppost trees, and will be particularly interested to see how long they survive.

Failure rates for urban trees is very high - 30-70% within first year of planting. Estimates for 1985, 1998 and 2008 are the same. So lessons have not been learnt. These figures refer to standard/half-standard trees not whips, so there was a considerable investment of time and money in planting these trees. I'd have expected the considerations described above to have been taken into account before any such planting, but Glynn has many examples where they hadn't been, including a large supermarket car park, where 198 out of an initial 220 trees had died after just 2 years.



What is a compacted soil?

	Ideal soil	Compacted soil
Organic matter	5%	5%
Soil particles	45%	80%
Pore space (air & water)	50%	15%

Relationship between soil compaction and planting failure:

Soil compaction (g/cc)	Planting success	
1.25 - 1.34	100%	Successful
1.34 - 1.54	60%	Mostly successful
1.55 - 1.64	33%	Partial failure
1.55 - 1.64	10%	Mostly failure
>1.65	0%	Total failure

Glynn recommended "Principles and Practice of Planting Trees and Shrubs" by Gary W. Watson and E.B. Himelick. ISBN-10: 1881956180

TREE CHARTER

The **Tree Charter Festival** emphasised the fight for greener policies and importance of getting all local authorities to adopt a Tree Charter. At the time of the Festival (28th November 2020) 300 local councils had become Tree Charter branches. All councils should adopt tree-friendly policies, which includes having a published Tree Strategy. Wokingham does not (yet) have a Tree Strategy, although Reading, Bracknell and Maidenhead and Windsor have had one since 2010, with Reading and Bracknell having updated theirs in 2020 (*at least I think these dates are correct for Bracknell, but it hasn't dated its documents!*). As well as a tree strategy, all councils should adopt tree-friendly policies:-

- Protect ancient woodland in local plans.
- Protect street trees and trees outside woods.
- Integrate trees into new developments.
- Maintain and increase the tree cover and set tree cover % targets.
- Identify sites for planting and for natural regeneration.
- Promote UK sourced and grown native stock.

You can read the Tree Charter, watch some short videos and download a short "toolkit" from the Festival [website](#).

The main threats to urban trees are

- Lack of public and political appreciation of trees and the people who look after them.
- Under-funding (including under-funding of Tree Officers).
- Pests and diseases.
- Development pressures.

NATURE'S CALENDAR

I've known about the Woodland Trust's **Nature's Calendar** for a long time, but was inspired to take part by a talk at the Tree Charter Festival, when I realised that data on just one tree was useful.

You are asked to choose a location that you visit regularly. Trees featured are alder, ash, beech, European larch, field maple, English (pedunculate) oak, sessile oak, rowan, silver birch and sycamore. Hawthorn, hazel and holly are listed as shrubs. Tree features you can record include budburst, first leaf, first flowering, first autumn tinting, full autumn tinting, first leaves falling and bare tree.

You **add your records** to the Woodland Trust website and they are plotted on an **interactive map**.

They have about 3 million records; with records of oak burst for one tree recorded by the same woman, since 1950. She started as a child and is still doing so.

All the records, not only of trees of course, are combined into a UK Spring Index. On average spring was 8 days earlier in the period 1998-2019 compared with 1891-1947. This has various ramifications, with resultant mis-matches in the food chain. Trees provide food for caterpillars, which in turn provide food for birds. Caterpillars have adjusted to the earlier leaf-burst, but birds have found it more difficult. Hence caterpillars may be causing more damage to trees and birds are finding it more difficult to feed their young.

As you can see here, Jubille Oak #51 in Spring Gardens in Spencers Wood, Shinfield had plenty of leaves in December. This month it still has 14 leaves clinging on. Some oak trees had lost all their leaves by November, but others held on to just a few. You have to look carefully if there are a few up high, because it might be a broken branch with its leaves attached perched across a living branch. A pair of binoculars is useful.





The three new elm trees we wrote about in the last 'Tree Watch' have arrived and been planted. These photos show the Tree Council trees in Elms Field (with WTC groundsman) and Charvil (with Sarah Swatridge); and (below) the Wokingham Society elm, also in Elms Field, with Peter Must, the chairman of the Wokingham Society.



We couldn't decide what heading to give this article and asked each other "what is the opposite of *Sadly Departed*?" As the trees arrived on one of the wettest January days, maybe the heading of "*Sodden Saplings and Wetter Wardens*" would be appropriate! There are more details in the last 'Tree Watch' about the particular elm species *Ulmus* 'New Horizon' grown by Hilliers, but it is 100% Dutch Elm Disease resistant. We must thank Glynn Percival for donating enough biochar for all three trees and Stephen Loyd for advice on planting and for the two huge hazel stakes used for the Elms Field trees until metal cages were put up to provide protection against vandalism. Those stakes have now moved over to Reading to support their Tree Council elm tree.

With lockdown restrictions we were not able to have any planting events but are taking photographs of the trees with single people as we can arrange to meet them (at a photographer's distance). Details of the

trees, their locations and photographs will be added to our 'Commemorative and Special Trees' map and inventory. For those of you who are registered as tree wardens, you may have seen the [article](#) about the 30 trees in the January email of 'Branching Out' which lists the 30 sites. It also has photographs of a few of the trees. Both Wokingham and Charvil are there, with the groundsman in Elms Field and Claire Andersen in Charvil, both looking as wet as they were.

HERITAGE OSIER BEDS IN TWYFORD

Sarah Swatridge

The Common Osier is a small willow which thrives in wet habitats, such as the banks of the Thames, the River Loddon and Old River in the Twyford and Charvil area.



The growing of Osier in this region, for the making of eel traps, is recorded in the Domesday Book. The industry had its heyday in the 1860s but ceased in 1950 because demand had fallen due to the increasing use of plastic.

The Heritage Osier Beds were planted in Twyford in 2016 by members of the Twyford and Ruscombe Local History Society. Three types of willow are grown: *Salix triandra* (almond willow), *S. viminalis* (basket willow) and a hybrid red.

Each year, around December, the Osier is coppiced. The long, flexible shoots (the withies) are used in basketwork, although unfortunately last year's crop could not be used as our basket maker was unable to hold her usual classes because of social distancing restrictions. Do let me know if you have a use for the cut willow. It is currently standing in water until ready for **stripping** in early summer.



THE MEMORY OF ELMS

Duncan Fisher

Memories can be such fleeting things. The large stumps of trees within the hedgerows of Essex, for me, long enough ago that I had not yet learnt the names of trees. Sometime hence, but somehow grafted in my mind, the rediscovery of such remains slowly returning to the soil led me to try and imagine, like an archaeologist building an image of a Roman villa from an uncovered footprint of walls, each tree that once stood in these places. But I had not the memory of a mature elm tree to draw on and, having only witnessed veteran oaks at such girth, I stitched together in my mind an altogether misleading scene.

This may not be strictly true. I had visited Brighton through early childhood so must have seen elm trees there but I had not thought to take the tree out of this city context.

By the time I could recognise the genus I was lucky enough to be living far enough north in Scotland to still be able to see large specimens. I remember pointing out the two main species as curios of the parks and botanic gardens; occasionally lining a street or dominating a private garden. The trees persisted in the backdrop of my life there and, regretfully now, maybe I too willingly dismissed them as inevitably doomed and unworthy of much further study.

I could probably find the odd photograph taken during those times with these trees, slightly blurred, framing the background. However, the strongest memories of those trees I can now conjure are probably of the flowers, so early and so welcome as we emerged from winter, and the same so abundant on the ground after a strong wind.

I have returned to the fields and hedgerows from my youth and seen the ongoing cycle of sucker growth and die-back of elms. The landscape that I grew up with must have looked so greatly different from that of my parents and yet this is not something that we talk about. It's as if we've foolishly assumed that our individual memories are shared in common.

Now, with the elms being planted locally, I wonder what the future landscape will look like and whether the elm will be a common feature of hedgerows again. The optimist in me thinks that it may be just a couple of generations that will live with the absence. However, the pessimist worries that there will be no memory of elms passed on to inspire a restoration of the species.



A mature elm at the SE entrance to Preston Park in Brighton in 2015

Photo by Alex Z cco1.0

I happened to be talking to Barbara Stagles and the conversation turned to the subject of elms and I somewhat clumsily expressed my concern that the memory of elms locally might well be lost. Barbara very kindly sent me a paragraph or two of her memories of elms along with some images. This got us both thinking whether there might be others in the group who would be interested in sharing their memories or photographs. If there is sufficient interest then maybe we can record them with a local museum.

If you have any memories and/or photos of historic elms, especially of mature elms along hedgerows, please send them to WDVTA and they will be sent to Barbara Stagles, who is coordinating this effort.

In the meantime, here is a verse originally published by Rene Rapin (I believe) but translated by John Evelyn and included in his Sylva (vol 1):

*An elm for graceful verdure, bushy bough,
A lofty top, and a firm rind allow.
Plant elm in borders, on the grass-plots list,
Branches of elm into thick arbours twist;
A gallery of elm draw to the end,
That eyes can reach, or breath'd race extend.*

REMEMBERED ENGLISH ELM TREES IN THE 1940 - 1960s

Barbara Stagles

Growing up in Bristol, I remember family excursions to the country mainly in Gloucestershire and Somerset. Elm trees were to be seen everywhere, growing especially in the hedgerows that surrounded the fields. To young eyes their oval leaves and greenish seed heads were not especially distinctive, as were those of other trees like oaks, sycamores and chestnuts. At guide camps we avoided picking up elm branches for our fires because the wood did not burn well and was very smoky.

What was distinctive about elms though were the unusual silhouettes of mature trees as seen from a distance. Like historic sailing ships they stood tall, their trunks like masts reaching to the sky and their canopies like billowing leafy sails. And the strange thing was that the leaf clusters at the tops of the trees were often larger than those lower down. This shape was so unlike the more regular, rounded canopies of other trees that you couldn't fail to identify them.

We took them for granted as permanent features of the countryside and when Dutch elm disease struck, we grieved that we had not appreciated their beauty nearly enough. All we have for now in our hedgerows are the remaining roots and young growth of these beautiful trees, sadly doomed to die when they reach some 6-8 metres.

I don't really have any memory of elm trees, which I much regret. When we moved to this area, we looked at a house in Beech Lane, Earley, which had a mature elm tree in its front garden. We were told it had been injected with something that would protect it from DED. We didn't buy that house and the tree was subsequently felled. We did have a mature elm in the field behind the house we bought in Spencers Wood, but it fell soon after we moved in. There had been a mature elm in our back garden, but that had been felled before 1976. We still have the remnants of its stump.

There are [postcards](#) from 1906 showing elm trees along Station Road in Wokingham and you can see some photos of mature elms on the Woodland Trust [website](#).

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

SULV – Site of Urban Landscape Value

LNR – Local Nature Reserve

POS – Public Open Space

LWS – Local Wildlife Site

Green spaces are protected under the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) and green spaces include "urban spaces that provide a tranquil oasis". In their '[Local Green Space Topic Paper](#)' WBC mention three SULVs within the Borough. These are Joel Park (also a POS, LWS and LNR); land to the east of Maiden Erlegh Lake (also a POS); and land south of Reading Road, Bulmershe (containing a POS, LWS and LNR).

SPECIES IN FOCUS - ENGLISH ELM (*ULMUS PROCERA*)

10 miscellaneous facts about the English Elm.

1. In spite of many suggestions that the species arrived in the UK during the Bronze Age or earlier, molecular studies have shown that all the English Elms in Britain were/are derived from a single clone brought to Britain, via Spain, by the Romans 2,000 years ago. Elms were used to provide supports for vines and elm pollen has been found in Roman vineyards in Britain.
2. The specific name *U. procera*, dates from 1796, and is still widely used, but more recently alternatives have been used (especially in Spain): *U. minor* subsp *procera*; *U. minor* var. *vulgaris* and *U. minor* 'Atinia'. *U. minor* is the field elm.
3. Frequently referred to as the common elm in England, it was known as 'Horse May' in Cornwall. More recently, especially in Europe, it's called the Atinian elm.
4. In AD50 the Roman agronomist Columella, advocating the use of elm for vine supports, recommending a barren tree that was vegetatively propagated. This was the Atinian elm. The identification of the English elm with the Atinian clone was first proposed in the 19th century.
5. These elms are hermaphrodites, with both male and female reproductive parts within the same flower; but in UK and Spain they are sterile, reproducing only vegetatively, by root suckers. In 19th century, they were also propagated by grafting on to wych elm rootstock to prevent suckering.
6. Being clonal, they have little genetic variability and all are susceptible to Dutch Elm Disease (DED) which has devastated elms in Britain. Mature elms are only rarely found beyond Brighton and Edinburgh. The oldest surviving elm in England is one of the 'Preston Twins' in Preston Park, Brighton. Both had girths over 6m in 2008 (as shown in the photo above). The larger one lost two limbs in 2017 and was felled in 2019. In spite of the *cordon sanitaire* around Brighton, it had succumbed to DED.
7. They can still be found in our hedgerows, but once they reach a height of 6-8m, they succumb to DED.
8. English elm was the first elm to be genetically engineered to resist disease, at the University of Abertay Dundee. Its sterility means there is no danger of introgression (transfer of genetic information from one species to another) in the countryside.
9. Fine mature trees occur in USA, and Australia, as well as Canada and New Zealand. Royal Parade in Melbourne has a double avenue of 400 English Elms, planted in 1897 and 1910-15. They look majestic, as the photo (right) shows.
10. In Wokingham, there's an apartment block in Broad Street called "The Elms". It's a fine Georgian building, but the original "Elms" was built in the 15th century. The garden of this house became Elms Field and is now Elms Park, where the two new disease resistant elms have been planted



MISSING TREES

Sarah Swatridge

Back in July 2018 I took a photo (*lhs*) of 'The Living Bridge in Winnersh'. Winnersh Bridge forms a pedestrian link from Winnersh station to Winnersh Business Park. It spans 62m over five lanes of traffic. It supported 9 mature trees. These trees help reduce surface water run-off, and are contained in specially built pits with removable covers that blend into the footpath. Irrigation pipes and drainage are concealed.



The *rhs* photo was taken in Feb 2021. There was Heras fencing up and so, unfortunately, I was unable to take the photo from the same place. There is obviously some work going on with the bridge but no one was around to tell me what. I hope they are replacing the trees. It was quite a feature and looked great.

Let us know if you have any information about this.



There's a Green Bridge in Arborfield for pedestrians and cyclists. The photo here (from [Wokingham Today](#)) shows a model of this bridge. You can also watch a [video](#) of its construction. It crosses the new Arborfield Cross Relief Road linking the A327 Reading Road with the A327 Eversley Road.

THEN AND NOW

MRN **8053** in July 2017 and February 2021. Parklands in Three Mile Cross, Shinfield.



The area is being developed as 'Stanbury View' estate (planning application **171737**).

THE BIG TWYFORD TREE PLANTING PROJECT - FROM ACORN TO "FOREST"

Both Stephen Loyd and Sarah Swatridge sent me accounts of this event and I've combined them here. Sarah and Alison Griffin took the photos.

A young girl collects an acorn from a local oak tree. It is potted and nurtured. The time comes to plant it out - but where? Her mother, Rebecca Howard, an artist living in Twyford, thought of the local Stanlake Meadow recreation ground and contacted the Parish Council which quickly agreed. Rebecca wanted to show her daughters how they could make a difference to the area in which they live. Her simple idea snowballed as she began to realise how many other families were interested in taking part. She organised a crowd funding project for other residents and groups to plant their own trees. Very soon the number of sponsored trees exceeded sixty.



On 5th December last year, during National Tree Week, 77 native trees were planted - hornbeam, silver birch, oak, field maple, alder, wild cherry, mulberry and beech. Some were dedicated to those who have passed away, others to lives just beginning. It was particularly good to have such a positive outdoor family event in spite of the Covid restrictions. The event was extremely well organised. All the social distancing rules was observed, with separate households arriving at their allocated time to plant their tree. There was a lovely family atmosphere with much laughter.

Feedback has been good and follow-up planting is hoped to

take place in 2021, when the planting site will be extended to an existing copse which has been adopted by a local Friends group for ongoing management.

During the digging for planting, many stag beetle larvae were uncovered in the first few inches of turf. They are white grubs with orange heads and you could see their forelegs if you looked closely. They spend up to 7 years feeding underground before flying, mating and dying. They were carefully re-homed nearby.

Twyford Parish Council have generously funded a new water supply to the site, and there will be a follow up event in the Spring to

demonstrate the need for regular watering and weeding by each tree's sponsor. The grass cutting regime at Stanlake Meadow will be changed to allow grass to grow long and soil to de-compact around the trees.

This project is an excellent example of co-operation and enthusiasm by local residents, the Parish Council and a local tree supplier, **The Big Plant Nursery**.

The event was **featured** in the Jan-Feb issue of the 'RG10' magazine.



Veteran Tree Survey snapshot

FEBRUARY
UPDATE

118

new trees added

18%

with girths $\geq$ 5m

358

new photos

193

updated records
(including adding
photos)

5

lost trees

DID YOU KNOW?... There is an on-line map of tree graffiti.

Dates, pictures, poems and royal marks can all be found throughout the New Forest. The New Forest National Park Authority have asked visitors to take photos and note the locations of the historical 'arborglyphs'.

These include concentric circles, or 'Witch's Marks', thought to ward off evil spirits, and the 'King's Mark.' This is a broad arrow head, and was used to identify trees reserved for building Royal Navy ships. Once iron and steel were introduced for shipbuilding, the trees remained untouched and still bear their royal mark.

You can click on a green pin on the [map](#) to see the photos. So far 88 have been recorded. You can also [contribute](#) new findings.

Whilst being asked to find these graffiti, people are asked not to add to them, not to carve any new marks on trees!

GROWING WOOD IN THE LABORATORY

This is the title of an article in "[The Times](#)" sent to me by Kerry. Scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology hope to grow wood so that wooden furniture can be produced without chopping down trees. They use living cells extracted from the leaves of the zinnia plant and a gel, infused with plant hormones to encourage the cells to produce lignin. The gel is formed into a scaffold in which the wood grows. This scaffold can be formed into any shape. One of the engineers working on this project is quoted as saying "Yes, you could theoretically grow a table directly - fully assembled." So far, they have only produced tiny wood-like structures, but these were grown indoors, without soil or sunlight.

REMARKABLE TREES



MRN **545** - This lovely old oak was photographed by Sarah Swatridge during the re-survey of Charvil. It's visible to the public in a private garden, off Old Acres Lane, Charvil.

Originally recorded in February 2007, with a girth of 4.01m at 1.5m, when re-measured by Sarah in December 2020, its girth was 4.52m. That's an increase of 51cm in 13.8 years - 3.7cm/yr, which is a good growth rate. The average for an English oak tree is 2.5cm/yr. The estimated age of a maiden oak with this girth is 260yrs (germinating in 1760), but this is a pollard and so it could be 580 years old (germinating in 1440).

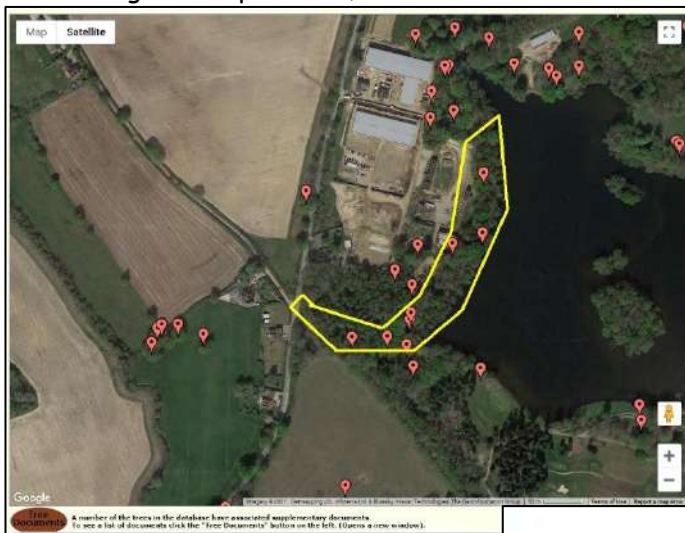
It's classed as a veteran by the Ancient Tree Inventory and has the classic veteran features of holes, water pockets and a hollowing trunk.



SADLY DEPARTED – MRNS 5493, 5494, 5495, 5496, 5499, 5505 AND 5507

Just as I was about to send out this issue of 'Tree Watch', we heard about the felling of many trees (possibly 200-300) in Arborfield last month, including the ones listed above and perhaps others. All these recorded trees, six oaks and an ash, had girths of 3m or more when measured in 2011. They would obviously be larger now. All were classified as veteran by the Ancient Tree Inventory. These lost trees are in addition to the five recorded in the latest database update: MRNS 244 & 529 (died) and 1095, 3595 & 5502 (felled).

The Google® map below, shows the area of



destruction (the red markers are trees recorded in our database). It's Bearwood Lake Dam, off Mole Road and was covered by TPO 1462/2013. However, because the lake is classified as a reservoir under the Reservoirs Act (1975) and the trees were considered to pose a risk, the felling of these trees did not require permission from WBC. The permission to fell given in December (planning application **203483**) was a formality. The potential risk relates to the dam instability and possible flooding. A detailed **inspection report** of the site from March 2015 is attached to this

permission. The tree work specified that the stumps were to be cut to 1m above ground level.

The felling has caused a lot of anger amongst members of the public and some councillors. There was no prior publicity. WDVTA and Wokingham Tree Wardens were not informed about it. The first we heard was when Richard Cave, and Paul Fishwick alerted us independently of the devastation. Richard sent us these photos and a **video**.

It is a shame that local people were not notified about this in advance. It's an even greater shame that an alternative engineering solution couldn't be found, one that did not involve destroying the trees; but obviously cutting down the trees was the cheapest option, and that's still what counts, despite the climate emergency.

If we get any more information about this, it will be posted on our **website**.



"A culture is no better than its woods."
W H Auden, "Bucolics II: Woods" (pub 1955)

RECOMMENDED READING AND VIEWING

NATURAL ENGLAND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTION MANUAL (NE751)

Following our Climate Emergency Talk, Duncan Fisher recommended this free-to-download manual, in which Natural England have assessed the vulnerability to climate change of different habitat types (including different types of woodland). It summarises risks and possible adaption responses.

TVERC AUTUMN CONFERENCE

Last November's conference - in case you missed it

ARBORICULTURAL ASSOCIATION AWARD FOR 2020

As mentioned by Alison. Read a summary of Jill's work (which does not mention that in her very early career, she was a ranger at Dinton Pastures) and watch her presentation video.

The awards were instigated in 1982 and the list of **past awardees** includes Alan Mitchell (1984), David Lonsdale (1999), Ted Green (2003), Glynn Percival (2017) and Tony Kirkham (2019).

PLANTING TREES – GOOD OR BAD?

This "Inside Science" episode from Radio 4 discusses biodiversity - planting trees for good and bad, reforestation versus afforestation, Kew's 10 golden rules for planting trees and the Kew **conference** - plus phytomining.

FSC – PRIMARY RESOURCES

If you have primary aged children or grandchildren, you should check out these Field Studies Council's YouTube videos. One entitled "**What to do on a walk**" (45 minutes) concerns trees. It joins the team at FSC Flatford Mill in Suffolk, to learn how to identify trees and figure out their height and age in a fun way. It's not just trees, there are tortoises too! You can also **download** the associated worksheet.

There's a lot of wind noise in some sections and the video could be better - especially when showing guides.

RESTORATION OF THE EMM BROOK

Information from the **South East Rivers Trust**. There will be a talk about this project after our AGM on 30th March. The main site also features a page on the **Charvil Meadows project** featured in the last issue.

WOKINGHAM (TOWN) VIRTUAL MUSEUM

There's no tree collection (yet) - but wouldn't it be nice to have one for significant trees of Wokingham - perhaps a future project? There is a photo of "**The Elms**" referred to in 'Species in Focus'.

"SPECTACULAR 'TREE OF LIFE' FOUND IN AUSTRALIAN LAKE"

Enjoy this 2-minute video.

"FINDING TRANQUILLITY IN ANCIENT WOODLAND"

Enjoy some nice photos. It was nice to see this featured amongst the top stories by the BBC news app.

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



Sarah Swatridge saw this on a walk in Twyford, near Stanlake Park.
All Star Wars fans will appreciate it.



Some developers are proud of trees.
Unfortunately, they aren't identified (yet).

Some sources used in this issue: all web pages accessed 25-02-2021 (unless stated otherwise) Links embedded in the text are not repeated here.
Email me if you want a list of them.

p11-Species in Focus: Mitchell, Alan (1974) 'A Field Guide to the Trees of Britain and Northern Europe' ISBN 0 00 212035 6
<https://www.nature.com/articles/4311053a> <https://www.ipni.org/?q=Ulmus%20procera>
<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/british-trees/a-z-of-british-trees/english-elm/>
<https://www.wokingham-tc.gov.uk/museum/document/WTH0382> <https://www.conservationfoundation.co.uk/elms>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulmus_minor_%27Atinia%27 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Parade,_Melbourne

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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.