



On 9th February, we had **8561** trees in our database and **13,470** photographs

Welcome to the latest issue of Tree Watch.

We are all hoping to be able to meet up for walks and talks this year, but it's early days yet. Following his talk at our on-line 'Favourite Tree' evening last May, Dick Greenaway invited us to join an extended "Gin and Tonic Toddle" walk on 20th February (report in next issue). In spite of the various restrictions imposed on us all last year, WDVTA managed to hold some impressive meetings. There's an excellent review of 2021 on our [website](#). Because our talks were held on-line, we were able to record some them and you can still watch them on the [event presentations](#) section of the publications page.



The photos here, taken last November, are of just one row of veteran trees we've recorded at Hall Farm in Arborfield. We all hope they are not lost if the Hall Farm development goes ahead.

If they are kept, they'll probably be surrounded by houses.



There are several requests for help in this issue both practical and asking for information. Do get in touch if you can help in any way.

The next issue of Tree Watch will be May 2022 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

As usual, links to on-line references are in green and clicking on the item names in the contents list will take you to the appropriate page

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Events - March - May 2022

❖ Thursday 21st April 19:30 - AGM St Paul's Parish Rooms; Free, donations welcome. Large free car park adjacent.

Non-WDVTA events:

❖ Friday 18th & Saturday 19th March 10:00-12:45 - TVERC Spring Recorders' Conference, via GoogleMeets. Free, but need to book. See their [website](#) for details.

❖ Saturday 2nd April 10:30-13:30 - Ancient tree walk at Petworth - **booking required**.

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

TREE WATCHING FROM MY CHAIR

Alison Griffin

A belated Happy New Year to you all. We have just held our first committee meeting of the year and Kerry and Martin are planning events where we hope Covid risks will be low enough to be manageable for us to have face to face meetings and activities again. I do hope so and I look forward to seeing many of you at the AGM and talks and events over the summer and autumn.



Tree Watch is always worth re-reading and looking back at the Autumn issue, there was a splendid front page full of autumn tree and fungi colour and inside there was a reference to a mimosa tree. This links well to my photographs for this Tree Watch. The first is the blossom on a mimosa tree. I see this frequently; and with snowdrops and hazel catkins, it's mimosa blossom that always makes



me feel that spring and warmer weather will come along before too long. Before Christmas I visited Greys Court near Henley and enjoyed seeing the house, but it was rather too cold to wander around the grounds so we decided to head to the walled garden. There were a few trees on the side of the path we took and (as one does) I was looking at them in passing and suddenly was literally stopped in my tracks by this tree trunk with its wonderful hues of reds and browns.

I went back to ask some of the volunteer gardeners what species it was and one said that they thought it was a 'cinnamon bark tree'. After trying all sorts of book and internet searches to see if that fitted the leaves and shape etc and getting nowhere, I resorted to the tried and tested option of asking Coralie. By return came the reply 'a lovely old strawberry tree (*Arbutus unedo*)'. The tree itself doesn't stand out from a distance as you can see here, but that trunk is something special. The name comes from the fruit looking a little like strawberries and the 'unedo' in the name means 'eat just one' as the fruit are edible but you probably won't eat more than one! Once I had the right species name, I was able to find an internet [article](#) on the trees and grounds of Greys Court, including the strawberry tree. There are many more interesting trees to see there on a warmer day.

What a difference a tree makes



The far-left photograph is very typical of so many in our records, a good mature street-side English oak, now unfortunately too close to not just the road but a junction which needs to be altered. This is just south of Wokingham town centre where the junction between Molly Millars Lane and the

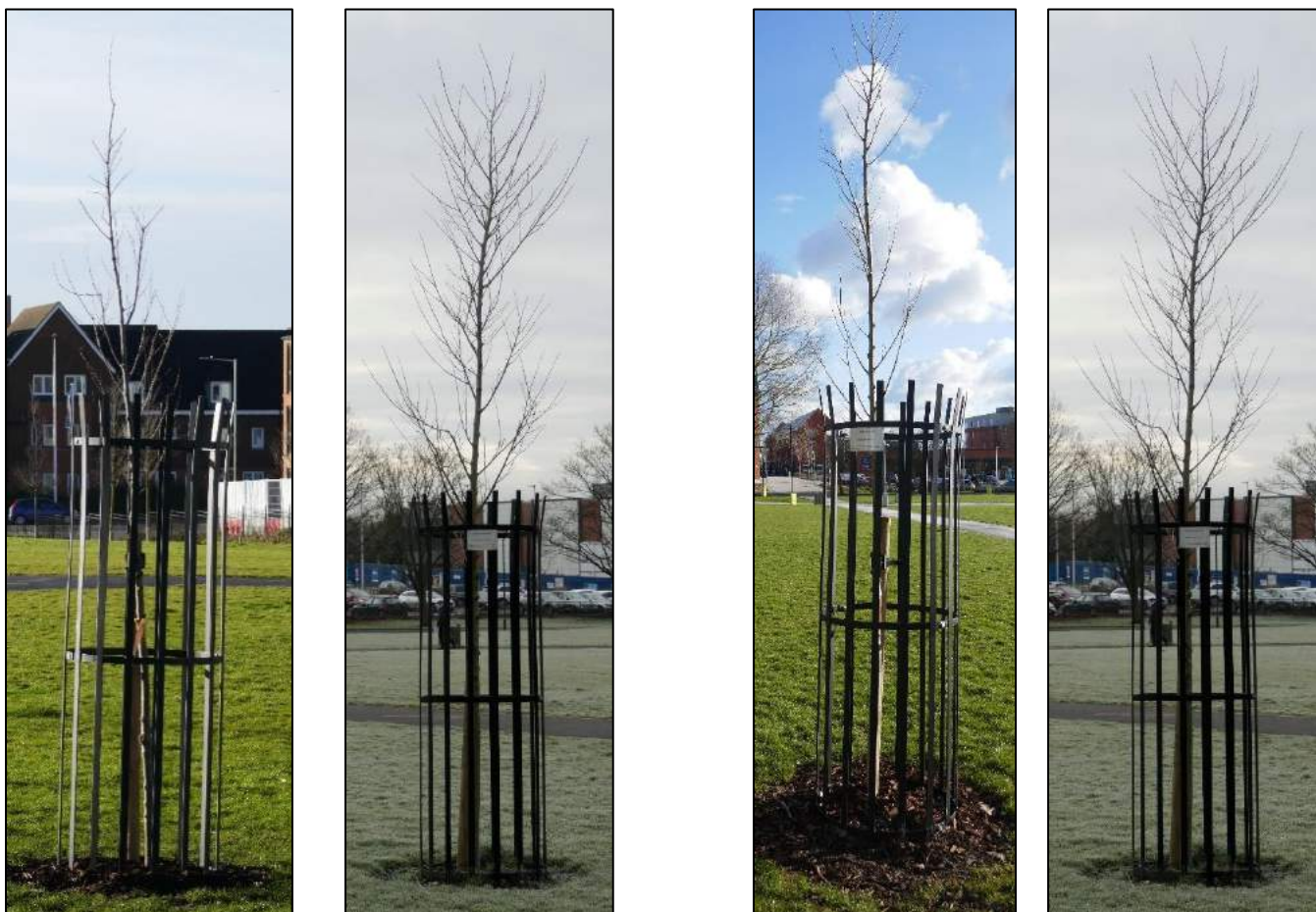
Finchampstead Road will be widened to cope with increased future traffic. I did comment on the planning application for the new road design and asked if there were potential alternative layouts which would allow the tree to be retained, but there really were none and in November I was sent an email to tell me that the tree ([MRN 1729](#)) would be felled on December 5th. I drive past the tree every time I go into town, so I was aware that the felling had taken place; but I am concentrating on the road traffic and pedestrians as I drive, so it wasn't until I went on foot to take the update photographs for the database to send to Elaine that I realised what a difference that tree loss has made. Walking along, the tree attracted the eye and you then ignored the multitude of overhead cables and all the street furniture. Now it has gone, the cables, poles and lights are all too visible and unattractive. What a difference.

Happy Birthday

From a lost tree to three we welcomed a year ago, the three elm trees planted in Charvil ([W119](#)-right) and Wokingham's Elms Field. Sarah Swatridge and I have



taken new photographs and you can see how much the trees have grown in just a year. The photos below show the Elms Field Wokingham Society elm tree (W121 - left) and the Wokingham Town Council elm tree (W120) in Jan 2021 and Jan 2022



Help needed to look after another new tree

In the last Tree Watch I wrote about the five English oak saplings we had bought as Barbara's Jubilee Trees. Oliver Ward from Heartwood has kindly planted two of these new saplings to replace Diamond Jubilee trees which had been lost. He has offered to look after one of these in Swallowfield, but we need a member who lives near Winnersh Meadows, or who walks regularly in Winnersh Meadows, to keep an eye on the new Jubilee tree he has planted there.

Please get in touch if you are able to help with monitoring this tree in Winnersh Meadows.

Thank you for the suggestions for sites for the remaining three saplings. We have shortlisted sites and will be visiting them and seeking permission for planting from the landowner and will plan the planting for October or November this year.

Leonardo Di Caprio has a tree named after him

The first new plant species to be described in 2022 is an evergreen tree native to Cameroon's Ebo forest. It has been named *Uvariopsis dicaprio* to **commemorate** Leonardo Di Caprio's campaigning efforts to protest the Ebo forest from logging.

"Should ancient trees be designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest?"

T Green, British Wildlife, 2001 vol 12 p164-6

DOREEN DYE 1929-2021

Doreen sadly passed away on 24th November 2021 in her 93rd year. Her son, Julian, told us she was frustratingly house-bound for the last couple of years and her death was a release from the torment of a failing body, and yet she kept her humour, compassion and common-sense invective until the end.

She was a founder member of WDVTA and our coordinator for Wokingham Without parish. She was also a Wokingham Without Parish councillor, and a committee member of The Thames Valley branch of the Royal Society of Biology for many years. Doreen particularly promoted ecological management, and the protection of plant species to benefit bees, butterflies and birds.

The photo below shows Doreen beside one of the veteran trees she recorded (MRN **1132**) in June 2007.



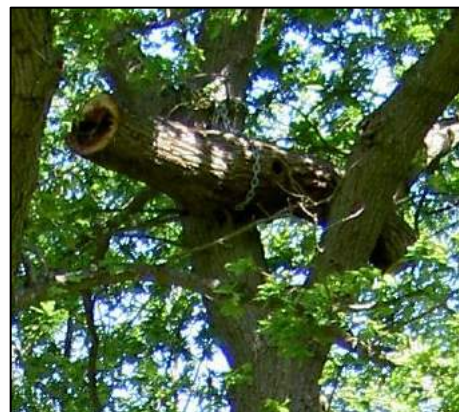
Her appreciation ceremony and funeral were held on 3rd December at **Sheepdrove Farm** on the Lambourne downs, where she was buried, appropriately, in a woodland grave. Sheepdrove is an organic farm in the heart of the Berkshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and dedicated to sustainable agriculture and re-wilding.

Amongst the many tributes to Doreen are those from Barbara Stagles, Alison Griffin and Kerry Clissold. Barbara remembers her, in particular, coming to her Folly in its early days and identifying the wild flowers and plants. Her biological knowledge was very impressive and she was a regular supporter of many events and activities concerned with environmental issues. She was a great promoter of talks and books being given by authorities in the field. Barbara will remember her as a stalwart, green campaigner and an independent and critical thinker. She certainly made her mark in environmental circles and it is sad to have lost her. Alison recalls that the committee and many members knew Doreen well and have many memories of meeting her at events and meetings. She was well known for nearly always being at the back of walking groups as she would have stopped after finding interesting plants along the way - and was nearly left behind on more than one occasion! Kerry remembers a great day at Blenheim, with Doreen in the thick of the group and particularly likes this photo (*right and above with Kerry*) of Doreen and the group with an amazing tree behind them. She added, "Doreen educated me along the way that day too, and we didn't even lose her".



SAFETY FIRST

At **Burnham Beeches**, as at so many other sites, when it comes to old trees there can be a conflict between safety and retaining the tree for its ecological value. Recently, a tree on Hawthorn Lane was deemed to be in need of immediate removal, but it had a hollow trunk and was great habitat. They cut the trunk in as large a piece as possible and then, using lifting equipment, strapped it to the trunk of a sound tree nearby. Now the tree is safe and any wildlife that was using it can, hopefully, continue to do so. You might remember WBC doing something similar in Holt Lane, Wokingham Town, when a tree (MRN 452) with a bat roost had to be felled. The limb containing the roost was attached to the nearby MRN 466, (photo right).



National Tree Week, at the end of November, seems a long time ago now; but since it was just after the last issue was published, the events are reported here. There were major tree planting events in both Twyford and Charvil.

TWYFORD TREE FESTIVAL

Stephen Lloyd

Following storm Arwen, which destroyed a large number of trees around the country, Sunday November 28th dawned cold, but bright and sunny, for Twyford's Tree Festival. The event was held in Stanlake Meadow to celebrate planting a further 30 trees to bolster 2020's planting of over 70 trees to improve the biodiversity of this popular recreation area.

The Festival was supported by a range of attractions to provide interest for families, whilst the tree planting by local people took place during the day. Similarly to the initial planting, trees were sponsored by individuals and local organisations.

WDVTA had a stall at the event to raise awareness of veteran trees in Twyford and Ruscombe and to interest visitors in joining the Association.

The photo above (taken by Jan Challis) shows Martin Haslam and Alison Griffin manning the stall. The lovely carved owls and mushrooms were carved and donated by Steve Radford. All of them were sold, and raised £85 for WDVTA funds. Steve's generosity is much appreciated.



Other groups represented included the Woodland Trust, BBOWT, and Freely Fruity, as well as local environmental organisations. Carol singers ended the day's events. Many visitors were asked to nominate a word to express their feelings for trees (excluding the overused adjectives amazing or iconic!) and the most quoted were magnificent and green. Families were also drawn in large numbers to Martin Woolner's brilliant hi-tech magnification of invertebrates living in leaf litter.

[Martin is giving us a talk on 26th May entitled "Life in Leaf Litter" at St Paul's Parish Rooms - Ed.]

TREE PLANTINGS IN CHARVIL

Sarah Swatridge

This is a roundup of planting in Charvil during National Tree Week - end November/beginning of December 2021. There's also a nice report in the Sonning Parish Magazine (page 27).

A good number of Charvil residents (of all ages) mucked in and planted a large selection of trees to enhance our beautiful village. During the week these volunteers planted an elm, a community orchard and 24 silver birches.

The disease-resistant **SPANISH FIELD ELM** (*Ulmus minor* 'Ademuz') was planted to help attract White-letter Hairstreak butterflies whose caterpillars live solely on elm leaves. The butterflies can be seen between mid-June and August. This is the 7th elm to be planted in Charvil since December 2018 and the 295th tree planted as part of Project Hairstreak, which has featured in previous issues of Tree Watch. This tree is number W141 in our Commemorative and Special Trees Inventory.

After months of planning Charvil now has a **COMMUNITY ORCHARD**. It was officially opened by Theresa May on 28th November. In the photo below she is with our Charvil coordinator, Barry Anderson.



Six small apple trees were planted in this first phase of planting. Eventually, it is hoped to have 30 trees in our orchard. This is a community effort, with the trees and the equipment to plant them all provided by local residents. Some people sponsored a tree, whilst some volunteered to do the planting. Jim Cartmell, a garden maintenance man from Old Bath Road was very supportive too. A group has been set up to monitor the orchard and do any required maintenance, such as watering during periods of drought.

The six apples planted are different varieties:

- Charles Ross - named after the head gardener at Welford Park, Newbury. It was originally named Thomas Andrew Knight (after the president of London Horticultural Society) and under this name won the RHS Award of Merit in 1899.

- Winston - raised by William Pope (also from Welford Park, Newbury) in 1920. It is a cross between Cox's Orange Pippin and Worcester Pearmain.
- John Standish - believed to have been raised in about 1873, by a nurseryman called John Standish of Ascot, Berkshire.
- Orleans Reinette - an old French late-season apple variety. Its fruit are firm rather than crisp.
- Strawberry Orange Pippin - first recorded in 1874.
- Beauty of Bath - originated from Bailbrook, near Bath in 19th century. It received a first-class certificate from the RHS in 1887.



ST PATRICK'S RECREATION GROUND. Twenty-four silver birches were planted in eight groups of three. This entire project was funded by a very generous local resident. The trees are young 'whips' at the moment but will look stunning in the years to come.

One small-leaved lime was also planted to replace a tree that had to be felled near the children's play area. The weather was cold but, at least for the most part, it was dry.

Further planting will continue in the spring with a hedge that needs replanting.

OTHER COMMUNITY ORCHARDS



Also on 28th November, 100 apple trees were planted in the community orchard in **Winnersh Meadows (W116)** - photo left.

So far, we have recorded 12 **community orchards** in our *Commemorative and Special Trees Inventory*; but two of them have no details yet. These are in Gipsy Lane, Wokingham Town and Pitts Lane in Earley. The Tree Council's **orchard project** map show just one school in the Borough, St Mary's Junior School in Shinfield. I've also been told there's an orchard in Buckhurst Meadow, Wokingham Town.

Do let me know if you know anything about these, or of any others. I'm sure we don't know about all the

community orchards in the Borough. If you do visit any, please send me some photos.

Wouldn't it be nice if they were all mentioned on the relevant parish/town websites (some are, but not all); and there should be a page or section devoted to them on the WBC website.

TREE PROTECTION

We are all aware of the limitations of TPOs and for many years there has been the desire to have some statutory legislation protecting important trees in the same way that listed buildings are protected. There have been a few serious attempts to get a statutory register of heritage trees, but no success yet.

The Tree Council launched a 'Green Monuments' campaign in 2003. One of its aspirations was to create such a register.

In 2013 WDVTA participated in another scheme **TreeAH** (tree assessment for heritage status). The system, developed by **TreeAZ** had been undergoing field testing in a number of



countries and was well developed. We submitted six **nominations**, and had more ready to go, but it came to nothing. *The photo above shows one of our heritage tree nominations. It's an English oak (MRN 6932), a relic of our past landscape in the middle of Elizabeth Park in Barkham - a housing estate built between 1984 and 1989.*

Later in 2013 the Tree Council organised a symposium, attended by Jeremy Barrell from TreeAZ and the Woodland Trust, as well as, amongst others, Stephen Loyd representing WDVTA. It seemed successful and they proposed a non-statutory Green Monument listing, with the hope that it would eventually lead to the statutory protection of heritage trees. To support this a lottery fund bid was proposed and Jeremy Barrell suspended TreeAZ's efforts and planned to support the Tree Council initiative. I don't know what happened about the bid, but I can't find any reference to the Green Monuments scheme on any of the relevant website.

There are of course several lists of important trees, including our own Veteran Tree database, which is shared with ATI and TVERC as well as WBC. [See Acronyms below.] National schemes include TROBI and ATI. Both classify Champion trees (for height and girth). If we know that one of the trees in our database has a TROBI rating it's mentioned in the comment. There's a link to the ATI listing for all our trees on their inventory. ATI has other classifications: Tree of the Year (winner and shortlisted); Heritage trees and Trees of National Special Interest (TNSI) and there are also starred trees. The ATI **map** currently shows that 19 of our trees have been given TNSI status (identified by filtering for TNSI). The photo here shows one of them, a crack willow in Langley Mead in Shinfield (MRN 7810). There is currently only one tree in Berkshire on the ATI map classified as a Heritage tree, and that is in Woodley (MRN 7941).



There is, however, a non-statutory government recognised register, where we could register our heritage trees NOW. This is a register of 'Non-Designated Heritage Assets' (NDHAs). As defined in the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework), non-designated heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified (because of their heritage interest) as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets. As such, they do not have defined legal protection, but planners do have to take them into serious consideration. All local planning authorities (LPAs) should have such a list. **Wokingham** does. WBC has designated conservation areas and a **downloadable list** of buildings on this register (sadly none in Shinfield), but the list does not include small landscape areas or individual trees. If such areas or trees have a heritage value, they should be included in the NDHA. Obvious examples would be the grounds of Shinfield Grange in Cutbush Lane (shown below on a misty day in November and currently under threat of development); the four Wellingtonia avenues in the Borough, the double lime avenue in Barkham and any



tree planted to commemorate an important event. These are all listed in our '*Commemorative and Special Trees Inventory*' and could provide a basis for the expansion of WBC's current list. Since the TreeAH project didn't complete, we don't know whether our six nominations would have been successful; but there must be a good case for adding these to the NDHA list now.

I hope the Wokingham Tree Strategy, being developed by the council, will define the criteria by which trees and landscape features can be included in Wokingham's NDHA and in such a way that developers and planners are readily aware of them. For a start, they could look at the criteria developed for the heritage status assessment described on the *TreeAZ* website, which also details a methodology for assessing the importance of trees in the urban environment.

To facilitate this, we need information about any locally or nationally important people or events associated with any trees or landscape features; any stories about them that can be considered part of our heritage. If you think you have something of interest, please let me know and I can add it to our existing records. Hopefully we can convince the officials at WBC to include at least some of them in their NDHA.

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

TVERC - Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre

TROBI - Tree Register of Britain and Ireland

ATI - Ancient Tree Inventory (previously the Ancient Tree Hunt)

TNSI - Tree of National Special Interest (ATI designation)

NDHA - Non-Designated Heritage Assets

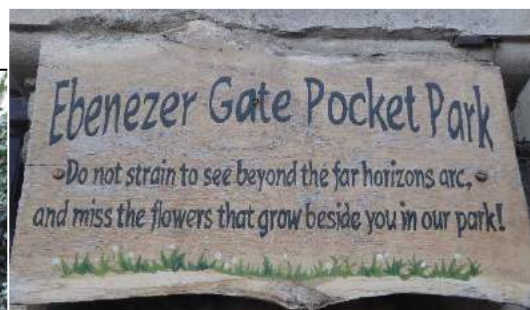
NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework

LPA - Local Planning Authority

POCKET PARKS.

Pocket Parks are, as the name suggests, small parks, often including trees, primarily for the enjoyment of people in urban areas, but they are also important areas for biodiversity.

Whilst in Bristol recently, I came across *Ebenezer Pocket Park*, a tiny area behind Ebenezer Gate (the entrance to the former Ebenezer Methodist Church) in



North Street. A community group called '*The Ebenezer Angels*' manage it. In 2015 it was a small patch of overgrown and fly-tipped land behind a stone archway, closed off to the public by a padlocked iron gate. In

2016 it took advantage of the government's first *Pocket Parks programme*, and, at a cost of £12,000, it became the attractive place it is today; with curved benches designed to create spaces for storytelling amongst new planting, including a '*help yourself*' herb garden.

For this government scheme, a pocket park was *defined* as "*a piece of land of up to 0.4 hectares (although many are around 0.02 hectares, the size of a tennis court) which may already be under grass, but which is*

unused, undeveloped or derelict." Each pocket park is an individual space tailored to the needs of the local area by the community group which has applied for the grant. It can be used for everything from a quiet escape from busy city life, to areas designed for physical exercise, growing vegetables, children's play or community events. That national programme had a budget of £1.5 million and resulted in the transformation of 87 neglected urban spaces. Looking at the interactive [map](#) of these sites, the closest to Wokingham, is [Cocksherd](#) Woodland Pocket Park in Slough. A second government [fund](#), in 2018, with a budget of £1.35m, saw the creation of another 68 pocket parks, none of which are local to us.

In London, another scheme ran from 2013-2015, providing £2m to create more than 100 parks across 26 London boroughs. These [projects](#) ranged from community orchards to edible bus stops.

Last December, in another round of government funding, a new 'Levelling Up Parks Fund' of £2m was [announced](#), to create over 100 new parks across the UK "to ensure equal access to parks in urban areas that are deprived of green space". The [Local Government Association](#) interprets this as money for pocket parks.

What are now called Pocket Parks have probably always existed; but have now become a world-wide movement with pocket parks existing across the Americas, Europe and Japan. Apparently, they first appeared in Europe in the aftermath of World War II, presumably in urban bombed areas

Northamptonshire can claim to be the first place in England to establish areas officially known as 'Pocket Parks'; following a 1984 project. Between then and 2015, 80 parks were established. They have their own dedicated [webpage](#) with an interactive map of the sites.

Of course, similar areas exist without being called [Pocket Parks](#). They may have no designation or they may fall into other categories, such as community gardens, and (especially, but not exclusively in USA) [neighbourhood commons](#), [urban open or green space](#), urban parks and vesty parks; as well as [parklets](#), parkettes and mini-parks. Whatever they are called, they are an excellent initiative. Please let me know if you visit any and send me some photos. Perhaps there are areas within Wokingham Borough that would qualify.

'Pocket Park' is such an evocative term, it's not surprising that architects use it to describe their landscaped features, such as that at [Winnersh Triangle](#), completed in September 2020. These photos below were taken last month. You can see a plan of the area and more photos on the [web](#).



DID YOU KNOW?... You can contribute to tree planting by having a coffee at the Rose Inn in Wokingham?

Barbara told me about this [scheme](#). For every coffee sold, the recently re-opened Rose Inn will contribute to the 'Oakman Inns Tree Nation' project. This funds the planting of trees in Madagascar and Tanzania to extend the 'Oakman Forest'. The project [website](#) gives impressive details of the overall project, as well as a counter, showing how many trees have been planted. By 3rd February, they have financed the planting of 385,989 trees.

Following Stephen's description of ash culling in the **last issue** (page 9), Sarah sent the following account.

LODDON NATURE RESERVE AT TWYFORD

Sarah Swatridge

At the end of November, we went for a walk around the nature reserve at the rear of the Waggon and Horses in Twyford. We walked clockwise around the lake. Initially, there didn't seem to be a great deal of change, although there was evidence of some maintenance work having been carried out. However, just past the railway bridges and the footpath leading to Dinton Pastures, suddenly the scenery opened up



letting in light through the lack of trees. The scene was totally different. It resembled a logging yard.



They must have cut down literally hundreds of ash trees which are now piled up. I suppose they will become hibernacula for frogs, toads and hedgehogs. Once or twice on this part of the walk, I felt quite disorientated as the landscape is so very different. It was a sorry sight but beautiful too with the extra light. It was wonderful to see a grey heron using one of the ash tree trunks as a perch.



SADLY DEPARTED

It's estimated that more than **8,000,000 trees** have been uprooted this winter, leaving some areas looking like battle fields; and that's before storms Dudley and Eunice. The **National Trust** reported that **Bodnant Gardens** in North Wales, Wallington in Northumbria and areas of the Lake District were amongst the worst hit during storm Arwen, last November. They put the cost of restoration at £3million.

This loss is in addition to the vast numbers of trees being felled because of disease. The **National Trust** plans to fell at least 30,000 ash trees because of ash dieback, as well as a similar number of larch trees in the Lake District because of an outbreak of *Phytophthora ramorum*.

SPECIES IN FOCUS - SWEET GUM (LIQUIDAMBAR STYRACIFLUA)

12 miscellaneous facts about Liquidambar.

1. A deciduous tree, native to SE USA and limited tropical montane regions of Mexico and Central America; it is a popular ornamental tree in temperate regions, particularly because its leaves turn brilliant yellow, orange, red, and purple in the autumn.
2. In the northern part of its range, and when planted in colder areas, the leaves are often killed by frost whilst still green; but in the extreme southern or tropical parts of its range, some trees are evergreen or semi-evergreen, with negligible autumn colour.
3. Alternative names include American Sweet Gum, American Red Gum (because of its reddish bark), American Storax, Hazel Pine, Bilsted, Satin Walnut, Star-leaved gum and Alligator Wood (because of the way plates of bark appear to look like reptilian scales).
4. *Liquidambar* (Linnaeus, 1753) is from the Latin *liquidus* ('fluid') and the Arabic *ambar* ('amber'), referring to the fragrant turpentine-like juice or gum which exudes from the tree; '*styraciflua*' means '*flowing with storax*' (resin).
5. It belongs to the small family, *Altingiaceae* (in the order *Saxifragales*) which has a good fossil record, originating in the Eocene, about 40 million years ago. The family is named for the genus *Altingia*, a previous generic name for *Liquidambar*, and named in honour of Willem Arnold Alting (1724-1800), a Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies.
6. Introduced into Britain and Europe in 1861 by John Banister, a missionary collector sent out by Bishop Compton, who planted it in the palace gardens at Fulham.
7. Whilst the five-pointed leaves of *Liquidambar* resemble those of maples (*Acer sp*), *Liquidambar* is easily distinguished from *Acer* as its leaves are alternate rather than opposite and it has distinctive hard, spiky fruits.
8. The spiky fruits remain intact for long after the seeds have been dispersed. They can be unpleasant to walk on and for this reason the tree has been banned as a street tree in some areas of USA.
9. *Liquidambar* may live to 400 years old. They are not large trees. The largest girth recorded by TROBI is 3.02m (in 2002) at Syon Park in Middlesex;. Syon has a superb collection of this species, dating from the late C18th; when Hugh Percy, 2nd Duke of Northumberland, imported them from eastern USA.
10. In the carpentry industry, the timber is referred to as '*satin walnut*'. It is one of the most important commercial hardwoods in the SE USA. The wood is bright reddish brown, with the sapwood nearly white, and may have black grain in the heartwood. It is heavy, straight, satiny, and close-grained; but not strong. It takes a beautiful polish, but warps badly in drying.
11. There are various varieties in cultivation, including a dwarf variety, called '*Gum Ball*', discovered in Tennessee in 1965 and grafted onto wildtype rootstock to create an attractive round crown
12. We have two entries in our '*Commemorative and Special Trees*' inventory: W060 recorded as a specimen tree in Wargrave (no photos) and **W142**, a short avenue in Spencers Wood (photos here).



REMARKABLE TREES - THE BRIDEGROOM'S OAK

This is a 500-year-old oak in northern Germany and is the only tree in the world with a postal address. It receives about six letters a week from people seeking a romantic partner! Rather appropriate for Valentine's month.



Sarah Swatridge mentioned this to me. As well as being a frequent contributor to *Tree Watch*, Sarah is an enthusiastic tree warden and surveyor, having recorded and checked many veteran trees in Charvil; but did you know she's an author? As well as short stories, she's had seven books published, with another coming out in March (a 'People's Friend' pocket novel "*The Gentleman Gypsy*"). Several of her stories are linked with trees and she has a short novel in the pipeline about a Tree Warden! One of her short stories, linked to the RSPB's 'Big Bird Count', and called (by the magazine) "*Blessings and Birds*" was published in 'My Weekly' last month. It was whilst looking at this issue that Sarah found mention of the Bridegroom's Oak in an "unusual facts" section. This photo of Sarah is taken from an article about planting elms in Wokingham and Charvil in last February's issue of *Tree Watch* (page 8).



The 'Bridegroom's Oak' is a registered monument and has its own German [website](#). In 2006, its girth was 5m. A hole in the trunk, reached by a ladder, is a public letter box, meaning anyone can open, read, take or answer letters.

Apparently, it got its name in the late 19th century, when the daughter of the head forester and the son of a Leipzig chocolate maker fell in love. Her father disapproved, so they secretly exchanged letters by leaving them in the hole in the tree's trunk. When he eventually gave his permission, they were married under the tree on 2nd June 1891.

There's a legend that if a girl walks round the tree three times under a full moon, thinking of her beloved, but not speaking or laughing; she will be married within the year.

On 25th April 2009 the oak itself was symbolically married to the 'Himmelgeist Chestnut', a horse-chestnut in Düsseldorf, which also had a postal address. The "marriage" lasted for six years until the chestnut died in 2015 and lost its postal address. Its sculptured trunk remains.



THE MACPHERSON LIME



Kerry Clissold sent me these photos of one of the small-leaved limes (*Tilia cordata*) in the Lindeboom Cemetery, Ypres. It is enveloping the gravestone of Private J. MacPherson, who died in July 1917, aged 33 years.



RECOMMENDED READING AND VIEWING *Just click on the green links.*

TREELINE BY BEN RAWLENCE - a 'Book of the Week' on Radio 4 (available until 13th March)

With climate change, the tree line in northern latitudes is moving farther north, and having some profound effects on species that live there, including humans.

TREE OF THE YEAR 2021 Voting in this annual Woodland Trust competition closed in December. There were 10 **candidates**. The winner, a lone **hawthorn** on the Scottish coast is the UK candidate for the '**European Tree of the Year 2022**' (voting ends 28th February).

The winner in 2020 was also a "lone" tree in Scotland, a **rowan**.

WOKINGHAM'S NEW PARKS With all the development going on in the Borough, there are several new parks, and these are listed on this WBC webpage. WBC have recently posted drone videos of some of their building works, such as the new **activity centre** at Dinton Pastures. It would be very nice if they could do this for our parks.

"THE KINGDOM: HOW FUNGI MADE OUR WORLD" (52 min video) This was recommended by Prof Martin Bidartondo in his excellent on-line talk to the RDNHS on 1st February. [It doesn't mention lichens!] You can also read a brief **description** of the film.

TALKING A LOT OF ROT - PART 1 and **PART 2** (100min each) Arboricultural Association discussions with Ted Green and Lynne Boddy.

IT'S TIME TO FEAR THE FUNGI The effects of climate change on pathogenic fungi.

THE WOODLAND TRUST MARKS ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR - a list of its achievements over the decades. Its **Annual Review** highlights the importance of volunteers.

TREE PLANTING AND REWILDING IN WEST SUSSEX - a virtual tour of the National Trust's Slindon Estate with Ray Mears and John Deakin (6½ mins).

THE BRACKNELL WILD WAY PROJECT - an ambitious project replanting areas of felled pine along the A3095, with final tree planting just completed.

THE VALUING NATURE PROGRAMME'S FINAL REPORT (96 pages) A description of the programme's achievements, and discussion about what worked well and what could be improved in future programmes.

INDONESIA'S BIODIESEL DRIVE IS LEADING TO DEFORESTATION

GATESHEAD GOATS EAT CHRISTMAS TREES TO HELP ENVIRONMENT

EARTH HAS MORE TREE SPECIES THAN WE THOUGHT

WHAT IS A BEE'S FAVOURITE FLOWER, AND WHY SHOULD WE CARE? (16mins) not trees, but an excellent and informative video from the Royal Society.

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

These photos were taken in Simons Wood in Finchampstead.



Some sources used in this issue: all web pages accessed 15-02-2022 (unless stated otherwise). Links embedded in the text are not repeated here. Email me if you want a list of them.

p13-Species in Focus: Mitchell, Alan (1974) 'A Field Guide to the Trees of Britain and Northern Europe' ISBN 0 00 212035 6

<http://www.treeregister.org/> (database accessed May 2013)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liquidambar_styraciflua <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altingiaceae>

<https://www.syonpark.co.uk/explore/about-syon-park/trees>

<https://www.frankpmatthews.com/catalogue/ornamental-trees/liquidambar/liquidambar-sty-gumball/>

p15-Bridegroom oak: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bridegroom%27s_Oak

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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 has recorded our trees.
We wouldn't have a database without you.