



On 20<sup>th</sup> August, we had **8,559** trees in our database and **13,707** photographs

Welcome to the latest issue of Tree Watch.

This lovely photo of a tawny owl in one of the veteran trees in Earley was taken by Anne Booth. A lovely illustration of the value of our veteran trees.



The photo left is one of those uploaded to our database this month. It's a horse chestnut, MRN [3377](#), in the University of Reading's Harris Gardens. If you have any photos of our recorded trees that you think should be included in our database then please let me know. Although the veteran tree survey has been completed, we are still refining the database (see [page 8](#)).

In this issue we feature several items of local interest, but the most important is the publication of the long-awaited WBC Tree Strategy ([page 2](#)).

We were delighted to hear that Angus Ross, an influential WDVTA supporter and WBC councillor has been declared an Honorary Alderman (see [page 3](#)).

The next issue of Tree Watch will be November 2023 and the copy deadline is 31<sup>st</sup> October. If you have any comments or responses to anything in this issue or contributions for future issues, please send them to: Elaine Butler - TreeWatch @ [wdvta.org.uk](mailto:wdvta.org.uk)

**Don't forget words underlined in dark green are links to further details (obviously not when printed).**

**Main items in this issue:-** ([click on title](#))

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Events - Sept-Nov 2023 - two events planned but dates not confirmed yet - check [website](#)

❖ 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> September - Decaying Wood Trail at high Standing Hill, Windsor great Park

❖ National Tree Week 26<sup>th</sup> November - 4<sup>th</sup> December - Trees in Art Evening

Non-WDVTa events:

❖ Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> September - 19:00 on-line - Berkshire LNRS introductory webinar for interested residents. (See [page 4](#)). Free but need to [register](#)

For up-to-date information - see the events page on our website - [wdvta.org.uk/events.php](http://wdvta.org.uk/events.php)

## **WBC TREE STRATEGY**

*Alison Griffin*

The Borough Council has now approved and published a Tree Strategy for the Borough. It is available on the council website through this link [Wokingham Engage](#) and links have also been put on our website.



The document provides the Council with a framework to help manage its tree assets and achieve a number of objectives relating to the protection of the local environment as well as promoting the health and welfare of everyone who lives, works or studies in the Borough.

Our involvement in lobbying for the development of this important local policy started at our AGM in Spring 2019. Jon Stokes from The Tree Council was one of the invited speakers and he encouraged us to work with the Borough Council to develop a tree strategy. We had support from council officers and Cllr Angus Ross, but funding the resource needed was an issue until the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) was started. As trees are a key element of the CEAP, this required the development of a strategy for the Borough's trees. Work was planned in 2021 and resourced in 2022 with the draft being issued for consultation in December. We had already submitted input at an early stage in 2022 and responded formally as an organisation to the consultation process in January this year.



The Tree Strategy has a lengthy early section covering the legal framework that the council must follow regarding trees. It is worth remembering that its presence is a very useful repository for future reference. This is followed by sections covering most of the topics that we wanted to see, such as developer responsibilities, replacement tree planting, hedges and hedge trees. There is a high level action plan at the end.

One request we made that we know has been included is that many of the images used in the report are from our repository, with acknowledgement to WDVTa (three are shown here). So, unlike Yorkshire Water, WBC will not be called out for using images of trees from outside the Borough. How many of the trees included can you recognise?

We have not yet had chance to identify how many of our consultation feedback suggestions have been included. We know that the exclusion of some key points will be a disappointment, but having this major policy document now part of the strategies for the Borough is a very positive step which, if implemented as intended, will significantly contribute towards the welfare of Wokingham's trees.



## TREE STRATEGY DATA

Appendix A of the [Tree Strategy](#) (follow the "Read the finished document" link to access the appendices) has some very interesting statistics concerning the tree cover in the Borough. I hope this desk-top study will be repeated in 5 or 10 years time for comparison. Will we have more or fewer trees then? As the average tree cover for England has been estimated as 16%, Wokingham is considered to have an above average tree cover.

### The ground cover estimates for Wokingham Borough

|                      |     |
|----------------------|-----|
| Grass & herbaceous   | 56% |
| Trees and shrubs     | 22% |
| Impervious buildings | 7%  |
| Impervious road      | 5%  |
| Impervious other     | 4%  |
| Soil & bare ground   | 3%  |
| Water                | 3%  |

Aerial imagery provided data on every tree over 3m tall, giving a total of 630,381 trees in the Borough, with 14% being on WBC-owned land. Twyford has the least number of trees (10,008) and Finchampstead the most (101,080). However, expressed as trees per hectare Shinfield (which ranked 7<sup>th</sup> on total number) has the least (22 per ha), with Twyford being ranked 8<sup>th</sup> (out of the seventeen parishes and towns). Finchampstead still has the most (52 per ha).

As a follow-up to this desk-based survey, 102 sample plots (50m x 50m) were chosen for examination. These were not random plots, but specially chosen sites with the largest number of trees in council ownership, with 6 plots in each of the 17 parishes. In these plots, oak

and ash were the most prevalent. In the table below the results of this survey are shown alongside data from our veteran tree survey. These figures are not comparable of course, not only because the WBC plots are selective, but also because the WBC survey included all trees, whereas our data records trees with large girths.

| Species                               | WBC % | WBC rank              | WDVTA % | WDVTA rank       |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-----------------------|---------|------------------|
| Oak ( <i>Quercus spp</i> )            | 21    | 1 <sup>st</sup>       | 54      | 1 <sup>st</sup>  |
| Ash ( <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> )     | 15    | 2 <sup>nd</sup>       | 7       | 2 <sup>nd</sup>  |
| Birch ( <i>Betula spp</i> )           | 8     | 3 <sup>rd</sup>       | 1       | 21 <sup>st</sup> |
| Willow ( <i>Salix spp</i> )           | 7     | 4 <sup>th</sup>       | 4       | 4 <sup>th</sup>  |
| Field Maple ( <i>Acer campestre</i> ) | 5     | joint 5 <sup>th</sup> | 2       | 9 <sup>th</sup>  |
| Cherry ( <i>Prunus spp</i> )          | 5     | joint 5 <sup>th</sup> | 1       | 23 <sup>rd</sup> |
| Other                                 | 39    |                       | 31      |                  |

Our top 6 genera are: oak, ash, lime, willow, sweet chestnut and wellingtonia.

Appendix B has tree canopy maps for each parish.

The tree canopy is estimated using the [i-Tree](#) method as described in Tree Watch [#42](#) page 5. The results obtained then are gratifyingly similar to those quoted in the Tree Strategy, giving confidence in the method. The differences in % cover between 2019 and 2023 range from -5 to +3. Differences of 3% or less are within the measurement standard error. Only four parishes had differences greater than 3%: Arborfield and Remenham each have 4% less cover than in 2019 and Earley and Charvil 5% less. Of course, these are not necessarily real losses, but could be measurement errors.

## HONORARY ALDERMAN STATUS GIVEN TO ANGUS ROSS

**Alison Griffin**

Wokingham Borough Council has recently awarded Angus Ross the ceremonial title of Honorary Alderman. He is only the second recipient of this honour. The local paper, [Wokingham Today](#), had an article and summarised his work for the council over the 32 years when he served as a councillor.

Angus has been a supporter and friend of our organisation from the start in 2007 when he attended the inaugural meeting. He has advised us on which councillors, executive members and council officers we should talk to, attended many of our talks and events and for many years he was the independent examiner for our annual accounts.

He was particularly helpful with the joint project we had with the Borough Council in 2012 to plant 60 English oak trees in celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. All of the trees had a welcome ceremony

and Angus attended nearly all of these. This photograph is of him planting Jubilee [tree 55](#) at Sol Joel Park in Earley.



More recently he was a strong supporter of our request for the Borough to produce a Tree Strategy and his support helped the work to be included in the Climate Emergency plans, with the strategy being recently finalised and adopted.



We would not have achieved as much over the last 26 years without his support.

We have sent him our congratulations and Barbara wrote a [letter](#) to 'Wokingham Today', published on 3<sup>rd</sup> August, to follow up on their article and describe his influence and support for WDVTA.

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## **OTHER LOCAL NEWS**

### **Oak Processionary Moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*)**

The Tree Strategy (see [page 2](#)) mentions the presence on one reported case in our Borough, but doesn't say where that was. It's timely to remind you all about this potential infection. It's important to know what to look for, and if you do spot or suspect OPM on oak trees near you, report it immediately to [WBC](#) and to [Tree Alert](#). Remember that OPM can pose a threat to human health, so don't go close to caterpillars or nests or attempt to remove active, or even old, nests; leave it to the experts! For information about OPM see government [guidelines](#). There's also an [OPM toolkit](#) for Local Authorities produced by the Tree Council. To confuse matters, there are [OPM lookalikes](#), but if in doubt it's best to assume OPM initially.

### **Local SANGS**

'[Greenspace on your doorstep](#)' is a directory giving details of 80 SANGS in Berkshire, Surrey and Hampshire. All those listed have at least 2 hours free parking. Many have dedicated car parks and surfaced paths. The individual site descriptions give information about parking etc, as well as directions if you type in your starting point. There's an interactive map of all 80 sites and a downloadable 15-page [booklet](#) listing 62 sites, the first 11 are in Wokingham (2019 version). WBC has an [interactive map](#) of the 'nature parks' within the Borough.

**WBC new website** - Last month WBC launched a new [website](#).

### **Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (BLNRS)**

It's been in the pipe-line for what seems like ages, but last month it was announced that the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) has been chosen as Berkshire's responsible authority for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. They will coordinate work with the other five unitary authorities in Berkshire,

including of course Wokingham. The Government has allocated £14 million to be shared between 48 such authorities. Berkshire's share is £238,000. The aim is to prioritise areas where nature can be expanded and protected; where habitats need improving, protecting or enlarging, including creating wildlife corridors. After extensive consultations, it's hoped that a nature map of opportunities will be published in late 2024 and incorporated into the planning process. BLNRS is hosting a series of [webinars](#) to explain its plans. The one aimed at interested residents is on 26<sup>th</sup> September.

### Tree planting in the Borough

More than 40,000 trees have been planted across Wokingham in the past 20 months. About 26,000 of these were planted on land owned by schools, parish councils and the Borough Council, with another 10,000 on sites owned by private landowners. A £300,000 contribution from the Woodland Trust's Emergency Tree Fund was used to give free saplings to individual residents: 4,332 were given to 1,492 residents. An estimated 6,036 tonnes of carbon emissions have been offset through the trees, orchards and hedgerows planted recently.

WBC is now looking for sites larger than five hectares, for more tree planting. This is in addition to the Covid Memorial Wood at Rooks Nest Farm.

### Green Flag Award

Reading University's Whiteknights Campus has been awarded its [13<sup>th</sup> Green Flag award](#). Each year, this scheme recognises the UK's best public outdoor spaces, with winners judged on the overall quality of green spaces and the work that goes into their upkeep. Set within 134 hectares, the Whiteknights campus includes a lake, woodlands and the Harris Garden. It's a haven for local wildlife and there's a self-guided biodiversity [walk](#) around the campus.

### Nature in Earley 2024

This is the fifth year that the Earley Environmental Group (EEG) has produced a calendar using photos of local wildlife selected from those submitted by local residents. June 2024 features a pyramid orchid, a large Cockshafar and our Diamond Jubilee Oak (#10) on Rushy Way. The oak photo, taken by our membership secretary, Jane Sellwood, was cropped from her photo below. It shows the two Diamond [Jubilee trees](#) along Rushey Way: #10 is in the foreground with #9 behind.

Calendars cost £6 and are available from various outlets in Earley, including the parish office or by [email](#).

### Will tree planting absorb as much CO<sub>2</sub> as proposed?

During photosynthesis, CO<sub>2</sub> and water are converted into carbohydrates. Since the CO<sub>2</sub> is taken from the atmosphere, planting trees is seen as an important part of climate emergency measures.

Calculations of the amount of carbon off-set are based on the assumption that the rate of photosynthesis remains constant or increases with the increased amount of CO<sub>2</sub> in the air. However this may not be true, and global rates of photosynthesis are thought to have decreased since 2000.

With increasing temperatures drying the air, leaves close their stomata to minimise water loss, meaning that less CO<sub>2</sub> is taken in.



### National Award for Shinfield School

In the [last issue](#) (page 7), there was a description of a Miyawaki forest of over 2,000 trees planted at St Mary's CE Junior School in Shinfield. Last month they were accredited as an 'Outstanding Beacon School' by the Tree Council. A presentation took place at the Tree Council's '[Force for Nature](#)' exhibition in Birmingham. The school was represented by 12 pupils and two members of staff, including Matt Knight, the Head of Sustainability and responsible for planting the trees.

The photos below were published in '[Wokingham Today](#)' and are printed here with their permission. Matt Knight is standing behind the children.



### Kew Herbarium coming to TVSP

Kew's herbarium is one of the oldest and largest in the world, founded in 1852 and now containing about seven million preserved vascular plant specimens. Many subsequently donated collections contain earlier material. The oldest specimens are dated 22-27 April 1696. Over the years new wings have been added to the original herbarium building, the latest being modern climate control building added in 2010. The photo shows the original herbarium building in 2017, after its contents had been relocated to this new wing. In 2021, after five years considering the future of the facility, it was decided that a [new site](#) was the best option. They have chosen the [Thames Valley Science Park](#) (TVSP). The process of securing funding, designing and building the facility, and moving the collections is expected to take 5-7 years.



### Fox Hill Woods

Two [information boards](#) commissioned by the [Friends of Fox Hill](#) have been installed in the woods

### Berkshire Record Office to become Royal Berkshire Archives

The cabinet office has given permission for this [name change](#) to mark the Record Office's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### Earley Green Corridor Network

The principle of a network of green corridors in Earley was adopted by Earley town Council in 2022 and EEG (Earley Environmental Group) produced a [plan](#), which was submitted to WBC. Nothing happened. This month they produced a summary document and circulated it to councillors and officers at WBC and ETC, to BBOWT and to newly created Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (BLNRS). Hopefully, especially with the formation of the BLNRS (see above) the time is right for this excellent proposal to gain more attention. It would be so good if all parishes within the Borough could produce similar plans.

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## **BIGWOOD - THE 'FAIRY TREE' - A HIGHWOOD TREE TREASURE**

***Barbara Stagles***

In the November 2022 issue of [Tree Watch](#) (page 6) we reported on a walk in Highwood, Woodley, with the Reading Tree Wardens. Highwood is a Local Nature Reserve owned by the Wokingham Borough Council and managed by their Countryside Service, supported by a group of conservation volunteers.

The walk has stimulated a renewed interest in the history of the woodland and its trees. It contains an understory of native hazel, birch and rowan trees, as well as yews, English oaks and field maple. There is also a sizeable group of sweet chestnut trees. In the nineteenth century the owners of Woodley Lodge/Bulmershe Court created an arboretum in the woodland area. Different non-native tree species were planted including Holm oak, monkey puzzle, incense cedar and, very importantly, some 65 or more coastal redwoods.

On a return visit in July, Elaine Butler, Edd Snook and I spent time studying one of these trees - a very unusual specimen that was featured on the front page of the May issue of [Tree Watch](#). It is recorded as MRN [7941](#) in the WDVTA database and is number [198872](#) in the Ancient Tree Inventory. Linda Martin surveyed the tree in 2020 and estimates it, like the other coastal redwoods, to be over 150 years old. Clearly it had fallen many years ago and its large root base upended. From this base had grown 3 large main stems and 4 smaller stems, similar to those growing from the stumps of the many other coastal redwoods in the woodland. It's thought that these trees were coppiced during the first half of the nineteenth century, probably to provide wood for pit props and other uses as part of the First or Second World War efforts.



This fallen tree recently became popular with some local residents and their children and was unofficially given the name "Bigwood" - The Fairy Tree". A Face Book [page](#) shows images of the various decorations that have been put on its interesting root base, although these are 'mysteriously' regularly removed. In itself though, it is one of the many tree treasures in Highwood we are delighted to be rediscovering. We hope to expand our knowledge of the wood and its history and would be very interested to learn of any other stories or interesting information that Tree Watch readers may know about. Please contact us at [treewatch@wdvta.org.uk](mailto:treewatch@wdvta.org.uk)

Highwood is publicly accessible from any of these entrances

- High Tree Drive, Earley SU 74804 72510
- Kingfisher Drive, Woodley SU 75340 72468
- Blackstone Way, Woodley SU 74960 72745

[You can see the height of this tree in the photo above. Barbara (in a white jacket) and Ed are just discernible on the path beside the tree.

Barbara contacted '[Redworld World](#)' about these trees and they are now featured on their [website](#).]

*"All tree-planting on public land, whether developer funded or not, will be undertaken by the Council to ensure a consistent approach and level of quality, and to reduce the likelihood of new tree stock failing to survive through lack of weed control or watering."*

WBC Tree Strategy (2023) page 54

## COMMUNITY ORCHARDS

Community orchards have become rather popular across the country and several have been planted in Wokingham Borough. We know of twelve and these are listed in our '[Commemorative and Special Tree Inventory](#)'; but they are not highlighted by either WBC or individual towns or parishes. There is reference to orchards in the [tree strategy](#), on the new Wokingham [website](#) and the Borough [website](#), but only in a general reference to planting more trees. Contrast this with Chepstow, with twelve mini-orchards (one of which is below Chepstow Castle) publicised by information boards and orchard trails: a shorter one of about 3 miles and an extended one of almost 6 miles; with a [downloadable](#) trail leaflet.



Wouldn't it be nice if Wokingham Borough and Wokingham towns and parishes could do the same?

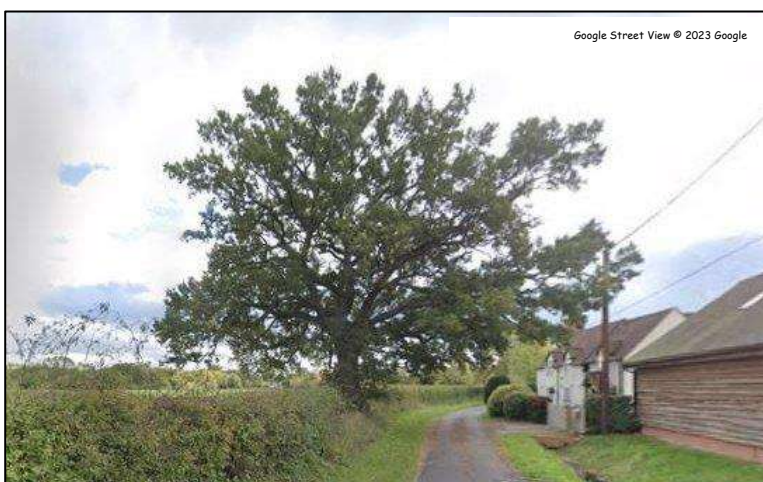
## THE VETERAN TREE SURVEY

Once again, in spite of the survey being officially "closed", a few more trees have been added this month. This is because we are still (slowly) checking our records and whilst doing so we can add any unrecorded trees we come across. One of these trees is MRN [9355](#), an English oak with a girth of 4.36m and an estimated age of 250 years.

On 24<sup>th</sup> July, '[Wokingham Today](#)' reported a near miss when a large branch fell across Hogmore Lane in Hurst. It looked a large tree, but wasn't in our database and so Maggie Sanderson went out to measure it. The 'Wokingham Today' article included some lovely photos which are now on our website, thanks to them giving us permission to use their photos. Although, we didn't have any photos of the tree before the split, we could see what it looked like on Google's Street View and those photos are also on our website thanks to Google's permission to use their images.

A before and after image is shown here. There are more on our [website](#).

Both resources are very useful and gratefully acknowledged.



### **Are there any errors in our records?**

We do want our records to be as accurate as possible; so please have a look at the data on our [webmap](#) and if you spot any errors (including spelling mistakes) or missing data let me know.

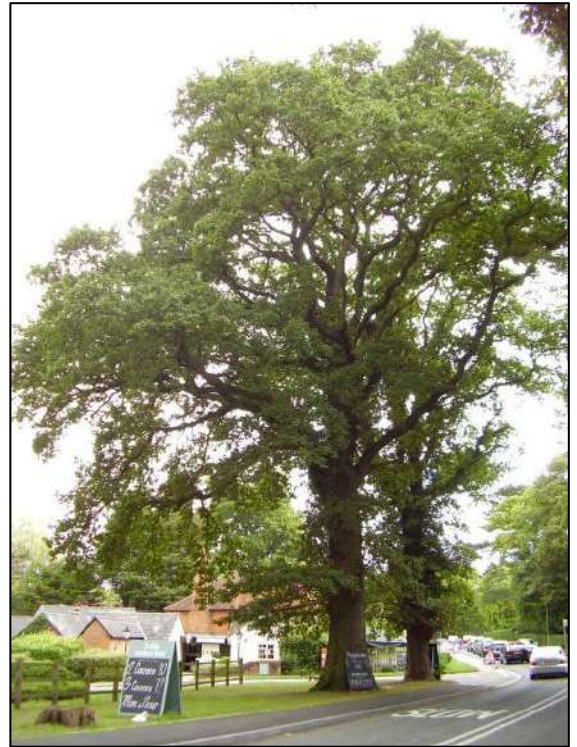
There's a contact form attached to each record, making it easy to report errors or add comments. You can't add photos to the contact form, but can use it let me know you have them.

## SADLY DEPARTED - MRNS 3206, 3207, 3208 AND 3209

The two distinctive trees shown here (top right) were a significant feature of the landscape on the roadside verge outside the Ye Olde Leathern Bottel (*that's not a typo - it is spelt that way*) public house, 221 Barkham Road. In June they were felled and the stumps ground out. We have made



several enquires, but still don't know why. The photo above shows the sad scene now. Both trees were English oaks. MRN [3206](#), in the foreground, had a girth of 4.04m when recorded 14 years ago. The stump visible in both photos is MRN [3205](#). It has two silver birches growing from it. A WBC tree officer visited the site, and we were told that TPO requests had been made for the remaining trees on the site. None are shown on the on-line [TPO map](#) yet (mid-August).



In addition to this, three trees behind a fence at the back of the pub's car park were felled in May. These were MRNs [3207](#) (photo right), [3208](#) and [3209](#). Again, we don't know why. There were six trees in a row and the other three have been left (including MRNs [3210](#) and [3211](#)).

Someone (we'd love to know who) inscribed a very poignant message on the cut stump of MRN [3207](#):

THIS TOOK c380 YEARS TO GROW - HOURS TO FELL  
A HOME TO MANY R.I.P.



Follow the links to see the photos of MRNs [3208](#) and [3209](#) before and after felling.

Any developments related to these fellings will be reported on our [website](#).

Thanks to Alison and Barbara for the photos.

HUGHENDEN MANOR

I recently came across a leaflet I'd picked up some years ago, advertising the 'Hughenden Tree Walk'. Hughenden Manor is a National Trust property and was where Benjamin Disraeli lived with his wife Mary. Both, it seems were very interested in trees.

This particular walk features only 10 trees plus 2 bonus ones which are less accessible. If you've ever walked around the beautiful grounds at Hughenden, just outside High Wycombe, then you'll know that choosing *only* a dozen trees must have been very difficult.



The walk begins at the Welcome Kiosk near the car park and immediately in front of you is a **Cedar of Lebanon**. The leaflet says this was Disraeli's favourite tree and he brought seeds back from the Holy Land and had three imported from Lebanon in the 1860s. These have not survived but new ones have replaced them.

In the kitchen garden we found the **Aylesbury prune** (*Prunus insititia*). There is a theory it either evolved from a native sloe or a wild hybrid of the damson. The fruit looked more like damsons than sloes to me.

Near the house itself you'll find a **Monkey Puzzle**, a **Colorado blue spruce** (above) and a **London Plane**.

Further exploration of the grounds highlights an **Atlas Cedar**, **Manna Ash** and several **Yew trees**. Some of the Yews (right) are huge!

There were numerous lime trees planted in the grounds, including a **Crimean lime**. This is a smaller tree with drooping lower branches. We found one near the parterre. Unfortunately, we couldn't find the **Almond tree**.



Hughenden's champion trees are hidden away in the parkland. They boast the largest **field maple** in Buckinghamshire and Europe's largest **horse chestnut** with a 7.33 metre girth! (Leaflet dated 2018.)

It was good to see some tree planting had taken place and no doubt there will be more at the end of the year. Disraeli and his wife also planted a German Forest, so that's a walk for another day.

TREE OF THE YEAR 2023

It's that time of the year again, when the Woodland Trust asks us to vote for the **Tree of the Year 2023**. This year the nominations were restricted to ancient or veteran urban trees. There are thirteen to choose from. The nearest to us is the lovely Crouch Oak in Crouch Lane, Addlestone. It has a girth of 7.3m and may be 800 years old. It's a roadside tree in a built-up area, and Surrey County Council are implementing a **plan** to preserve the tree, including removing the pavement between the tree and the road. Enter 51.3736, -0.4926 in the search bar on Google maps and then use Street View to see this magnificent oak. There are seven photos taken between July 2008 and April 2022.

Voting closes on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> October and the winner will be announced on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> October. That winner will be the 2024 UK entry in the **European Tree of the Year** competition.

The 2023 UK entry, the **Waverley Abbey Yew**, came 7<sup>th</sup> with 9,413 votes. The **winner**, an English oak (*Quercus robur*) in Poland, had 45,718 votes.

## FROM THE COMMEMORATIVE AND SPECIAL TREE INVENTORY - W119

W119 is a disease resistant elm (*Ulmus* 'New Horizon') awarded to Charvil by Tree Council to commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Tree Warden Scheme. It was planted by tree wardens Claire Anderson and Sarah Swatridge on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021, on a mound at Eastpark Farm, near the Charvil Pavilion, off Park Lane.

The photo here was taken this month and as you can see from the tree is thriving, thanks to Claire's care for it. She regularly checks and waters it.

The inset photo is Claire planting the tree and shows how much it has grown in the last two years.

W119 is one of three disease-resistant elms that were planted in 2020/2021 as described in a [document](#) in our inventory.



### Veteran Tree Survey snapshot

#### COASTAL REDWOODS

69

in our database

16<sup>th</sup>

rank position

71%

multi stems

20

maidens

6

parishes have  
recorded at least 1  
tree

2

parishes  
(Arborfield &  
Woodley) have  
recorded 10 or  
more

### DID YOU KNOW?... *There are Pocket Novels.*

I'd heard of Pocket Parks - and mentioned them in a previous issue of Tree Watch (#52, page 10); but 'Pocket Novels' were something new to me. They are short novels or novellas; 50,000 words for 'My Weekly' and 39,000 words for 'People's Friend'; but are only on the shelf for about two weeks before being replaced by the next one. They're often sold at railway stations as they're good to read on train journeys. WH Smith sell them, as do large supermarkets and some newsagents. DC Thomson have an on-line shop selling them directly.

At the beginning of August, the 'My Weekly Pocket Novel' was 'Isaac's Oak', a story about a Tree Warden written by Sarah Swatridge, one of our Charvil recorders and regular contributor to Tree Watch. This was Sarah's 11<sup>th</sup> pocket novel. Her 10<sup>th</sup>, 'Jacob's Ladder' was a 'People's Friend Pocket Novel', published last month; following which she was featured as their '[Writer of the Week](#)'. You may remember I've previously mentioned her story '[Oak Apple Day](#)'. Her list of publications is growing. They are not all about trees of course, but if you want to keep up-to-date with her work, you can sign up for a monthly, one-page newsletter. If you want to do that, let me know and I'll forward your email to Sarah.

As Sarah says, "Perhaps think of pocket novels as the Bonsai of the book world."

## SPECIES IN FOCUS – COASTAL REDWOOD (*SEQUOIA SEMPERVIRENS*)

### 12 miscellaneous facts about the Coastal Redwood.

1. 'Sequoia' probably derives from 'Sequoyah', the Cherokee name of George Gist, who developed the still-used Cherokee syllabary. In Latin 'sempervirens' means "ever green" or "everlasting".
2. Native to just a narrow coastal belt between southern Oregon and mid California, it has been successfully planted across the globe.
3. Introduced to Britain via Russia in 1843.
4. In 1857, a grove of redwoods was planted at Leighton, near Welshpool. At 166 years old, this 'Old Grove' remains unthinned and healthy. Now owned by the Forestry Commission's, it's unfortunately closed to the public because of anti-social behaviour.
5. In 2016, 40 redwoods saplings were planted at the Eden Project; the second largest redwood forest in Europe (after Birr Castle in Ireland). We have recorded 45 (photo above) in Highwood in Woodley, and there are more records to be added, but Highwood is not exclusively redwoods. As part of a project to archive the genetics of ancient trees, the Eden trees were grown from cuttings taken from Californian natives, including from re-sprouted stumps of trees felled in the 1890s.
6. The coastal, coast or Californian redwood is one of the tallest and oldest tree species. The oldest known specimen was 2,200 years old when it died. There are many historic reports of trees over 400' (122m). The current tallest is 116m (379'), with a girth of 4.8m. Called the 'Hyperion' tree, it was only discovered in 2006. It's in Redwood National Park, but its precise location, along with those of many other tall specimens, is not disclosed to protect it and the surrounding habitat.
7. Girths of up to 9m are reported. We have recorded one with a girth of 7.1m (MRN [5480](#) in Arborfield-right).
8. They can reproduce asexually, by layering or sprouting from the root crown, stump, or even fallen branches. Many trees naturally grow in straight lines, because they've grown from fallen trunks. Sprouting from the base of the tree trunk produces "fairy rings".
9. The 30cm-thick spongy red-brown outer bark protects mature trees from fire damage. Terpenoids and tannic acid in all parts of the tree protect it from insect and fungal infection and rot.
10. The wood is one of the most valuable timber species in the lumbering industry, being highly valued for its beauty, light weight and resistance to fire and decay. In fires following the 1906 earthquake, unburned buildings in San Francisco were almost all constructed from redwood lumber.
11. There are albino redwoods, mutants that can't produce chlorophyll. They can grow to 66' tall and retain contact with the parent trees, which supplies their food. Some store higher concentrations of toxic metals, and may act as "waste dumps" for the parent trees.
12. Coastal redwoods are related to the other two species also called redwoods: Wellingtonias or giant redwoods (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) and dawn redwoods (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*). All three are the only living species in their respective genus; but all are in the subfamily Sequoioideae; their relationship being confirmed by molecular studies. All three have long fossil records, dating back to the Jurassic (201-145mya), when they grew across large areas of the world. *Sequoia* might be the result of hybridization between *Metasequoia* and *Sequoiadendron* ancestors.



## **RECOMMENDED READING, VIEWING AND LISTENING** *Just click on the green links*

### **ATH SPRING/SUMMER WEBINARS -**

*"Pollards in the Basque region of Spain"* - Helen Read of Burnhams Beeches.

*"Scanning ancient trees with terrestrial lidar"* - the SCATTER team from UCL, including Mat Disney

*"Tree Architecture"* - Tom Joye, Inverde

### **HEDGE TALKS** - Tree Council talks for National Hedgerow Week 2023

### **EXPLORING NATURE'S CALENDAR** - another chance to view the Woodland Trust's webinar

### **FOREST FOR CORNWALL MARKS MILESTONE OF 600,000 TREES**

### **THOUSANDS OF TREES TO BE PLANTED TO MARK KING'S CORONATION**

Grants from a new £2.5 million fund will be available for tree planting by councils and farmers, and for community groups to plant orchards and Miyawaki forests.

### **ANCIENT TREE PILGRIMAGE FROM LAND'S END TO JOHN O'GROATS**

Brian Hunt alerted me to this X (Twitter) link. You don't need a X account to access it.

Martin Hugi, who works for the Woodland Trust and is a verifier for ATI, is taking 4 months off work to walk from Land's End to John O'Groats on a mission to visit about 2,700 of the oldest trees taken from the ATI database. Starting in mid-April, it should take 4 months. His journey was reported in the national **press** and he talks about his trip on a visit to Savernake Forest in **"Ramblings"** on Radio 4.

**TWO ANCIENT TREES WITH LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE** - Tāne Mahuta (the 'god tree' of New Zealand) and Pando (a forest of over 47,000 trees genetically identical and considered to be a single organism).

### **PHOTOSYNTHESIS AND NEW FUELS**

#### **ARTIFICIAL LEAVES: BIONIC PHOTOSYNTHESIS AS GOOD AS THE REAL THING**

**DECADES-OLD MYSTERY ABOUT PHOTOSYNTHESIS FINALLY SOLVED** - It takes just four particles of light to jump-start photosynthesis in plant cells, but the details of what exactly happens after the fourth photon is absorbed have eluded researchers until now. Understanding photosynthesis at this level could advance the development of clean fuels by developing a process of turning water into hydrogen fuels.

### **EVOLUTION OF TREES**

**WHEN TREES TOOK OVER THE WORLD** - The first true trees - *Archaeopteris* (8 min video).

**THE DIVERSIFICATION OF GYMNOSPERMS DURING THE EARLY MESOZOIC** - including redwoods, bristle cone pines, Wollemi pines, *Metasequoia* and *Araucaria* (16 min video).

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FOSSIL RECORD OF GINKGO** and the evolution of its leaf shape (20 min video)

**A NEW MODEL FOR THE EVOLUTION OF TROPICAL RAINFORESTS**

### **TREES THAT REFUSE TO DIE**

*Sarah Swatridge*

In response to Kerry's 'trees that refuse to die' [featured in 'to make you smile' in the **last issue** page 14], I wanted to share these holiday snaps [reduced in size here]. In May we were in Lanzarote (first holiday abroad since 2019) and visited the National Park where there are 32 volcanoes. In the 1700s they erupted and this continued for almost SIX YEARS!!! The landscape is like a moonscape now. Amazingly, since the late 1700s, farmers have grown grapes in this area. It seems that if you cover the ground with



ash, it traps the moisture from the dew which is enough to keep the crop alive. Lanzarote rarely has rain so this is vital. Just like Kerry's examples, grapes shouldn't be able to grow in such desolate areas, but they do. It's similar, I suppose, to tomatoes growing in January in Iceland because they harness the heat from the earth to heat greenhouses which grow tomatoes for export. I do remember, in our first house, we had a real fire and used to put the ash on the allotment. I didn't know why until now.

I like a challenge and I am sure I've come across various plants and trees that should not survive, but do. I don't seem to be able to find photographic evidence just now, but I'm sure I'll come up with something to share soon.

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

**"August is usually one of the hottest months of the year – making watering essential."**

The opening sentence to an article titled "*IN THE GARDEN: Drought resistant gardens*" in the Lifestyle section of '[Wokingham Today](#)' on 1<sup>st</sup> August this year!! Presumably prepared in June.

A short BBC [video](#) showing how a Yorkshire artist uses leaves, stones and other natural items to create transient works of art should make you smile in appreciation.

**Some sources used in this issue:** all web pages accessed 30-08-2023. Links embedded in the text are not repeated here. Email me if you want a list of them.

p12-Species in Focus: Mitchell, Alan (1974) 'A Field Guide to the Trees of Britain and Northern Europe' ISBN 0 00 212035 6

<http://www.rmtrr.org/oldlist.htm> <https://www.leightonnews.com/history/the-redwood-grove>

<https://rfs.org.uk/about-us/our-woods/charles-ackers-redwood-grove-and-naylor-pinetum/> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eden\\_Project](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eden_Project)

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/mar/14/europes-first-redwood-forest-planted-at-eden-project>

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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 10<sup>th</sup> 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](http://wdvta.org.uk/report10.php)

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

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

[wdvta.org.uk/commem.php](http://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.