



Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association

Tree Watch

Issue 61

May 2024

On 2nd March, we had **8,652** trees in our database and **13,884** photographs

Welcome to the latest issue of Tree Watch.

It's been a very wet spring, following a very wet winter. There's an old saying "Oak before ash in for a splash. Ash before oak in for a soak." When I started writing this, in mid-April, the oak tree I can see from my house was in full leaf, whereas the buds of the ash tree were just beginning to break into leaf; and I thought perhaps we might have a reasonable summer. It isn't summer yet, so I suppose there is time for the old saying to be true.

In this issue we report some very sad news. Gill Hopkins died earlier this year. See [page 5](#) for her obituary and learn what a fascinating life she had.

This photo of the 'Cathedral Oak' was taken on our visit to Savernake Forest in August 2019, one of many visits that Gill enjoyed. This ancient oak is one of [several](#) in Savernake. It was distressing to hear that one of them, the '[Crockmere Oak](#)', had fallen. It probably fell in one of the storms earlier this year, although it wasn't noticed until earlier this month. It had been assessed as being in fair condition prior to its collapse, although there were signs of rotting and hollowing at its base, and the fallen trunk



showed significant evidence of rotting in its centre. It was probably 450-500 years old. It will stay where it's fallen and will be an important habitat for many years to come.

The next issue of Tree Watch will be August 2024 and the copy deadline is 31st July. If you have any comments or responses to anything in this issue or contributions for future issues please send them to:

Elaine Butler - [TreeWatch @ wdvta.org.uk](mailto:TreeWatch@wdvta.org.uk)

Don't forget words underlined in dark green are links to further details and the items listed below are links to those items within this document (obviously not when printed).

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

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Events - June-August 2024

❖ No events scheduled.

Non-WDVTa events:

- ❖ Saturday 8th June 10:00 - Guided Nature Walk in Foxhill Woods - no need to book.
- ❖ June 8-16 'The Great Big Green Week' Wokingham's events not published yet.
- ❖ Until 28 June 10:00-17:00 "Lovely as a Tree" exhibition. Linnean Society, Piccadilly. Free
- ❖ Saturday 6th July - National Meadows Day including the official opening and naming of the Ridge SANG in Shinfield. Check websites for other events nearer the time.

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

THE 2023/24 WDVTa COMMITTEE

Officials:

Chairman: *vacant*

Secretary: Kerry Clissold

Treasurer: Derek Oxbrough

Committee members:

Barry Anderson, Elaine Butler, Alison Griffin, Sarah Hanson, Martin Haslam, Stephen Loyd, Stephanie McKay, Claire O'Keeffe, Michael Rea, Jane Sellwood, Barbara Stagles and Gordon Veitch

Maggie Sanderson has left the committee. She's made a very valuable contribution to the running of the association, being the coordinator for Hurst and very efficiently managing the catering at all our events. Her presence will definitely be missed.

We're very pleased to welcome Gordon Veitch back to the committee. He was a founder member of the association and the coordinator for Finchampstead. He left the committee when its meetings clashed with those of the parish council, but continued to promote trees in Finchampstead, resulting with several new plantings and care for existing trees, not least the Wellingtonias in Wellingtonia Avenue.

We've also delighted to have a new member, Claire O'Keeffe, and look forward to hearing her comments and suggestions. It's always good to have new input and especially so as we chart a new course following the closure of the veteran tree survey.

PARISH/TOWN ACTIVITY - MEMBER'S REPORTS

In the last Committee meeting it was agreed to merge the Committee and Forum meetings and the first merged meeting will be held in June, with a proposal for the following one to be in the Autumn. It was also agreed that Parish reports, previously presented at the Forum meetings, should go into Tree Watch and hence be available to all members. If you have any tree matters you'd like included here, please send them to me.

CHARVIL - from Sarah Swatridge

The water meadows haven't been accessible lately but I did manage to get to see Barbara's Oak last week and, as yet, it's got no leaves. I've been in touch with Claire and Barbara Stagles and we'll monitor it. Of the five 'butterfly' elms that I could get to, they were all looking green and healthy and have grown, but good access isn't possible yet, due to flooding.

The Spanish Elm planted by Peter Cuss was very close to the sinkhole but remains unaffected and is growing well.

Claire Anderson weeded around the elm planted in January 2021 to celebrate the Tree Warden Scheme in Charvil. It's looking good as shown here.

FINCHAMPSTEAD - from Alison Griffin

In January we were notified by Wokingham Borough Council that an inspection



of an oak tree along Nine Mile Ride ([MRN 6509](#)) had identified significant decay and a major reduction was required. Following the new Borough Tree Strategy, rather than fell the tree (the recommendation), the surgery done was as little as possible to minimise the risk from the tree. It will now be checked more frequently to monitor the internal decay and increase in dead wood. The work done was very sympathetic to the tree with limited reduction of the branches. In fact so little was removed that we went back to the WBC officer to check that the work had indeed been completed. Below: when recorded in August 2012 (*left*) and after pruning in February 2024 (*right*).



SONNING - from Sarah Swatridge

At last, the second batch of trees planted on the boundary of Sonning Farm (University Farm) and the A4 boundary west of the 'Wee Waif' roundabout, have taken and there's lots of new growth.

TWYFORD - from Stephen Loyd

After losing a veteran oak on WBC land on the Broadhinton Estate, WBC have planted four new saplings. I have not yet been able to identify them as they are in very tall guards with no leaf visible yet.

WOKINGHAM - from Alison Griffin

Plans to fell a large yew tree in the grounds of Wokingham Baptist Church have been refused. A TPO has now been put on it and on another yew on the west side of the front of the church. It was reported in '[Wokingham Today](#)'.

OTHER LOCAL NEWS

Oak Processionary Moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*)

[WBC](#) and local [newspapers](#) have published warnings that, given reports of Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) in Bracknell, we should all be vigilant and look out for any signs in Wokingham. Any sightings should be reported to WBC and to [Tree Alert](#). The Forestry Commission has produced an information [leaflet](#) and [video](#) explaining the dangers of OPM and how to identify it. This pest was first mentioned in Tree Watch nearly 14 years ago, in the [November 2010](#) issue (page 7), when it had been found in Pangbourne. The Forestry Commission successfully eradicated that outbreak and hopefully the same will happen in Bracknell.

You may remember, from the [August 2023](#) issue of Tree Watch (page 58), that the Wokingham Tree Strategy did mention one reported case in our Borough.

Tree Planting

Shinfield St Mary's Primary School has just finished planting 1,200 trees in collaboration with The Tree Council and with support from the Woodland Trust Emergency Tree fund. They have now planted more than 5,000 trees

on the school site since 2021 and received a national award from the Tree Council, as reported in the August 2023 issue of [Tree Watch](#) (page 5). Their Miyawaki forest was described in the [May 2023](#) issue (page 7). This planting effort was reported in the WBC Climate Emergency [newsletter](#), under the sadly predictable heading "Tree-mendous achievement (by) primary schoolchildren".

Elsewhere in the Borough, 200 trees have been planted at the Bohunt School in Arborfield, 940 at Hatch Farm in Winnersh and 770 at the Van Demans site in Swallowfield.

The Finchampstead Society

The closure of the Finchampstead Society was reported by 'Wokingham Today' on 1st May. It was established in 1976, when residents were "concerned about the possibility of urban development threatening the rural charm of Finchampstead and the surrounding area". However it didn't restrict its activities to objecting to proposed developments. Its first project was a study of the Parish, resulting in 'Finchampstead past, present and future', being published in 1977. You can download this from the [publications](#) page of their website. It includes a detailed description of the trees in the parish (pages 38-42) and you can read about "Cobbett's mistake".

Another early project, begun in 1979, was a hedge survey. The report, 'Hedgerows and Local History in Finchampstead' was published in 1993 and can also be downloaded. It would be very interesting to see how many of these hedgerows are extant. There's 148 pages of detailed results and survey methods in their archive. It's just one of many items in their impressive [archive](#) list, most of which are downloadable as pdf files (but not, unfortunately, 'Thirty Acres and a Cow' (1949) or the undated 'The Devil in Finchampstead').

The society has closed because, unfortunately, like so many societies these days, its ageing membership and reduced numbers makes it no longer viable. Its very interesting [website](#) will be maintained for 5 years.

Landslip at Sonning Cutting

London Paddington-Reading trains were [disrupted](#) during the morning of Tuesday 7th May, when heavy rain caused a landslip at Sonning Cutting. Is this where they cut down the trees?

More land up for sale

Plots of land between Mill Lane and the River Loddon in Sindlesham are up for sale or have recently been sold. A 2,458m² rectangular plot (plot 5) was auctioned on 18th April. The [guide](#) price was £8,000 and it [sold](#) for £10,000. A larger plot (plot 6) adjacent to plot 5 and more than twice its size, was [listed](#) on 28th May with a guide price of £5,000.

Celebrating ancient woodland

Camp Mohawk in Wargrave is organising a charity gala ball with an [Enchanted Forest](#) theme to celebrate its ancient woodland.

New Information Boards for Highwood

Barbara reports that Highwood and South Lake in Woodley have some splendid new information boards. They've been designed, produced and erected by Simon Bartlam and colleagues from WBC. As well as a useful map, they give information on the biodiversity of the site, including references to the coastal redwood, holm oak and monkey puzzle trees in the woodland. We've mentioned the numerous coppiced coastal redwoods in previous issues. We still don't know much about the history of the site, and would particularly like to know when and why the coastal redwoods were coppiced and when the exotic species were introduced. See [Tree Watch 55](#) (page 6) for Barbara's article about a walk in Highwood in November 2022.



Many of you will have already heard the sad news that we lost a good friend of WDVTA earlier this year. I have heard good friend used in regard to Gill many times in her many guises. She was a great listener when that was what was most needed in her professional life, especially working to help others.

She wrote a profile of herself the early days of the association, for a 'Profile' series in Tree Watch. See Tree Watch [August 2012](#) (page 4).

I would just like to record our loss as an association with a few more of the words that I've heard repeated to me over and over again.

Gill was a stalwart of the association, wasn't she just. There in our very early days, always willing to get out into the woods measuring trees when our records only numbered in hundreds not the thousands as now. Practical was a word I heard more than once and indeed she was. With Barbara and Heather Mills she threw herself, often literally, into recording. Indeed, one fond memory from Heather was that one day Gill, intrepid as ever, got into an awkward, tight spot whilst surveying trees. Struggling to get out, she dropped her glasses into a rabbit hole! Being very determined by nature she somehow managed to retrieve them and carried on. Clear sighted came up from several people remembering Gill, perhaps the glasses helped but her vision was much greater than that. She was always there when it counted, including visiting Barchams Tree Nursery to see our specially chosen 60 oaks for the Platinum Jubilee planting. She was there to support many of those plantings.

The words that ring the loudest bells with me: a lovely, generous, cheerful spirit.

I wish I could find that photo I took of Gill on the town walk years ago. We arrived at the old mulberry tree and there were strict instructions not to pick all the fruit. The photo clearly shows Gill literally 'caught red handed'. She really enjoyed every one of those mulberries but smiled like a naughty child caught scrumping.

You'll see, if you read the full profile that Gill wrote about herself, that she was the silver birch of her family. She loved trees throughout her life from this one in her own garden planted by her family to many others along her life's path. She became a friend of Kew and loved the old oaks of Windsor Forest. A photo I have found is of Gill sitting centre ground in front of one of Blenheim Palace's oldest oaks in the High Park. She really enjoyed our visit there a few years ago, difficult as the walking was for her by then. She was still fiercely independent and always in good humour even when she took a mercifully gentle fall into long tufted grass there. That photo graces our 10th anniversary [report](#) (page 8). She'll hold a special place there for posterity.

Gill was a shining example of the sort of people I meet regularly within WDVTA, so willing to learn and to share that knowledge, to give their time generously to benefit the wonderful planet we are lucky enough to share,

A memorial for Gill was held at the Friends Meeting House in Reading on April 15th, with this synopsis of her fascinating life:

Gill was the middle daughter of Hilda and Thomas Hopkins, sister of Wendy and Jan. Her early years were spent in Reading where Thomas ("Hoppy") was a housemaster at Leighton Park School. Gill's early social life revolved around the families of the school and Reading Friends. She attended Saffron Waldon Friends school during the war, then Wooseshill Girls Grammar in Wokingham. At the University of Manchester, she was President of the women's students' union and gained a B.A. in Geography. She decided teaching geography was not for her and went to the University of Edinburgh to study social work. Her first social work post was in Liverpool working with dockyard families. In the 1970s she returned to Berkshire and worked at Sindlesham school where she made many long-standing friends. She bought a house in Wokingham and remained there for over 40 years. In the late 1970s Gill began working at Friends House and served as clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting for several years in the early 1980s. Stories from this time included travelling to the Middle East meeting Yasser Arafat and presenting Quaker concerns to Queen Elizabeth. She was a trustee of the Rowntree charitable trust and a



Governor of Leighton Park School. Later she returned to social work in Wokingham while also caring for Hilda. In retirement she was a frequent traveller, choir member and played clarinet with a woodwind group. Gill gravitated to the youngest in her extended family and was an influential, while light-hearted and whimsical Aunt and later Great Aunt.

The photos below, taken from the memorial sheet, show Gill as a teenager, a redhead, in 2006, in the 1990s and in 2017.



CONSULTATIONS FOR A LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY POLICY

Barbara Stagles

Berkshire workshops – a participant's perspective

Just recently workshops have been held locally aimed at contributing ideas to the Berkshire Local Nature Partnership (BLNP) as part of an England-wide effort to achieve positive change in the face of declining biodiversity in the natural environment. WDVTA was represented at two of these consultations, Cathy Harris and Barbara Stagles in Wokingham and Stephen Loyd in Reading. We did our best to ensure the important role of trees, especially veteran and ancient trees, was recognised and emphasised as part of the effort.

Originating from a 2011 government White Paper 'The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature', The **Berkshire LNP** is one of 42 LNPs across the country, working to bring together all interested parties in health education, local authority business, and nature conservation to create "a sustainable, healthy and vibrant Berkshire by promoting the conservation and enhancement of nature, and the benefits we receive from a healthy environment". Clearly it is important for WDVTA members to play a part in this.

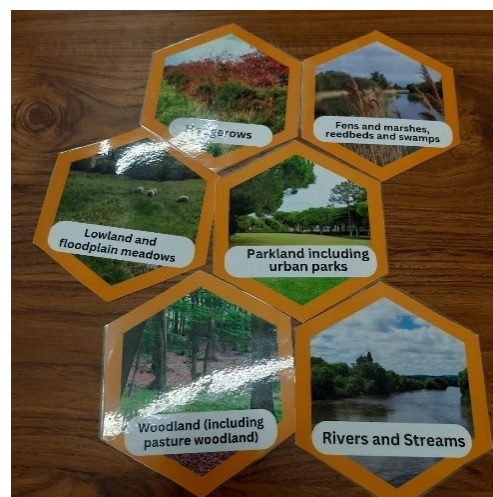
The workshop in Wokingham was extremely well-organised and it was good to meet so many others involved in local nature-based groups, either connected to specific sites of special natural value or focussing on particular species. We met several participants who were also WDVTA members and read our website and Tree Watch with interest. It was especially interesting to hear about the Earley Environmental Group's activities as members work to establish a Green Corridor Network, with four special routes connecting natural habitats, across Earley.

The aim of the BLNP is to produce a final report late in 2025 and so we will follow developments with great interest.

The photo shows the six environmental foci selected on Cathy's table. There were 36 to choose from.

Stephen Loyd: Just to echo similar sentiments to those above, as the Reading event was also well-organised and attended. I raised two points for possible inclusion in the strategy:

- Species focus might include rare tree species such as black poplar, wych elm, box, wild service tree etc.
- Some PCs have now developed their local plans which have included green spaces and identified potential wildlife habitat improvements, hence the BLNR should look at these plans where local knowledge has been incorporated.



TREE COVER

Last month Forest Research [published](#) data for the tree cover in 5,749 urban wards across the UK. Tree cover is assessed using the *i-Tree* method, as described in [Tree Watch 42](#) (page 5).

Data were collected between 2018 and 2022 and hence refer to the old wards (before the reorganisation that came into effect this year). Wards were classified as urban or rural based on size. Wards larger than 1,000ha were classed as rural.

As well as presenting the statistics, the report recommends the aim should be for 30% tree cover in all urban wards. The overall mean was 17.3%, with about a quarter of urban wards exceeding 20% (the previous suggested minimum target for UK towns). Everyone should be able to see at least three trees (presumably from their homes) and they emphasise the need for tree maintenance.

By region, SE England (22.1%) and South Wales (19.2%) have the highest urban canopy covers; with Northern Ireland the lowest at 11.8%. Unsurprisingly, urban wards with low canopy cover were more likely to be deprived areas in England, and in densely populated areas of England and Wales. Of course, these results refer to urban wards and rural wards across the country presumably have a greater tree cover. SE England topping the list just reflects its urban character.

There's an [interactive map](#) on their website and the data can be downloaded in various formats.

Within Wokingham Borough there were 25 wards. Finchampstead & Shinfield both had 2 wards, and in both cases, one was rural and one urban. Earley had 2 wards; Woodley had 4 and Wokingham Town had 5 and all are urban. Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe were combined into one rural ward. The remaining 9 parishes were single wards. Arborfield, Hurst and Swallowfield are rural, whilst Barkham, Charvil, Sonning, Twyford, Winnersh and Wokingham Without are considered urban.

That classification doesn't affect the calculation of tree cover of course! In fact, there is no difference between rural and urban wards in Wokingham if they are grouped together, with the average cover for the 6 rural wards being 27% compared with 26% for the 19 urban ones. The highest and the lowest ranked wards are both designated urban (Finchampstead North and Bulmershe & Whitegates in Woodley) with the second highest and second from last being rural (Finchampstead South and Shinfield South).

Whilst the towns/parishes range from 42% to 19%, as shown in the table below, the individual wards range from 55% for Finchampstead North to 16% for Bulmershe & Whitegates.

Town/Parish	Survey year	%tree cover	Ward range %	%cover-2019
Finchampstead	2018/19	42	39-55	39
Wokingham Without	2019	36		33
Barkham	2019	31		26
Arborfield	2019	28		27
Twyford	2019	26		25
Swallowfield	2019	26		27
Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe	2019	26		25
Winnersh	2019	25		22
Hurst	2019	25		24
Sonning	2019	23		24
Wokingham Town	2020	23	20-26	22
Charvil	2019	22		25
Earley Town	2019/20	22	21-22	28
Woodley	2020	21	16-29	24
Shinfield	2019/20	19	17-35	16

(All percentages rounded to whole numbers.)

The last column gives the % cover as calculated by us in 2019 and reported in [Tree Watch 42](#) (page 6). Most of the data reported by Forest Research was also calculated in 2019. The differences are very small, just 1% for seven parishes, with the largest being 6% (for Earley). Our calculations used parish boundaries, whereas theirs used ward boundaries (summed here to give parish cover). They do demonstrate the robustness of the method

(which of course isn't the same as confirming the accuracy of the method, although that has been ground-truthed and is generally accepted as being reliable).

Currently only 5 of the 25 wards meet the 30% target. They are Finchampstead North, Finchampstead South, Wokingham Without, Shinfield North and Barkham. There has been some substantial developments in some of these wards since the data was collected, and so they may not meet that target now; but perhaps, with the extensive tree planting within the Borough, that target will be met, and hopefully exceeded, in all wards soon.

In [February 2020](#) (page 8) the tree cover of eight local towns was compared. Wokingham and Bracknell had the highest tree cover (27%), compared with 18% for Reading and 14% for Slough, with the least cover.

TREE MAINTENANCE

It's good to see that tree maintenance, and not just planting, is mentioned in the urban tree cover report. WDVTA, and Barbara in particular, has always stressed the need for newly planted trees to be watered in the first few years. When the Jubilee trees were planted, a five-year maintenance contract was factored into the cost.

One of the many things the Reading Tree Wardens do is arrange for trees planted along streets to be watered and checked by local residents. This year, they've been nominated for a '[Pride of Reading Green Community Award](#)'. In an email to their members and supporters they said: "The nomination refers to all of the fantastic work that the Reading Tree Wardens (and all of our supporters) have done in increasing the town's tree canopy with the extensive new tree planting carried out over the years, as well as the efforts made in educating the public about the importance of trees, providing talks, and of course organising the fantastic "Tree Walks" - along with their respective booklets. All of the caring for, protecting and maintaining of trees - both young and veteran - has not gone un-noticed: we are, deservedly, recognised for doing our little bit towards creating a future with greener, cleaner, more beautiful, more bio-diverse - and healthier - communities in Reading."

Claire O'Keeffe has pointed out that one of the finalists in Prince William's 'Earth Shot' prize was '[FREETOWN THE TREETOWN](#)'. Over the past half century, Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, has undergone rapid population growth, resulting in the loss of millions of trees during urban development in the city. Seventy percent of Freetown's trees have been cut down and this project aims to restore what has been lost and protect it for future generations. It's a "pay-to-grow" scheme, in which residents plant and monitor trees across the city, managed via an on-line tracking program.

EARLY RECORDING OF VETERANS

Stephen Loyd

"The Tree Experts - A History of Professional Arboriculture in Britain" by Mark Johnston

During the nineteenth century there was a growing interest in ancient and remarkable trees which led to calls for some national record of these trees. One of the first journals to suggest this idea was the 'Proceedings of The Royal Horticultural Society', by the appointment of an arboricultural committee to coordinate the collection of records. However, this tree register never really materialized.

Then in 1883 the magazine 'Woods and Forests' declared "*we shall be pleased to record in Woods and Forests any observations furnished by our readers with regard to measurements of the finest specimens of trees in the British Isles, both indigenous and exotic. Such a record will, we think, prove useful in furnishing data respecting the relative rates of growth of cultivated trees.*" Unfortunately, the magazine lasted just over a year before going out of business.

In the horticultural press there was discussion about the need to standardise how these trees were measured. The Scottish Arboricultural Society set out its rules for measuring the girth of ancient trees, and in 1890 the renowned tree expert, Angus Webster, endorsed the society's method in 'The Garden' magazine "...to take all girths of tree trunks at 2 feet and 5 feet from ground level, unless good reason - owing to a swelling or protuberances -for departing from these can be adduced".

DID YOU KNOW?... 6000 trees, mostly oaks, were used in the construction of HMS Victory

She was launched this month in 1765, but construction had begun six years earlier, in 1759. The delay, caused by the end of the 7-years war, meant the timbers were weathered more than usual, resulting in a stronger ship. However, the timbers had swollen so much that to get her out of the dock, six inches had to be taken off the dock gate.

She is currently undergoing a 10-year, £43million, restoration project including new masts; but remains on the active list of the Royal Navy and is the oldest commissioned warship in the world. She's also the only active warship in the Royal Navy to have engaged another ship in combat. [Other ships with such claims have long since been decommissioned.]

CRICKET ST. THOMAS

If you visited the Warner's hotel at Cricket St. Thomas, you'd be forgiven for having that déjà vu feeling. It was the setting for the 1970s sitcom, 'To the Manor Born' starring Penelope Keith and is set in wonderful gardens.

The house was originally built in the 14th century and then rebuilt, after a fire in 1820. The grounds are stunning, nestled in beautiful Somerset countryside with lots of rolling hills.

There is an impressive avenue of **yew** trees - maybe 16 of them, leading up to Cricket St. Thomas church (photo right) which is now enveloped by the hotel.



There is a huge **Giant Redwood** (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) (left and below). These trees originate from California where



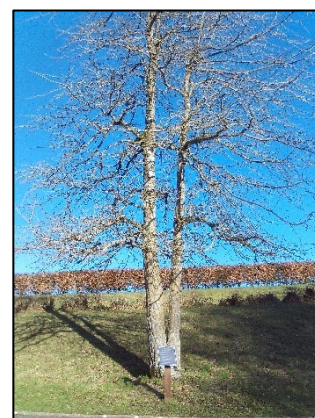
they are known as 'Sequoiadendrons' rather than 'Wellingtonias'.

I discovered a large **Magnolia delavayi** native to southern China (below). It's also known as Chinese evergreen magnolia or 'Delavay's Magnolia'. It was named after Father Delavey, a French



catholic missionary in China. It's a fairly small, evergreen tree with fragrant flowers.

I saw an **Atlas Blue Cedar** (*Cedar atlantica glauca*) (below left), a **Deodar Cedar** (*Cedrus deodara*) and a **Western Red Cedar** (*Thuja plicata*) (below second from left). *Thuja* is not actually a Cedar at all, but belongs to the Cypress family (*Cupressaceae*). It's valued for its decay resistant timber. These trees can live for about 1,000 years: the oldest, verified tree, was 1,460 years old! 'The Holey Tree' in the grounds here has been made from a Western Red Cedar (below third from left). The **Ginkgo biloba** or Maidenhair tree (below right) is a native of China, unique in that it has no living relatives. It's a deciduous tree with bright



yellow leaves in autumn.

More recently, **Himalayan birch** (*Betula utilis*) (left) have been planted near the lake which flows through the estate providing them with their own fresh water supply.

Obviously, not all trees survive and it is a testament to the owners of the estate, that some of the trunks have been sculptured. One of these is known as the Admiral's chair (right) after Alexander Hood (1727-1814) who became a vice-Admiral and who owned the estate at one time.



SPECIES IN FOCUS – SANFORDIACAULIS DENSIFOLIA

12 miscellaneous facts about *Sanfordiacaulis densifolia*.



Reconstruction of Sanfordiacaulis densifolia by Tim Stonesifer.

Human figures for scale (male height=1.75m).

from '[Smithsonian Magazine](#)' Feb 5 2024

1. *S. densifolia* doesn't have a common name and was described for the first time this year.
2. It lived 350 million years ago, in a period where there is very little plant fossil evidence.
3. Only 5 fossils are known, all found in close proximity in the Stonehammer UNESCO Global Geopark, in New Brunswick, Canada, having been buried in an earthquake-induced mudslide. One of the specimens is remarkably complete,
4. Named after the quarry where it was found and the quarry owner, Laurie Sanford; the specific name refers to the dense arrangement of its compound leaves.
5. It grew in a tropical wetland ecosystem, at a time considered particularly experimental in the evolution of large forest plants, many of which, including *Sanfordiacaulis*, were evolutionary dead-ends.
6. Its structure is totally different from other known trees.
7. It was a vascular, non-flowering plant with a non-woody trunk nearly 3m (10') tall, but only 16cm (6") in diameter.
8. It had no branches, but the long compound leaves, concentrated at the top of the trunk, resembled branches, the longest being over 1.7m (5½') long.
9. The leaves had alternate "secondary laterals" (leaflets) and were arranged in a dense spiral pattern that allowed the tree to maximise its exposure to sunlight.
10. The canopy had a diameter of about 5.5m (18'), with a crown volume of 20-30m³ (25-40yd³).
11. *Sanfordiacaulis* is the first evidence of the evolution of a sub-canopy. Previously there was just ground vegetation and tall tree-like structures.
12. It's been described as "an upside-down toilet brush" and "a Dr Seuss doodle", since it resembles the trees from 'The Lorax' by Dr Seuss.

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

FROM THE TREE COUNCIL:

[Care of newly planted trees](#)

[New hedgerow protection in England](#)

[Joining the Dots: A Future for our Hedgerow Trees](#)

[Hedge Hub](#) - various videos about hedges and links to other web pages.

MOTHER TREES AND SOCIALIST FORESTS: IS THE 'WOOD-WIDE WEB' A FANTASY?

Malcolm Inglis sent me this thought-provoking article, with several interesting links. If you aren't aware of the recent trend to "humanise" trees, some of this might surprise you.

WELLINGTONIAS IN UK:

[More here than in their native range in California](#) - This featured in main news summaries on Radio 4 on 13th March, and there was a brief interview with Matt Disney (who spoke to us at our AGM last year) on the 'Today' programme that day.

[They grow well here and should grow as tall as in California](#)

[Carbon storage potential and growth rates](#)

TREES IN A CHANGING CLIMATE:

[Coastal Redwood Groves in Wales](#)

[Scotland needs more conifer plantations](#)

[Climate change relating to ancient and veteran trees](#) - Ancient Tree Forum briefing paper.

[Climate change and fruit tree flowering](#) – a University of Reading citizen science project. It's too late to participate this year, but you can see the results for 2022, 2023 and 2024 on the 'FruitWatch' [website](#).

SYCAMORE GAP TREE NEWS

[Tree Section on Display](#) – in Northumberland National Park

[Seeds from the tree successfully germinated](#)

[Men charged with the felling](#)

[NEW COMMUNITY ORCHARD IN WHITLEY, READING](#) – 50 saplings planted by Freely Fruity with added publicity as they were joined by the actor Winston Ellis (Pirates of the Caribbean) who grew up in the area.

[ENGLAND'S BIGGEST TEMPERATE RAINFOREST](#) – in Borrowdale in the Lake District has become a nature reserve.

['A DIFFERENT TYPE OF FORESTRY'](#) – Forestry England allowing natural regeneration and reported in the press this month. 'Forestry England' is the **new name** for an **offshoot** of the Forestry Commission.

[300-ACRE ORCHARD RIPPED OUT](#) – in Monmouthshire

[RAMPANT WILDFIRES ARE THREATENING A COLLAPSE OF THE AMAZON RAINFOREST](#)

[NATURE DESTRUCTION WILL CAUSE BIGGER ECONOMIC SLUMP IN UK THAN 2008 CRISIS](#)

[IDENTIFICATION OF UK WILD FLOWERS](#) – including tree flowers. Have a look at the wild service (*Sorbus torminalis*) [page](#).

[WATCH AN ELEPHANT KNOCKING DOWN A LARGE TREE](#) - in Mala Game Reserve, South Africa.

And to make you smile:

"DO YOU HAVE A TREE FRIEND?—HUMAN-TREE RELATIONSHIPS IN FINLAND"

This is the title of a research article published in the British Ecological Society's open access journal 'People and Nature' in February this year. The authors carried out a large-scale survey involving 1,758 people and used cluster analysis and cross-tabulation to correlate human and tree types "to address how the lives of humans and trees are bound together in interspecies relationships". Their results "show that the strongest influence on tree-human relationships originates from human lifestyles and nature connections. Consequently, we identified three main types of human-tree relationships:

(1) Admiring relationships towards large, old and charismatic trees, primarily grounded in sensory and emotional experiences, are common among urban nature-loving people.

(2) Nurturing relationships that occur with young trees in people's own gardens, which is most typical for rural outdoorspeople owning houses.

(3) Nostalgic relationships are associated with trees with symbolic value in the memories of people who no longer have a material connection to an important environment."

They conclude: "We provide new knowledge of the correlations between human and tree characteristics in forming their interspecies relationship and how this relationship affects human emotional well-being. Based on our findings, we suggest that understanding human-nature interdependence helps to sustain and create emotionally supportive multispecies environments through green design and management."

Some sources used in this issue: all web pages accessed 30/05/2024 (unless stated otherwise) Links embedded in the text are not repeated here. Email me if you want a list of them.

Species in Focus:

<https://phys.org/news/2024-02-rare-3d-fossils-early-trees.html?utm>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanfordiacaulis>

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/rare-fossil-shows-trees-looked-very-different-350-million-years-ago-180983733>

<https://edition.cnn.com/2024/02/02/world/sanfordiacaulis-ancient-tree-fossils-discovery-scn/index.html>

<https://doi.org/10.1016%2Fj.cub.2024.01.011>

<https://stonehammergeopark.com/>

<https://www.nbm-mnb.ca/stonehammer-unesco-global-geopark/>

<https://www.nbm-mnb.ca/natural-sciences/>

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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.*