



Our veteran tree database has **8,696** trees and **13,976** photographs

Welcome to the latest issue of Tree Watch.

For various reasons the November issue of Tree Watch was not produced and, as you can see, the February one is very late and I apologise for this. Consequently, the next issue will be June instead of May.

With no November issue, there are a lot of recommendations and local news items to put into this issue. Hence to save space, there is no 'Species in Focus' in this issue and the recommendations are formatted in a more concise way. Some items have been postponed to be included in a future issue.

You may well have heard the good news that Wokingham has been awarded 'Tree City' status. See [page 8](#) for more details.



With the completion of our veteran tree survey, the future of the association is now under discussion and whilst we think about that, it is very appropriate to have Jon Stokes and Sam Village from The Tree Council as the guest speakers at our AGM this year. It's on Thursday 10th April at 19:30 and is being held as usual in the St Paul's Parish Rooms adjacent to St Paul's Church on the Reading Road in Wokingham Town. It's easy to find and has a large free car park adjacent. It's also a few minutes walk from Wokingham Station and on bus routes. I do hope many of you will be there.



The lovely photo above, of Rapley Lake in Swindley Forest, Bracknell was taken by David Griffin in December last year, but with the lovely weather we've been having recently, it could easily have been taken this month. Also in December, Mike Dawson took this striking photo of spindle tree fruit. They really do brighten up a dull day. The wooden cat statue, carved from a felled scarlet oak, is outside the pavilion in Arborfield, as described in the [last issue](#) (page 2).

The next issue of Tree Watch will be June 2025 and the copy deadline is 31st May. 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**

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

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Events – April-June 2025

- ❖ Thursday 10 April – 19:30 – Walter Hall, St Paul's Parish Rooms – WDVTA AGM with guest speakers Jon Stokes and Sam Village from The Tree Council. Free car park adjacent.

Non-WDVTA events:

- ❖ Reading Walks Festival 10-18 May – variety of walks, some featuring trees.
- ❖ Every 2nd Friday 13:00 – Free Tree Tour – Marble Hill Park, Twickenham – meet at the cafe.

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

PARISH/TOWN ACTIVITY – MEMBERS' REPORTS

ARBORFIELD & NEWLANDS – Gabriella Eöry

For National Tree Week, I created a short tree trail around Nightingale Fields to raise awareness of the beauty of our surroundings. The trail is available via 'GoJauntly' (a free app available to download from the Apple Store or Play Store) as the 'Nightingale Fields Tree Trail'; a PDF version will be available shortly.

ARBORFIELD & NEWLANDS AND BARKHAM - Derek Oxbrough

The **Coombes Woodland**, which exists on the edge of the Barkham and Arborfield & Newland Parishes was purchased by the Parish Councils in 2023, after some elicited "land-lotting" purchases of part of the Woodland threatened the existence of this Ancient Woodland. A joint committee, "The Coombes Woodlands Committee (CWC)", for the management of the woodland, has been formed jointly by both parishes and has recently opened a website. At the moment it is quite basic, but will be expanded as time goes on and activities increase. One of the most interesting pages on the website is the section on the History of the Coombes and the surrounding area. A larger document, A complete History of The Coombes Woodland, can be downloaded. It has some interesting sections on Ownership, Wildlife, Environmental recognition and Walks, as well as some useful maps of the area.

A Working Party has been established and its first session, which involved some theory and practical training, was held on the 12th January. Another one is scheduled for 22nd March.

CHARVIL - Sarah Swatridge, Stephen Loyd and Elaine Butler

Adrian Larkham has planted more trees in the Charvil community orchard.

Jane Hartley will join Sarah Swatridge as a Tree Warden and fills the gap left by Claire and Barry Andersen, who have moved away.

The 4 Himalayan birches that had been planted on the new Hicks development, but were damaged, have now been replaced and are looking strong. More trees have been planted on the central green in Canberra Way.

The Jubilee Oak that wasn't thriving in the Meadows, has been replaced by 3 (slightly smaller) locally grown oaks. These were planted in a different location from the one originally identified by Sarah and Barbara in the Meadows. They were planted together as per the Miyawaki planting method and so far, so good. A local resident, Karen, who grew and nurtured these oaks and helped plant them, will be keeping a close eye on them too.

During Tree Planting Week Nov/Dec 2024 the Parish Council planted several more trees in The Orchard, plus several replacement trees. A Rowan was planted at the village hall, a silver birch on the mound at East Park Farm, a replacement (lime?) was planted in Vale View where one was felled. (SS).

Econet Charvil has been set up (SL)

Against local opposition, permission has been given for 75 homes to be built on land adjacent to Park Lane. There are 6 veteran trees on the edge of this development: MRNS 3794, 3817, 3795, 3796, 534, & 3797. (EB)

EARLEY - Sarah Hanson and Jean Hackett

A member of Earley Environmental Group has offered to update the parish record of veteran trees and produce another walk leaflet to which the new trees will be added. The University of Reading has given Swallows Meadow to Earley Town Council to allow public access as part of a green route. (SH)

Earley Community Orchard in Laurel Park, was set up in 2016 (first negotiations about location with WBC in 2104!), and all the trees were bought by sponsors, found through EEG, our local residents' association and a non-Facebook social media site called Streetlife (now taken over by Nextdoor). The site is a narrow strip of land between the Laurel Park football pitches and the public footpath leading towards Maiden Place from the pavilion.

We planted 18 trees: 13 apple varieties, 2 pear, and 1 each of plum, damson and greengage. There was some vandalism in the first year, which we made good. One sponsor even took 'his' tree home when it had been retrieved from where it was thrown, potted it, gave it some TLC, and replanted it 2 years later! In the meantime we'd replaced it, and it's been located at the far end of the orchard, next to a walnut tree grown from a nut by Tim and Linda Chambers and donated by them.

Most of the trees have borne fruit in the last 2 summers, but I don't think the sponsors have had any of them! As 2 of the apple varieties are cookers, there may have been a few consumers surprised at the tartness when they bit into them.

The original group members/committee are hoping to find younger blood to take over the running of the group and maintenance of the orchard. If you or anyone you know could spare some time to help maintain this orchard, it would be greatly appreciated. Contact: info@earleyorchard.org.uk (JH)

FINCHAMPSTEAD - Gabriella EÖry

The veteran tree survey map couldn't be completed in Arborfield Green because of the construction of the new developments. By the end of 2024, I could survey two undiscovered parts of Arborfield Green (in Finchampstead Parish): the Nightingale Fields and the Kingsley Park, the area between the A327 and Sheerlands Road, divided by the Nine Mile Ride extension. We are lucky because there are plenty of beautiful trees here. The inventory contains all the trees that need our attention. At least five veteran oaks and a Eucalyptus are in my inventory, and more than ten have girths larger than 2 metres. All of them are in good condition. My favourites are the two majestic oaks which welcome the visitors to Nightingale Fields on Ambler Drive. Both are maiden English oaks with girths of more than 4 metres. The remaining undiscovered field of Arborfield Green is still under construction between Rowcroft Road and Sheerlands Road. I plan to survey it by May 2025.

NB: The Arborfield Green development includes parts of Arborfield, Barkham and Finchampstead.

[I expect you've heard about the controversial new road layout at California Crossroads including leaf patterns. It's been described as looking like a playground, but according to WBC it meets all current regulations and has been designed to slow traffic down. - Ed]

RUSCOMBE - Stephen Loyd

Veteran willows in Ruscombe wood have been pollarded (*photo right*) as part of the management to retain these c200 year old relics of the local Victorian osier business. The work was carried out by volunteers from the 'Friends of Ruscombe Wood', who also maintain the 100 year old hazel coppice.

SHINFIELD - Patricia Green and Elaine Butler

The Wollemi Pine in the Harris Garden continues to grow well, and is developing cones (possibly female ones - *photo right*) on the tips of its branches at about 10' height. The tree colours in the



Garden are magnificent in autumn especially the Ginkgo with its yellow leaves (PG).

Shinfield has three new community orchards. The **largest**, planted in December last year by 'Freely Fruity' and pupils from St Mary's Junior School, is behind the school in Langley Mead SANG. It's in a corner of a field surrounded by a high metal fence and only accessible via the school, so perhaps it shouldn't be described as a community orchard, although it is **described** as providing "Lots more free fruit for residents of the local area". The trees were donated by **Freely Fruity** in partnership with the University of Reading and Shinfield Parish Council, with funding from Beard Construction. In January, the same partnership planted 13 fruit trees along the edge of the car park at Langley Mead. This small linear orchard has a selection of apple, cherry, pear and quince trees. The third orchard, in Ryeish Lane, was planted by the developers of the adjacent housing estate.

The photos below show the Langley Mead orchards and the Ryeish Lane one (*below top right*) – you can see tree guards clearly, and can just make out the whips! I hope they all thrive and can feature in Tree Watch next year.



TWYFORD – Stephen Loyd

There appears to be a worrying issue with pollarded willow that is evident on BBOWT's Loddon Nature Reserve. Re-growth is initially vigorous after pollarding, but in the second year and beyond the new growth dies off unexpectedly. The details and photos have been sent to the 'Small Woods Association' expert on tree health and the problem will be discussed in the forthcoming issue of their magazine "Small Woods". In summary, unfortunately it does appear to be a virus that is attacking the trees on this site.

Subsequent to pollarding the crack willow, we are seeing browning of the leaves (*photo right*) on the new regrowth. Over a two year period some of the new growth has completely died. Also some of the mature unpollarded willows are looking less than healthy. Is there any new disease infecting willow that may be causing this?

Econet Broad Hinton has been set up.



WOKINGHAM TOWN - Barbara Stagles, Juergen Adam and Elaine Butler

Sadly, the iconic cedar of Lebanon in St Pauls churchyard has had to be felled because it had succumbed to a disease. Unfortunately the young cedar, that had been planted as a succession tree, failed unexpectedly several years ago for no obvious reason. (BS)

Woosehill Meadows and Emm Brook Community Regeneration Project: The 'Friends of the Emmbrook' are the project patrons and WBC is supporting this project's regeneration work in Woosehill Meadows and Emmbrook. The project group also coordinates with the South East River Trust. Active volunteer work started in November. The group will focus on woodland regeneration along the Emm Brook with brush clearing and coppicing work around the veteran willows. It plans to build dry hedges and deadwood piles, selectively clear brush to support woodland plants and herbs as well as giving the crowded willows more space. The group is currently seeking support from WBC and other potential sources enabling the purchase of working tools. We will continue to monitor progress on the plan to restore the old route of the Emm Brook that had been started by the SE Rivers Trust and might be continued if funding becomes available. Links are also being maintained with the 'Friends of Foxhill' conservation group. For further details see the [Woosehill Meadows & Emmbrook Park Community](#) Facebook site. (JA)

The removal of trees from land at 'Ye Olde Leathern Bootel' on Barkham Road featured in a previous issue of Tree Watch. Plans for an extension to their buildings was [refused](#) in December. One of the reasons is "loss of vegetation would detrimentally impact the Green Route of Barkham Road". (EB)

WOKINGHAM TOWN AND BARKHAM - Alison Griffin

The planning application for development between Barkham Road and Blagrove Lane that the council had refused has been taken to appeal. Alison has been communicating with a WDVTA member who has been working with the local residents group opposed to the plans. The group have some very useful reference information (e.g. reports on actual BNG (biodiversity net gain) figures that should be the minimum target, and failure rate of newly planted trees on developments) that might be useful to other members if they are ever involved in objecting to planning applications that will harm local trees, woods and biodiversity.

OTHER LOCAL NEWS

Spruce bark beetle

There is local concern about the eight-toothed spruce bark beetle (*Ips typographus*). The southern part of the Borough is in the [demarcated area](#), where special restrictions apply. The March issue of the Shinfield Parish newsletter, carried a copy of the Forestry Commission [poster](#).

Local Plan update

I expect you've all heard about the '[Proposed Local Plan Update 2023-2040](#)', and perhaps taken part in the consultation which closed on 12th November. It outlines where the council plans to build more than 11,000 homes by 2040, including potentially selling the council offices at Shute End for conversion into about 100 flats. Probably 10,000 of these new homes will be in three large developments, all in the south of the Borough.

The proposed development at Hall Farm (previously mentioned in Tree Watch), called 'Loddon Valley Garden Village' is outlined on page 79 [Policy SS13; map (figure 8) on page 85]. It sounds more like a town than a village, with over 4,000 houses, a primary and a secondary school, a district and two local centres, as well as an extension to the 'Thames Valley Science and Innovation Park' providing 'employment floorspace'. It will also have a 'multi-functional country park'. In addition there is 'Arborfield Green Strategic Development Location (SDL)' with another 3,000 new dwellings, primary school, district centre, local centres and more 'employment floorspace' [Policy SS11 page 71; map (figure 6) page 74].

'The South Wokingham SDL' [Policy SS12, page 75; map (figure 7) page 79] includes nearly 3,000 dwellings, 2 primary schools, 2 retail centres and a sports hub (at Gray's Farm).

All three plans include affordable homes , self and custom build service plots and Gypsy/Traveller pitches.

Biodiversity and the environment, including trees and hedges, get considerable mention [section 11-Natural Environment p181-200]; including the following statement:

"The design of development proposals should allow sufficient space for the natural development of a tree, particularly the predicted height, canopy spread and root development for each species. The design should provide sufficient protection for above and below ground constraints, including the protection of roots and soil structure as a priority." [Paragraph 14.42 page 192/3]

Hall Farm Development:- The next stage in the controversial plans for Hall Farm in Arborfield (also called 'Loddon Valley SDL' and 'Loddon Garden Village') is a scoping report ([PA 243188](#)). This was submitted to WBC on 19th December and the consultation period was (conveniently?) over Christmas, between 20th December and 10th January. Although you can't comment on it now, you might like to look at Figure 11 – [Ecology Site Maps](#). The first 4 maps are Nature Conservation Designations; Local Wildlife Sites; Baseline Habitats and Baseline Linear Habitats (showing lines of trees and hedges). There will be an opportunity to comment on the full planning application and Environmental Impact Assessment when they come out – which might not be for a while. The [objections](#) to this development continue.

The University of Reading has purchased Tanners Farm on the Swallowfield Road, near the Swallowfield/Arborfield boundary. The 635-acre site was acquired for about £16 million. That's some £25,000 per acre, somewhat more than the **"over £200 per acre"** paid for the farm in 1962, when Tanners Farm and the adjacent Bridge Farm (totalling 500 acres) were bought by Mr Peter Samuel, son the second Viscount Bearsted. On their [website](#), the University said, *"With the possibility of an updated Local Plan for Wokingham allocating parts of Hall Farm for a new garden village, the additional farmland will ensure there is ample space to continue the University's world-class research, in a location that is still close to the University's other facilities."*

Incidentally, an outline planning application for another [111 houses](#) in Arborfield has been made ([PA 243099](#)) and for 420 houses in Spencers Wood, Shinfield ([PA 250517](#)). An application to build 148 houses in [Three Mile Cross](#) in Shinfield was refused because existing trees and the rural character of the area would be significantly impacted. The developers are appealing of course.

Detailed assessments of [Local Green Spaces](#) was published in September last year as Appendix 8 of the Local Plan.

[Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy \(LNRS\)](#)

The report was out for [consultation](#) until 24th March, and suggestions could be made for additional sites to be included. There's a very useful interactive [map](#) (it is quite slow to load) with various layers which can be turned on and off. Layers of particular interest to us include five woodland habitat layers (including 'verteranize trees'), hedgerows and orchards. You can zoom in to street level to check individual sites.

Tree planting in Wokingham

Given that Wokingham has just obtained Tree City status, it isn't surprising that quite a lot of tree planting has taken place recently. Last year WBC planted more than 6,200 trees across the borough, with nearly half of them in [Ashenbury Park](#) in Woodley. These were native species, such as beech, silver birch, blackthorn, dog rose, hazel, spindleberry and wild cherry. This March they have two main projects with thousands of trees being planted on council land in Barkham and in [Ashridge Country Park](#) (SANG) in Bell Foundry Lane in Wokingham Town. Species include bell heather, elder, European blueberry, common alder and aspen .

About 6,700 trees will be planted in the [Covid Memorial Woodland](#), north of California Country Park in Finchampstead. There will be 17 different native species, including hazel, English oak and wild cherry; chosen because they grow locally and will increase biodiversity. There will also be a community orchard. Special planting sessions between 19th and 22nd March, involved local volunteers helping to plant the saplings.

In February, the Wokingham Rotary Club organised volunteers from several local groups to plant a native hedgerow in [Howard Palmer Gardens](#), a small park (0.8 acres) located behind the Cockpit Path car park in the centre of the Wokingham Town. The Woodland Trust provided 270 'wild harvest' whips and the children of Shinfield St Mary's Junior

School contributed hazel, blackthorn, crab apple, elder, dog rose and rowan from their community tree nursery. WBC provided stakes and tree guards.

Felled Trees

The felling of trees during the construction of the new [South Wokingham Distributor Road](#) has caused much [concern](#), but WBC says the new road is being built "[with nature in mind](#)".

Freely Fruity receives King's Award for Voluntary Services

The King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS) recognises outstanding work by local volunteer groups to benefit their communities. Considered equivalent to an MBE, it is the highest award given to local voluntary groups in the UK.

'[Freely Fruity](#)' is involved with various tree planting and maintenance activities in the Borough (including the community orchards in Shinfield mentioned above). They are one of six charities to receive this award this year, as was reported in the [local](#) and [national](#) press.

Local author

[Sarah Swatridge's](#) work has been mentioned in previous issues of Tree Watch and you can find some of her work in our local libraries. One of her latest publications "[Isaac's Oak](#)" was published last November. It's a soft-covered large print book and should be available in Wokingham libraries, but you'll have to ask them to purchase it. There's a nice photo of an [oak tree](#) isolated in the centre of a field on the cover (which I can't reproduce here for copyright reasons). "*It's never too late for love, nor to solve a crime. A mature romance and mystery rolled into one. Who'd have thought being a Tree Warden could be so much fun!*"

TREE ESTABLISHMENT MONITORING

Some years ago, in 2019, Barbara led a campaign to encourage the Council and developers to pay more attention to the care of newly-planted trees. There is a requirement to plant trees in the new housing developments in the Borough. This is good of course, but so many of them were dying through neglect. The photos here were taken at that time (and not in winter!).

Now, the Tree Council has launched a [project](#) aimed at determining the factors that contribute to successful tree establishment. It's funded by Defra, in association with Fera Science and Forest Research. Over the last year, they have developed and tested a new monitoring protocol and app to help people collect data about their trees in the years following planting. The next step is to build a large dataset that combines data from multiple sites across the country. This could include hedgerows, shelter belts, orchards and of course trees in parks and streets. They

want as many people as possible to contribute data this summer. There will be introductory and training sessions, probably on-line. If you want to take part, you will need:

- At least one site locally where trees have been planted within the last 10 years.
- If it is not your own land, you will need permission to access the site and conduct a monitoring exercise.
- A smartphone or tablet.

You can complete an '[expression of interest](#)' form and find out more about this [project](#) on the Tree Council website. This sounds

very worthwhile and I hope they get enough people sending in data to allow sensible conclusions to be reached.



TREE CITY STATUS

Tree City Status is an award that recognises a community's dedication to protecting and cherishing their urban tree canopy. '[Tree Cities of the World](#)' is a programme co-founded in 2019 by 'The Arbor Day Foundation' and the 'United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)'.

To be recognised as a 'Tree City of the Word' a city or community must meet five core standards:

- have clear responsibility for tree care
- set official tree management rules
- update an inventory of local tree resources
- allocate a dedicated tree planting budget
- hold an annual tree celebration event with the community

Countries

Argentina
Australia
Belgium
Brazil
Canada
Chile
Colombia
Costa Rica
Ecuador
Slovenia
Spain
USA
France
India
Italy
Mexico
New Zealand
Peru
Portugal
Puerto Rico
South Africa
Sweden
UK
Uganda

Wokingham has been added to the list and is one of 27 UK cities recognised in 2024 (many have had the status for several years). Cities can of course lose their status and as Tree Wardens, we must do our best to ensure Wokingham stays on the list.

Currently there are 210 recognised cities in 24 countries, with 3,271,531 trees planted and 134,303,472 people living in a Tree City.

The website summarizes the trees planted in 2024 by regions (of very varying sizes!) - not all tree cities planted trees in 2024:

Region	Cities	Tree Planted
Australia	14	554,594
Canada	21	384,799
Latin America	40	551,505
Brazil	34	404,054
Spain	16	57,480
UK	27	515,627
Total	152	2,468,059

Looking at the list of cities, one name was intriguing: 'City of Tea Tree Gully'. It's a local council in South Australia, in the NE suburbs of Adelaide. It dates from the 1850s when a settlement was established at the entrance to Tea Tree Gully, which passes through the Adelaide foothills. In 1858 it was officially designated as the 'District Council of Tea Tree Gully'. It's named after the tea trees growing in the gully, which has a permanent supply of water from many springs. There are several species of tea trees (*Leptospermum spp.*), most of which are endemic to Australia. They are shrubs and small trees in the myrtle family (Myrtaceae). Incidentally Howard Florey, of penicillin fame, who was born in Adelaide, is said to have lived there at one time.

UK Tree Cities-2024

Barking & Dagenham
Belfast
Birmingham
Bradford
Camden
Cardiff
Coventry
Doncaster
Edinburgh
Hull
Ipswich
Islington
Leeds
Middlesbrough
Newcastle upon Tyne
Newport
Plymouth
Redbridge
Sheffield
Solihull
Stockton-on-Tees
Telford
Tower Hamlets
Welwyn Hatfield
Wirral
Wokingham
Wrexham

FREE THE TREE

'Free-the-Tree' is another much needed and worthwhile project, this time initiated by [Fund4Trees](#) and promoted by the [Arboricultural Association](#).

Quite simply it highlights the problem with tree guards left in place for too long. There's a [poster](#) illustrating the problems they cause.

Russell Ball, Founder and Trustee of 'Fund4Trees' said:

"This is an important national public-engagement campaign to mobilise efforts within local communities to find these abandoned on-stake trees and help save them from their strangling ties."



In the August edition of [Tree Watch](#) last year (page 9) Elaine wrote about 'The Marton Oak' in Cheshire as one of the trees nominated for the UK Tree of the Year. Sadly it didn't win, but the picture reminded me of visiting the tree in 2017. I had recently read about it in Aljos Farjon's splendid book 'Ancient Oaks

in the English Landscape' and had driven through the village of Marton many times as my in-laws lived in that part of Cheshire. So the next time we were driving through the village I turned off the main road and left my husband and mother-in-law in the car whilst I ventured down the drive of the house that I thought had the oak in its

back garden. The owner was very friendly, even more so when I told him about WDVTA and why I was interested in his tree, as he had lived in Wokingham so knew our area well. These are a couple of the photographs I took. According to Aljos Farjon there is a drawing of the tree dated 1810 that shows the trunk already divided. The Woodland Trust also think it is a contender for Britain's oldest tree and also highlight it as the fattest.



In Tree Watch Elaine pointed out that the Marton Oak is one of the Tree Council's Golden Jubilee trees. I saw another of these Golden Jubilee trees last year on a visit to the botanic garden in Cambridge. It is a dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) and was the first of that species to be grown outside its native China. The botanic gardens were designed and planted in the mid Victorian era and contain rare examples of some unusual tree species. I was particularly taken with many unusual oaks, especially the very large leaves of the Shumard oak (*Quercus Shumardii*).



CLAYFIELD COPSE

Clayfield Copse (RG4 6RT) is a local nature reserve near Caversham Park Village. It covers about 21 acres and is made up of fields, wild flower meadows, native woodland and recreation areas, including a sculpture trail. It was Reading's first nature reserve, established in 1991.

There is free parking near the tennis courts/skateboard area. Alternatively, you can go to Loddon Brewery farm shop and cafe (closed Mondays except Bank Holidays) RG4 9QD Dunsden Green Farm. From here you can take the track near the car park and walk back to Clayfield Copse.

I must admit, I thought the whole area was called Clayfield Copse, but it seems to be made up of two areas, Blackhouse Wood and Clayfield Copse. There were no obvious boundaries or markers to show exactly where you were.

There's a '*Friends of Clayfield Copse*' [webpage](#) on the Econet website, along with a [Tree Walk](#) (transcript from a tree walk for National Tree Week in 2013). The walk is only about 1 mile beginning and ending at the Caversham Park car park.

Here you'll find several mature oaks (see photo right). A leaflet says they're approx 300 years old. In contrast, there are five young, disease-resistant elm trees in the area, planted about 15 years ago.

Unfortunately, there is much [evidence](#) of ash dieback, which was first found here about 10 years ago. It has changed the area. Where trees have fallen, there is now more light which has an effect on what will now grow there (and what won't).

The area is full of beech trees. There are several yew trees. A cedar had to be felled in 1987 and in the 1990 storm another cedar was blown down. Shire Horses were used to move it, in order to minimise disturbance to the woodland floor.

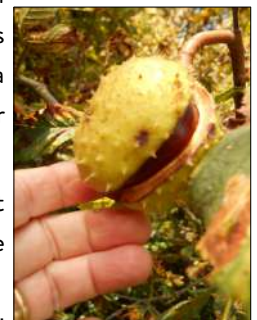
There was at least one American pine, but unfortunately that was felled in 2023. However, you can still find crab apples and wild service trees are on the perimeter with



Kiln Road. At the Kiln Road entrance to the nature reserve you'll find a single hornbeam with a beautiful trunk. We also came across sweet chestnuts, horse chestnuts and silver birches. The hedgerows were impressive with such a variety which must attract a good range of birds and other wildlife.

We visited in early October and the trees were still green, but it's worth a visit later in the year, especially when the leaves are changing.

We also found a couple of swings which pleased the 'inner child' in me. I can't resist a swing!



TREE OF THE YEAR

The 2024 UK '*Tree of the Year*' was an ancient oak (*Quercus robur*) from Lochaber in the Scottish highlands. It's called the '*Skipinnish oak*' because of its association with the Scottish Celtic band, [Skipinnish](#). It stands in a clearing in a dark spruce plantation in the heart of Lochaber and is 400 years old.

It came seventh in the 2025 [European Tree of the Year](#) competition (results announced this month). It got 16,771 votes. The winner, with 147,553 votes, is a Polish beech tree (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Atropunicea') called the "[Heart of the Dalkowskie Hills](#)". A [banyan tree](#) (*Ficus macrophylla*) in Portugal, with amazing buttress roots, came second, and a Spanish [stone pine](#) (*Pinus pinea*) was third.

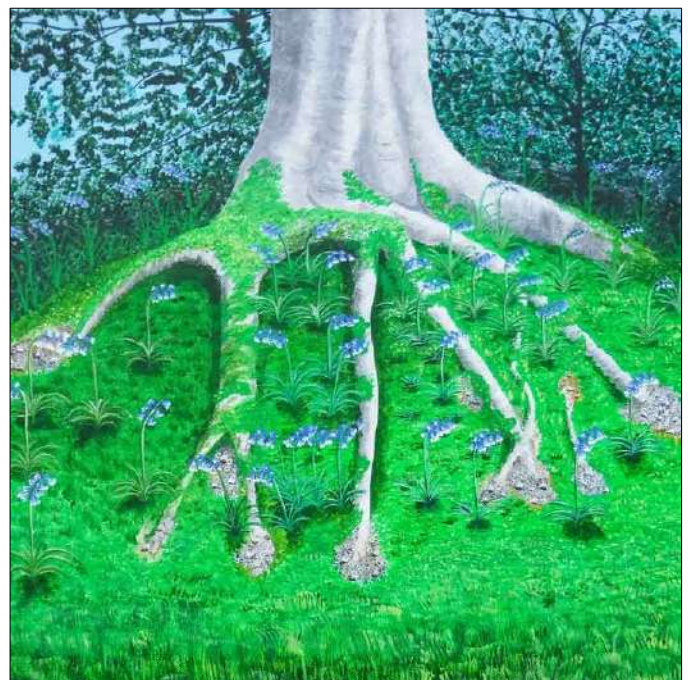
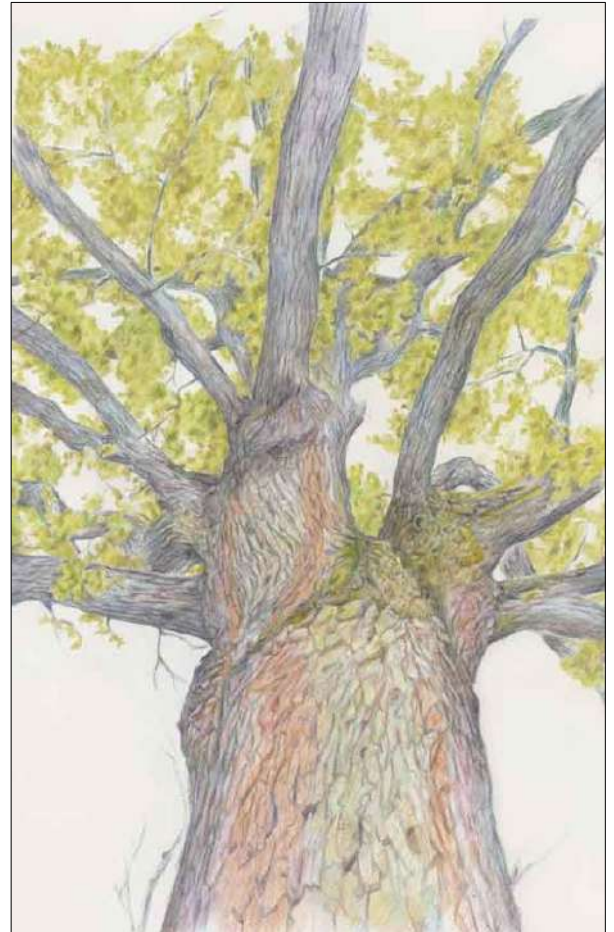
TREES IN ART

This joint project between WDVTA and the Wokingham Arts Society was described in the last issue of [Tree Watch](#) (page 2). The Tree Council promoted it in their social media on Facebook, Twitter (X) and Instagram. The entries included paintings, drawings, embroidery and carvings. You can see them all, along with descriptions, on our [website](#).

Below are just four:

Top: Wellingtonia [MRN 1689](#) by Philippa Lee Smith (*left*); Red Oak [MRN 3963](#) by Alan Tidy (*right*);

Bottom: Field Maple [MRN 6047](#) by Emma Major (*left*); English Oak [MRN 7131](#) by our treasurer, Derek Oxbrough (*right*).





It was with great sadness that, in November 2024, we learned of the death of Malcolm Butler, WDVTA Systems Manager, member and long term supporter.

From the establishment of WDVTA in 2007 as a borough-wide association, we were exceedingly fortunate to recruit, not only Elaine Butler as our Data Manager, but also her husband Malcolm, who was to provide invaluable technical assistance to a number of our activities. Together they brought an outstanding professionalism to the development of the WDVTA database making it widely respected, not only locally, but also nationally through leading figures in the Tree Council, the Ancient Tree Forum and the Woodland Trust.

Malcolm's greatest contribution was writing and running the programs to process our survey data, to check the validity of the data and display on it on our [survey map](#).

He contributed to several presentations at workshops in which members were trained to use technical equipment more accurately, so as to better record details about veteran trees for the survey. He was also on hand as a kindly and reassuring presence at public meetings of the association, helping to make certain that power point presentations proceeded smoothly without technical hitches. We were never disappointed!

It was always a pleasure to meet Malcolm and exchange ideas with him. My late husband Ray and I very much enjoyed occasional pub lunch meetings with him and Elaine, often at Christmas time, sharing family and other news as well as past experiences before arriving in Wokingham. Those were happy times.

Malcolm will be warmly remembered and much missed, not only by his family and close friends, but also by all those of us whose lives he touched through WDVTA.

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The photos here (left to right) show:

- Malcolm at a training session in 2008, demonstrating the use of the GPS we supplied for surveyors. Now most people use apps on their mobile phones.
- At the launch of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary [report](#) in October 2007.
- Measuring [MRN 4900](#) in January 2009. This photo is on the front cover of the second edition of our survey [handbook](#).



In his profile in 'Tree Watch' [May 2017](#) (page 8), Malcolm said, "These days the work rate has slowed as the survey gets nearer completion. This is perhaps fortuitous since the computer I assembled to support these activities back in 2007 is starting to show its age a little, as am I. The vet tree computer (we call it 'Igor') is now on its third operating system version having started out on Windows XP."

We all thought the survey was nearing its completion in 2017, but as you know it wasn't finally closed until 8 years later, in June last year, fortunately before he died. 'Igor' has lasted longer than Malcolm. He did find it infuriatingly slow at the end, as updates to the operating system (Window 10) required more resources and Igor was struggling to meet these. When we got the lottery grant for computer and other equipment in 2007 we had to take out insurance for the first year as that was a condition of the grant. We decided not to continue insuring the equipment, hoping our funds would cover any repairs or replacements that might be needed. That proved to be a very good choice!

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

- [Street trees](#) - an episode of Radio 4's 'Rare Earth' (53 mins). Although entitled "[Christmas Tree](#)", it's a discussion about street trees, TPOs etc, featuring John Stokes and Paul Powlesland, the barrister who helped the fight against the cutting down of trees in Sheffield and founder of 'Lawyers for Nature'.
- [Overheated trees](#) are contributing to urban air pollution
- [Trees have an extra climate benefit](#) thanks to methane-eating microbes
- All-night [streetlights](#) make leaves inedible to insects
- Nature's Diversity - 5 recorded events from the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew . Each session (such as "[Health and Nature](#)", "[Britain's lost rainforests](#)", "[Trees and Forest](#)") is a 15 min video and has a connection to scientific work undertaken at Kew.
- '[Botanical Architecture: Plants, Buildings and Us](#)' - Linnean lecture
- Woodland Trust '[Woodland Walks](#)' podcasts (audio only, 30 minutes) including "[Living Legends: the ancient oaks of Sherwood Forest](#)" (Sept 2024) and "[Magnificent oaks](#)" (Oct 2024)
- Google Street View helps [map how 600,000 trees grow down to the limb](#) - the simulation could help city planners better predict how seasonal foliage boosts cooling or when growing branches may require trimming
- [The Scatter Project](#) - mentioned in previous issued of Tree Watch
- Linnean Society: [News and Nature](#) - several interesting items
- [Wool-based tree guards](#) offer sustainable option to plastic
- [Tree damage](#) by Storm Éowyn (Jan 2025), including Glasgow's Darnley Sycamore, a Tree Council's 'Heritage Tree'
- Ash dieback spread '[past its peak](#)' in the South West
- Hunt for [invasive bug](#) damaging London trees
- Burnham Beeches-[Protecting the Hollow Tree](#)
- [World's trees slide towards extinction](#)
- [Has earth greened by 20% in 20 years?](#) An episode of Radio 4's 'More or Less: Behind the Stats'
- China's [Great Green Wall](#) has reached a new milestone
- [Underground Fungi and the Market Economy](#) - an episode of Radio 4's 'Naturebang'
- [Tree rings](#) used to determine course of the jet stream in previous centuries (Radio 4's 'Science in Action' programme)
- Seed ferns experimented with [complex leaf vein networks](#) 201 million years ago
- Researchers grow an [extinct plant](#) from a 1,000-year-old seed (originally report in [Nature](#))
- Man fined for [cutting down tree](#) in his garden worth £114,000
- Huge banner scuppers prime Sydney Harbour view gained by [killing of 300 trees](#)
- [Application to fell rejected](#) - oak tree claimed to be causing subsidence and structural damage to house.
- Group in Cowfold, West Sussex will camp "[for as long as needed](#)" to [save tree](#)
- Tigers and crocs make [mangrove preservation](#) tough work
- Woodland Trust [friend or foe wildlife quiz](#)



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

Have a look at some exotic tree houses - luxury (and expensive) places to stay, including one in Shotover Park in Oxfordshire. There's even a Bird's Nest Tree house.

Of course tree houses aren't always expensive holiday lets. There's a great variety from the "des res" to the functional, as illustrated here with a basic one by the Blue Nile River in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia and an imaginative creation in the grounds of the Château de Langeais in the Loire Valley in France.



ThomasPusch, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons



A.Savin, Wikipedia Free\_Art\_License

The tree house complex at Alnick in Northumberland, opened in December 2004, is one of the largest in the world (6,000ft<sup>2</sup> – 560m<sup>2</sup> - the size of two Olympic swimming pools). Built between 16 giant lime trees, it towers 60' in the air with 4,000ft<sup>2</sup> (372m<sup>2</sup>) of suspended satellite walkways. You can't stay there; it's a multi-room cafe, with a reception area and educational suite and can hold 300 people. Canadian cedar, Siberian larch, Scandinavian redwood and Scots pine were used in its construction.



Christine Westerback / The Treehouse, CC BY-SA 2.0

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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.