



Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association

Tree Watch

Issue 64

June 2025

Our Veteran Tree Database was closed in June 2024. The **8,696** trees and **13,976** photos are detailed on our [map](#).

Welcome to the latest issue of Tree Watch.

This June we've had some very hot dry weather, leading to the postponement of our planned walk on Monday 30th when 30°C temperatures are forecast. Some of our trees, especially recently planted ones have suffered from lack of water. Please keep an eye on them and if they look distressed, give them a bucket of water.

The photo here is one of our Jubilee trees planted in May 2013. It's #51 in the grounds of 'Spring Gardens' in Shinfield. As you can see it's very healthy; but another of our Jubilee trees has problems as described by Derek Oxbrough on page 4. Don't forget you can see details of all the Jubilee Oaks on our website. Go to the [map](#) and click on a number to see the details. As described on page 3, many of the Jubilee tree plaque posts had to be replaced. #51 has one of these new, rot-proof posts.

As you'll see I've had contributions from a number of members this time and this adds to the variety of the newsletter, making it more interesting. I'd love to have more, so if you want to contribute something, please do send it to me.

The next issue of Tree Watch will be September 2025 and the copy deadline is 31st August.

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).



Main items in this issue:-

p2	Events; WDVTA report for 2024	p10	Holiday Trees
p3	Parish/Town Activity - Members' Reports	p11	Plane trees in our database
p4	Jubilee Oak 27	p12	Species in Focus - The Franklin Tree
p7	Bottle Copse - housing development	p13	Species in Focus - Supplemental
p7	Other Local News; Trees in Art	p13	Book Review; Did you know? Babylon Code of Laws
p8	Sadly Departed - MRN 84	p14	Trees on the UoR's Whiteknights Campus
p9	National Treasures-Harcourt Arboretum	p15	Recommendations

Events – July-September 2025

- ❖ A walk at MERL, a hedgerow walk and a visit to Harcourt Arboretum are being planned – see [website](#) for details and updates

Non-WDVTa events:

- ❖ Wednesday 2nd July 12:30–13:30 **'How to Make a Woodland'** online Linnean Society lecture (free)
- ❖ Thursday 10th July 18:15–19:30 **RTWN** AGM Ridgeline Pavilion, Whiteknights Road. Ridgeline Trust gardens and walk through Whiteknights Campus.
- ❖ Saturday 26th July 2025 10:00–12:00 RTWN walk – Sulham Woods – limited places – **must book**
- ❖ Saturday 20th September **TVERC Recorders' Conference** – Pangbourne Hall
- ❖ Every 2nd Friday 13 00 Free **Tree Tour**: – Marble Hill Park, Twickenham meet at the cafe.
- ❖ Until 14th September 10:00–17:00 **The Power of Trees** – explore the enduring beauty of trees across art and culture – Sherwood Gallery, Kew Gardens (included in general admission ticket)
- ❖ Until 28th September **Digital Oak** – a 6m artwork focusing on the inner workings of the Lucombe oak at Kew Gardens (included in general admission ticket) – (see page 8)
- ❖ Until November **Croft Castle Ghost (tree) Walk** – NT **property** in Herefordshire (see page 8)

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

WDVTA REPORT FOR 2024 – presented at the AGM on 10th April 2025

Kerry Clissold

The Association was formed in 2007 and became affiliated with the Tree Council's Tree Warden Scheme in October 2010. It is managed by a committee consisting of 2 officers and 12 other members.

There were 172 members registered at the end of 2024, of whom 23 have registered as tree wardens (2023: 175 and 19 respectively). No membership fee is charged, nor are there any current proposals to introduce a subscription.

The financial transactions for the year to 31st December 2024 have been reviewed by Mr Barry Arnold, acting as the Association's Independent Examiner, and his report and the Receipts and Payments Account will be available for review at the AGM or circulated ahead.

This year included our more usual plans for a walk, an informative and relevant talk from an expert. We also considered other areas we were exploring which resulted in a very positive collaboration.

The prolonged winter wet weather affected planned walks. In March 2024 those present in the Walter Hall at St Paul's Parish Rooms heard Megan Gimber deliver a very interesting presentation on hedgerows entitled:

Hedgerows what have they ever done for us and what we can do for the them?

Megan was invited after seeing a presentation she gave to CPRE (the Campaign to Protect Rural England). She is the Habitats Officer at the People's Trust for Endangered Species and travels around the country speaking to farmers and landowners, schools and conservation groups amongst others.

The topics covered were:

- The rich wildlife value of hedges
- Why they are critical for wildlife despite being a man-made habitat
- Their importance for the climate, environment, farming, flooding and pollution
- How are our hedgerows doing? What do we know and what don't we know?
- How should hedgerows be managed? The lifecycle approach including laying, rejuvenation and approaches to trimming
- The history of our hedges and their contribution to the landscape
- What we can do to help hedges thrive.

Hedge trees are a regular discussion point at WDVTA and were much discussed on the evening. Megan has offered, and will return, to lead a walk around our local hedgerows in future.

In the autumn we looked at the collaboration with another local group, partly to raise awareness of WDVTA locally but also because a previous joint activity had been very successful some years ago. We held an event called 'Trees in Literature' with Wokingham Literary Society. A discussion was held with Wokingham Art Society and a plan made to offer their artists, and our own members the chance to create an art work based on any tree in our survey. This culminated in an online exhibition on our website and across social media to celebrate National Tree Week which ran from 23rd November to 1st December. Our thanks go to Wokingham Art Society who submitted works in a variety of different media. Members of WDVTA added to this and we have displayed embroidery, collage and carvings alongside the sketches, watercolours and more. Our webmaster must be thanked for creating a very user friendly and interactive online gallery where each submission can be viewed with the addition of a link to the tree record from our survey. It was also very pleasing to see that the Tree Council kindly added some of the submissions across their social media, featuring the WDVTA and the Art Society on their Instagram, Facebook and Twitter (X) pages.

The 60 Diamond Jubilee oak trees were visited and resurveyed in 2022 and the widely circulated [report](#) on the findings was published in 2023. This reported that many of the posts for the plaques for the trees had rotted or were missing. We are grateful to the borough council for funding the materials needed to replace the posts. These have all been replaced this year and the plaques reattached.

The veteran tree survey is closed, but a few final additions and updates were completed during the year. The Association owes a deep gratitude to both Elaine and Malcolm Butler for the professional processes, integrity and quality they both delivered from almost the start of the tree surveying data collection that has resulted in this large, unique and valuable asset. Malcolm was taken ill late in 2023 and not only managed to complete the final data changes but also as our Systems Manager ensured an efficient handover of his knowledge and our IT set-up during 2024. Malcolm sadly died in late 2024 but he leaves a major legacy within WDVTA and we pass our condolences to Elaine and their family. We also want to thank Malcolm Inglis our Webmaster for taking on the Systems Manager role and transferring the knowledge and responsibility to Claire O'Keefe who we also thank for taking on the role on a permanent basis.

It bears repeating that the committee had agreed that following the closure of the veteran tree survey the association will in future need to continue focusing on Tree Forum led projects and activities as well as responding to *ad-hoc* requests through emails and the website. The latter are forwarded to the local tree warden (or local member if there is no tree warden) to provide responses as quickly and efficiently as possible. There are many other active conservation groups around the borough. We at WDVTA are not sufficiently well resourced now to be a borough-wide active conservation group and must work within our limitations for the best interests of the borough's trees. We continue to be the only borough-wide network of volunteers interested in, and knowledgeable about, the complete borough treescape.

Thanks to all the work of our surveyors and recorders and the interest of our wider membership our veteran tree database will also continue to be an invaluable resource to many.

PARISH/TOWN ACTIVITY – MEMBERS' REPORTS

In this issue we have reports from Finchampstead, Barkham and Wokingham Town

FINCHAMPSTEAD – Gordon Veitch

Finchampstead Parish Council planted 4 English Oaks on March 25th. Three are on a plot in Longwater Lane (SU 79310 62987) which is believed to be the site of the original Village Green (*photo left*). The fourth tree, also an oak, was planted at St James' church to commemorate the Coronation of King Charles III. That one is recorded as [W051](#) in our '[Commemorative and Special Trees Inventory](#)' (*photo below*).



Gordon Veitch is a WDVTA committee member and a Parish Councillor. He was our veteran tree survey coordinator for Finchampstead.

Finchampstead Parish has a good record of tree planting; with ten in our '**Commemorative and Special Tree Inventory**':

W008 Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee (felled in 2003)

W009 Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee

W011 Queen Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee

W030 Death of Queen Victoria (MRN 3961)

W031 Silver Jubilee of King George V (MRN 3963)

W041 Memorial to Duke of Wellington

W065 Queen Elizabeth II's 90th birthday

W083 Centenary of Finchampstead Women's Institute

W092 100 years since ending of WW1

W151 Coronation of King Charles III (photo right)



BARKHAM:

JUBILEE OAK TREE 27

Derek Oxbrough (Barkham Tree Warden)

Why would a young oak tree loose its bark from two thirds up the tree???

I went for a walk in Rooks Nest Wood, Barkham on the 10th May and had a look at the two Jubilee Oaks there. The southern tree #27 has a top third which looks very stressed with no leaves, only buds, but the lower two thirds have normal leaf cover for this time of year (see below).



On closer inspection, the bark has completely fallen off the trunk and some branches at the two-thirds high point. The missing bark is a little hard to see from the photos (below), but it is about 4m to 5m up and extends right round the main trunk and larger branches. The other Jubilee Oak #28 is in good health.



I have googled and AI'd the subject and there seems to be 5 possible reasons for the bark loss:

1. **Natural Shedding** – Some oak trees naturally shed their bark as they grow. If the wood underneath looks healthy, this might just be part of the tree's normal development.
2. **Disease or Fungal Infection** – Certain diseases, like oak wilt or root rot, can cause bark to deteriorate and fall off.
3. **Pest Infestation** – Insects such as borers or scale insects can damage the bark, leading to peeling.
4. **Environmental Stress** – Drought, extreme temperatures, or physical damage (like strong winds or animal activity) can weaken the bark and cause it to fall off.
5. **Mechanical Injury** – If the tree has been hit or scraped (by lawn equipment, for example), it may lose bark in the affected area.

As the tree seems to be in very good health lower down, maybe the main reason could be the Environmental Stress issue, due to drought and sudden temperature changes, with the very hot and dry spring we have had, with very cold nights close to freezing.

A couple of questions for readers:

1. Who would be the best expert to contact over this issue for a clear diagnosis, and should we notify WBC as they are the custodians of the Jubilee Trees?
2. What action should be taken, for example, should the top section of the tree be removed for the overall health of the Tree?

In 2022 #27 (shown right) was recorded in 'good condition'; with a girth of 0.46m.

#28 was in 'excellent condition' with a slightly larger girth (0.61m). Both were 8.1m high.

See our [website](#) for more photos.



Bottle Copse LWS and the Berkeley Homes Planning Application

In July 2022 Berkeley Homes submitted an application to build 360 houses on green fields to the west of Wokingham, between Barkham Road and Blagrove Lane (SU 79402 67713).

See maps [before](#) (page 9:fig 3) and [after](#) (page 3) planned development in the developer's submissions to WBC.

Despite many campaigns by local residents, over 1500 objection letters and WBC Planning Committee's decision to refuse permission, the Planning Inspector decided to [uphold Berkeley Homes' appeal](#) and let the development go ahead.

What is at stake?

In order to build these houses the developers will construct a road through the middle of Bottle Copse LWS. It is a site of County Importance and has a blanket TPO. It is made up of two Priority Habitats: Wet Woodland and Lowland Deciduous Woodland. Also within Bottle Copse is a pocket of Ancient Woodland. There is currently no public access.

Criss-crossing the development site are numerous hedgerows varying from High Value hedges to some in moderate condition.

The Bottle Copse and the adjacent fields are home to a large, long-established clan of badgers, rare invertebrates and a sizeable number of bats.

Trees

A total of 157 trees will be felled, mainly in Bottle Copse. Other trees on the construction site have been declared unsafe and will be felled. Those removed will be a mixture of some semi-mature oaks, silver birch, goat willow, ash and hawthorn.

The Inspector has asked that an 'Invasive species monitoring programme' be set up prior to work commencing. The wood seems to be free of rhododendron and Himalayan balsam for now.

There are at least seven oaks within the main site which are listed on the Ancient Tree Inventory. These are all yet to be climbed and assessed so their fate is currently unknown. These trees will ultimately be in the middle of the eastern part of the development surrounded by new roads and houses.

The developers say they will plant four times as many trees as they cut down. A monitoring program for all these plantings will be drawn up with a condition, imposed by the Inspector, that any trees which fail in the first 5 years after completion will be replaced by the developer.

A number of trees will be lost from the junction of Evendons Lane and Finchamstead Road as Evendons Lane will need to be widened at this point.

Hedgerows

Three field hedgerows will be lost across the eastern portion of the site-all recorded as bat foraging routes.

New hedgerows will be planted around the 9ha SANG perimeter. Native species have been promised, the maintenance of which will require careful consideration in the SANG management plan if they are to be successful both as hedgerows



and as replacement habitats. The largest original field hedge will be retained but will now run behind gardens.

The hedgerows and trees along Blagrove Lane itself (photo above) appear safe for now but it is a very narrow lane – only 3m in parts – and it will be required to cope with a dramatic increase in 2-way traffic.

Obviously this is a very disappointing outcome for the local community that fought long and hard to protect these woods and fields.

OTHER LOCAL NEWS

- In their May Countryside [newsletter](#), WBC reminded people to beware of oak processionary moth.
- Latest reports about tree planting in Wokingham: [Tree Project](#) and [Covid memorial Woodland](#)
- Nature parks and other green spaces (with trees) coming to [South Wokingham](#)
- Hall Farm (proposed Loddon Valley Garden Village) – [planning inspector's concern](#).
- [Appeals granted](#) – Twyford is one of five applications refused by WBC, but approved on appeal.

TREES IN ART

❖ In the [last issue](#) (page 11) there was a report on the '[Trees in Art](#)' project and these artworks were displayed at the AGM. They were admired by members at the meeting and by John Stokes and Sam Village, who spoke to us after the formalities. Some of the artworks were displayed by the Tree Council on the web. The entries included 8 digital paintings by [Emma Major](#), who is almost blind. Five of her paintings (shown here) are also displayed this month at the [Reading Guild of Artists](#) (RGA) 94th exhibition at the London Road campus of the University of Reading. They include her depiction of the Gemini oak in Earley ([MRN 2815](#))



❖ Brian Moffat sent me an example of nature copying art. He was amazed at the uncanny similarity of the character and form between a Woosehill tree and Mondrian's 'The Gray Tree' painted 1911.



The hornbeam grows by the path alongside the Emmbrook in Woosehill not far from the 'Ripplestream Bridge' on the stretch that leads to Morrisons. He sent photos of the tree to Caro Verbeek of the Kunstmuseum in the Netherlands where the original painting hangs and was told that the tree used by Mondrian is still alive and grows in the province of Zeeland.

❖ The Tree Council has a [webpage](#) featuring a new tree street-art mural and there's a free exhibition by Giuseppe Penone '[Thoughts in the Roots](#)' at the Serpentine South Gallery in Kensington Gardens (until 7th September).

❖ On a different note, I've been sent a lovely card with a drawing of a tree with GPS coordinates as the only identification: GPS 51°02'40.8"N 1°09'06.2"W. Using Google Street View, I could see it's in the car park at [Hinton Amper](#) (photo right). [The drawing was very good, but can't be reproduced here for copyright reasons!]

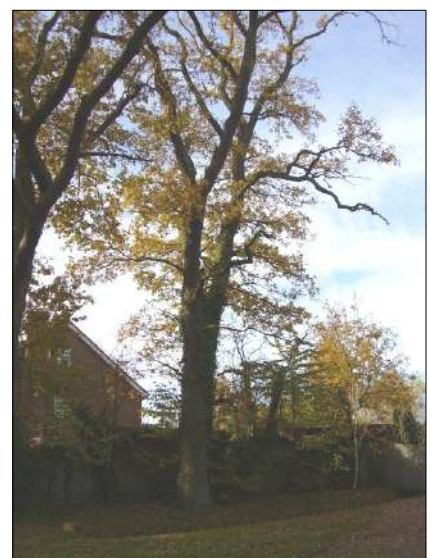


❖ As is quite common now, [Croft Castle](#), a National Trust property in Herefordshire, has a policy of leaving dead and dying trees as features of the landscape to provide useful habitats for a range of organisms; but these dead trees are also appreciated for their intrinsic beauty and as such are being celebrated at Croft Castle as 'ghost trees'. Three artists (painter Richard Gilbert, poet Sara-Jane Arbury and photographer Paul Ligas) have created an [art walk](#) that celebrates the wonder of seven ghost trees (veteran, dead, and dying trees) on the estate. There is also a [Ghost Trees exhibition](#) of the original artworks, poems, and photographs that inspired the final collaborative pieces featured along the Ghost Trees walk.

❖ At [Kew Gardens](#), a Lucombe oak has a digital twin – a 30-foot interactive version of the tree showing it throughout the year. It illustrates the inner processes of the tree and visualises the movement of oxygen around the tree. It does this using Lidar (an extension of the lidar survey of trees in UK) and radar below ground level. The installation is called "[Of the Oak](#)".

SADLY DEPARTED – [MRN 84](#)

The stump below is all that remains of MRN 84. This English oak in a Bradley Drive garden, Wokingham Town was one of a line of trees, possibly an old hedgerow boundary. The tree on the left is [MRN 85](#) and is still healthy. The photo below right was taken when recorded in June 2006. .



In Wales

"...pristine upland archaeology faces being swamped by tree-planting as a carbon-mitigation measure"

Christopher Catling (2024) Current Archaeology 408 p64

HARCOURT ARBORETUM

Each spring, Gardeners' World Magazine produce a card and guide to enable readers to visit over 400 gardens for a discounted price.

One such garden is the **University of Oxford Harcourt Arboretum** at Nuneham Courtenay, OX44 9PX.

It is somewhere I've driven past many times, but now I've visited, using the 2 for 1 card and I'll definitely return.

I went at the end of October and the colours of the leaves were stunning. You can explore over 130 acres of rare habitats, native woodland and endangered trees.

Their leaflet suggests '8 highlights in an hour'. This is an easy 1-mile amble on good paths. In the summer it includes wildflower meadows to encourage butterflies.

The 8 highlights include an impressive range of fungi, Blue Bean shrub (*Decaisnea fargesii* – photo right), Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis* sp.), Hornbeam Maple (*Acer carpinifolium*), Maidenhair Tree (*Ginkgo biloba*), Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*), Katsura Tree (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*) and a Swamp Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*).

If you only had time (30-45 mins) for this, you'd leave feeling impressed, and that you'd had your money's worth. However, if you do have time to linger, there are so many more delights to discover, not least an Ostentation of Peacocks! (Groups of peacocks are also called a pride or a muster).



The 'show' begins as soon as you arrive with a beautiful weeping beech in the car park. There are several types of cedar (Incense Cedar and Cedar of Lebanon). There's a striking avenue of Silver Birches, a huge Sweet Chestnut and Douglas Fir.

The only thing that was a slight disappointment was a group of three mature Liquid Ambers which are usually one of my favourites, but they weren't at their best.

I noticed numerous veteran English Oaks plus a few very young disease-resistant Elms and an area of Scots Pines.

As we finished our circular walk we paused

by a Cedar of Lebanon, where the arboretum staff had been working on the soil under the tree to help protect it being over-compacted. It's fair to say, I've never seen such a variety of really interesting fungi under one tree! The Magpie Inkcaps were particularly impressive.

So, whether you're a gardener or not, it's worth looking out for the April edition of Gardeners' World and their 2 for 1 booklet of gardens to enjoy all over the country. Regardless of this, if you happen to be travelling between Reading and Oxford near Nuneham Courtenay, I'd definitely recommend a visit. Harcourt Arboretum is on the road from Reading to Oxford.

Photos: Above -Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*)

Right -Paperbark maple (*Acer griseum*)



HOLIDAY TREES

In the last **issue** of Tree Watch (page 9) Alison described visiting the 'Marton Oak' in Cheshire, which is probably Britain's fattest tree.

FROM BRITAIN'S FATTEST TREE TO GREECE'S FATTEST TREES - ORIENTAL PLANE TREES

Alison Griffin

We had a holiday in the Pelion peninsular of mainland Greece last year and found that most of the mountain villages we explored had one or more oriental plane trees in their centre providing welcome shade over cafe tables. A couple were so large that it was impossible to get a photograph of the whole tree, these are the best photographs I was able to take:



Above: in Pinakates village

Left and below: in Tsagkarada village. This village claims this is the oldest and largest plane tree in Greece.



Veteran Tree Survey snapshot

PLANE TREES

66

trees in our database

3

oriental planes

18

recorded as 'just' planes

7.12m

largest recorded ([MRN 8332](#))

5

multi stems

4

parishes with none recorded

4

parishes with only 1 recorded

24

with no photos

1

with 10 photos ([MRN 76](#))

Two of five photos in our database for [MRN 8332](#)

– the largest plane tree we've recorded



Multi stem London Plane in Swallowfield - [MRN 5152](#)



SPECIES IN FOCUS – THE FRANKLIN TREE (*FRANKLINIA ALATAMAHA*)

12 miscellaneous facts about the Franklin Tree

1. A small deciduous tree, generally 5-7m (16-23') tall, but can grow to 10m (33'), with large white flowers and bright red autumnal leaves. The flowers only last for a day, but are numerous and the tree flowers from spring until autumn frosts.
2. It's the only species in the genus *Franklinia* (i.e. the genus is monotypic) and belongs to the tea family (Theaceae).
3. It's extinct in the wild, but widely grown in cultivation. The last confirmed sighting in the wild was in 1803, by the Scottish botanist, John Lyon.
4. John Bartram, Royal Botanist to George III, and his son William discovered it on 1st October 1765, after losing their way to the crossing of the Altamaha River at Fort Barrington in SE Georgia.
5. John Bartram named the species after Benjamin Franklin, his friend and fellow founder member of the American Philosophical Society (as well as being a Founding Father of the United States).
6. In spite of extensive searching, it was only found growing in one very restricted location, just 2-3 acres, beside the Altamaha River, but it grew abundantly there - considered a relic population.
7. All the Franklin trees existing today are descended from seed collected by William Bartram in 1777 and propagated at 'Bartram's Garden' in Philadelphia. This garden was established in the 1700s, designated a park in 1891 and is America's oldest surviving botanic garden.
8. It was known for many years as *Gordonia pubescens* in Europe and assumed related to *Gordonia lasianthus* (Loblolly Bay). It's often claimed that British Botanists wouldn't allow a plant to be named after Benjamin Franklin so soon after the American Revolution, but that doesn't explain the French usage. One problem was the plant was very difficult to grow in Europe (seed rarely ripened) and most European botanists hadn't seen the live plant.
9. It was introduced to Britain in 1774 (recorded in Kew Gardens as *Gordonia pubescens*), was grown outside at the Vineyard Nursery in Hammersmith in 1806 and by 1900 was growing in the garden of the Empress Josephine at Malmaison, outside Paris. In general it was very rare in European gardens before 1900, remaining a rare greenhouse plant.
10. It's become more popular in recent times. A census by the John Bartram Association in 1998-2000, found nearly 2,000 Franklin trees growing world wide. The oldest and largest are growing in the Arnold Arboretum in Harvard University, Boston. They have two specimens, growing side by side, both propagated in 1905 from cuttings from a tree received in 1884. They have taken root wherever the branches touch the ground. Both are 6.3m (21') tall. One has 8 upright trunks and a canopy width of 16m (53'). The other is 9m(30') wide with 6 upright trunks. [Propagation is by layering as well as from seed.]
11. Attempts to reintroduce it in its native region have been unsuccessful because the plants are very susceptible to the root rot pathogen, *Phyophthora cinnamomi*. Being descended from just a limited number of seeds, there is very little genetic variation and no natural resistance.
12. William Bartram's illustration from 1786 appeared on a US postage stamp in 1999, on the 300th anniversary of John Bartram's birth. His drawings are now in the Natural History Museum (London).



Francine Riez, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

SPECIES IN FOCUS – SUPPLEMENTAL

- ◆ The eighth largest *Wellingtonia* (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), with a girth of 6.7m at 1.5m, is also called the 'Franklin Tree'. It's in the Sequoia National Park in California and was named by the author of "*To Find the Biggest Tree*", Wendell Flint, who has a *Wellingtonia* named after him in the Giant Forest (within the Sequoia National Park). The girth of the Wendall tree is 6.5m.
- ◆ "*The Franklin Tree*" is the title of a short story by Sarah Swatridge, one of our Charvil Tree Wardens and regular contributor to Tree Watch. This story, her latest publication, was in the May 13th issue of "*Womens Weekly*" – but it's about a dog!! [In April, '*Wokingham Today*' published a [feature](#) about Sarah's latest book '*Feel Good Stories*' – with a good photo of her.]



The Franklin Tree -
Marty Alligata, CC BY-SA 4.0,
via Wikimedia Commons

BOOK REVIEW

Sarah Swatridge

'The Island of Missing Trees' by Elif Schfak

In many ways this is a simple love story of a Greek (Christian) Cypriot falling for a Turkish (Muslim) Cypriot and yet it has so many layers and is a real page-turner. I've now read several books based in Cyprus but by the end of this, I felt I'd learnt so much more about its history.

Trees are very much woven into this story especially a Fig Tree. I discovered that many trees were planted to replace ones that had been cleared over the years. Unfortunately, someone decided to plant Australian trees rather than native ones. It was interesting to learn, through the eyes of Kostas, what impact this was having on the environment.

At the very end of the book it is suggested that there is a tree for every mood and every moment. It gives a long list of examples, such as, '*if you are hurting and have no one to listen to you, it might do you good to spend time beside a sugar maple*'. I'm not sure if this is pure fiction invented by Elif Schfak or whether it's folklore, but interesting all the same.

In fact, there are many themes touched upon that will stay with me for some time. I gave it 4/5.

DID YOU KNOW?... *An ancient Babylonian text forbade the cutting down of garden trees without permission.*

In Hammurabi's Code of Laws (1755–1750BC) rule 59 states "*If any man, without the knowledge of the owner of a garden, fell a tree in a garden he shall pay half a mina in money*".

The mina was an ancient Near Eastern unit of weight for silver or gold; equivalent to approximately 1.25 lbs, and was divided into 60 shekels.

Hammurabi ruled from 1792 to 1750BC. He claimed to have been granted his rule by the gods "*to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak*". There were 82 laws in his Code.

There's an even earlier reference in tablets from Nippur which are considered the prototype of Hammurabi's Code. The Nippur code includes "*Should a man cut down a tree in another man's orchard, he shall pay a half silver mina.*"

Nippur was an ancient Sumerian city. Hammurabi's Code was written in Babylonian and Nippur's in Sumerian.

The image here is the Stele of Hammurabi, on which the Code of Laws are inscribed. It's black basalt, 2.25m tall and is on display in the Louvre (room 227). Image credit [Rama](#) [CC](#) [via](#)

[Wikipedia](#)



TREES ON THE UNIVERSITY OF READING'S WHITEKNIGHTS CAMPUS

I guess many of you will be familiar with the Whiteknights Campus, especially if you live in the western part of the Borough or you've been on one of our walks there (the one postponed from 30th June will be re-scheduled for later in the year). It's well worth a visit or re-visit. You can park for free on campus after 17:00 during the week and at week-ends (excluding the pay-and-display car park adjacent to the sports centre). A downloadable [campus map](#) shows the car parks.

There's a virtual arboretum of Whiteknight trees devised by Jonathan Gregory. This excellent website maps most of the trees on the campus, with photos of them in spring, summer, autumn and winter. It currently includes 745 individual trees and 7975 photographs. Look at the [Gallery](#) page to see the coverage. It's a very easy site to use and there is clear detailed information about it on the [About](#) page. There are two maps. The [Google](#) page is a 'MyMaps' map and "works" in the same way as our of '[Commemorative and Special Trees Map](#)'. On the [Campus](#) page there is an interactive campus map showing the trees (where you can also see the nearest car park if you want to see specific trees). When you click on a tree on that map, a pop-up window shows a photo, with the date of photo, location and a link to see a map of all trees of that species. It really is a fantastic website and a great resource.

Unfortunately neither the virtual arboretum nor the Whiteknights [Tree Walk](#) can be found from the main UoR website, although putting "*University of Reading trees*" into Google will find them!!

There are also some [self-guided nature trails](#) and for the Harris Garden, there's a [tree map](#), an interactive [Google map](#) and an [Audio trail](#).



Upper row from left: Wollemi pine ([W050](#)); Two *Araucaria*-in the Harris Gardens and outside Blandford Lodge

Lower row from left: Holm oak ([MRN 5826](#)) behind Students Union; English oak by lake ([MRN 5753](#)); Wellingtonias on front lawn

RECOMMENDED READING, VIEWING AND LISTENING

Just click on the green links

Tree fellings and threatened fellings:

You've probably heard about the felling of a veteran oak in Whitewebbs Wood, in Enfield, Middlesex. It was reported in the national news on TV and radio two days running, with articles about it in various newspapers and on-line posts. Here are a selection, with photos:

~Toby Cavery admitted the felling as reported in the [Independent](#) and [Enfield Dispatch](#)

~The European section of the [Shorouk Express](#) had the headline "Loss for the nation: Is this ancient, felled oak tree London's Sycamore Gap?"

~It was probed by the [police](#) and [Tottenham Hotspur](#) football club became involved because the tree was considered to be a fine specimen by arboriculturists working for the club as part of their plans to redevelop parkland next to their site.

~As you'd expect both the [Tree Council](#) and the [Woodland Trust](#) were concerned about it.

~It prompted the BBC to publish "[Why are ancient trees important and what protection do they have?](#)"

~In Surrey, Tandridge District Council [hopes](#) to use the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) rules in current planning rules to get compensation for trees felled by developers prior to submitting a planning application

~More than [1,000 trees with ash dieback felled](#) in Herefordshire

~Plymouth [tree felling fiasco](#) cost more than £3.3m

~Tree '[irrevocably damaged](#)' by SSE cut down in Reading

~Sad news from Brighton -20 [elm trees](#) to be removed

~Developer to apologise to residents over [incorrect tree felling](#) in Bracknell

~McDonald's plans to [fell six trees](#) in Bracknell

More news about the illegal felling of the Sycamore Gap tree:

The [anonymous 101 call](#) that snared Sycamore Gap felons

[Video](#) shows felling of much-loved tree,

[New woodland](#) planted in honour of Sycamore Gap

A superficial explanation of the Sycamore Gap tree [valuation](#)

~From Anne Booth: "Despite council officers recommending felling, the '[Planning committee councillors](#)' did not follow the recommendations and voted to delay the decision to get more evidence' (of subsidence).

Makes one feel a bit encouraged, would've been nice if WBC councillors had done the same for the Somerton Gardens Oak, and others."

Hedges and hedgerows:

~National Hedge Week was last month. If you missed the Tree Council's web series of talks, or you want to watch them again, they are available via their [National Tree Week webpage](#), along with other resources and information.

~[Recreating Britain's ancient hedges](#)

~[Hedges and poetry](#) - if you like poetry, you might like this radio program

~Allan Wrobel, chair of Barkham Village Hall., [advocates hedge laying](#).

New forests for UK:

~UK to get brand new [National Forest](#) with 20 million trees - the first in 30 years

~[Urban Forest](#) for Newport

~Key [forestry grants](#) re-opened to support tree-planting ambitions

~Drones used to sow 75,000 native trees in [new planting project](#)

~[The People's Forest](#) - a Radio 4 episode of 'Open Countryside' about Epping Forest, Including a discussion about pollarding (the Victorians thought them ugly) and the claim that Epping Forest has 55,000 veteran pollards, more than any other site in the UK, with 90% of the UK's (ancient pollarded beeches. [[Burnham Beeches](#) only has about 420 pollarded beeches and oak. It once had an estimated 3,000.]

Forests Worldwide:

~Fires cause record loss of [tropical forests](#) in climate threat

~[Ghost forests](#) are growing as sea levels rise trees choked by saltwater die along low-lying coasts

~[Tallest trees in the Amazon](#) protected

~Why [forests aren't coming back](#) after gold mining in the Amazon

Miscellaneous:

~8 of the world's [most dangerous trees](#) - including the exploding 'dynamite tree' that fires seeds at speeds up to 160mph

~Growing [walnuts](#) (plus peacans, hickory and cobs) in Warwickshire (an episode of Radio 4's 'On Your Farm')

~A couple of short articles from BBC Countryside: '[Britain's best tree avenues](#)' and '[What's the most common tree in Britain?](#)'

~The [benefits of trees and spending time in green space](#) (radio programme)

~[Acorn weevils](#) - watch these fascinating insects in the second episode of Spring Watch - starts 17:10 minutes into the episode

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

From West Northants Conservative council election literature:

Cleaning our Environment
WNC has a tree canapé strategy and has already starting planting trees

AND

Nothing to do with trees, but many of you will know Simon Bartlet, WBC Countryside Officer.

There was a photo of him holding a gigantic Wels Catfish in both the local and national press this month: [Wokingham Today](#), The [Reading Chronicle](#) and [BBC News](#).

That photo was taken in Spain, but was used to illustrate the finding of this invasive predator in the lake at Dinton Pastures.



This wood-carrying “dragon” was seen in Simons Wood.

Some sources used in this issue: all web pages accessed 25-06-2025 (unless stated otherwise) Links embedded in the text are not repeated here. Email me if you want a list of them.
p 12-Species in Focus: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_\(tree\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_(tree)) <https://sequoiaquest.com/wendell-flint.html> https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giant_Forest
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Lyon_\(botanist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Lyon_(botanist)) https://www.emmitsburg.net/gardens/articles/adams/2023/franklinia_tree.htm
<https://www.bartramsgarden.org/history> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklinia> <https://www.bartramsgarden.org/wp-content/uploads/Franklinia-Broadside-Spring-2000.pdf>
<https://seeds.ca/schoolfoodgardens/plants-of-paradise-the-franklin-tree/#:~:text=The%20last%20confirmed%20sighting%20of,plant%20species%20like%20the%20camellia.>
<https://arboretum.harvard.edu/stories/against-all-odds-growing-franklinia-in-boston/>
p13 – Did you Know?: <https://www.mesopotamiangods.com/hammurabis-code-of-laws-text/> <https://worldhistorycommons.org/code-hammurabi>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Code_of_Hammurabi <https://www.penn.museum/sites/journal/832/>

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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.**