Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association

Tree Watch

Issue 68 August 2026

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.

We are all delighted to learn that John Stokes, the Tree Council's Director of Trees, Science and Research, has been awarded an MBE. Read about it on the Tree Council website. He has given us several inspirational talks and was of course instrumental in setting up our Tree Warden scheme. He was profiled in the August 2017 issue of Tree Watch (page 7).

Bob Jones-The Tea Party Oak, Ickworth Park

You will remember the publicity surrounding the demise of the Sycamore Gap tree. In issue 59 (page 7), I mentioned three articles in an issue of '*Current Archaeology*'. That publication has a regular feature called '*Odd Socs*', featuring a different society in each issue. In the latest issue, July 2026, it's the '*Ancient Tree Forum*', with photos of the 700-year old '*Tea Party Oak*' at Ickworth Park, a 17th century mulberry tree and a 300 year old Judas tree at Melford Hall; all in Suffolk. Apparently Ted Green announced the launch of the ATF by the '*Tea Party Oak*' in 1993.

The Wokingham Borough Tree Warden Network was launched by the tree shown left, MRN 3593, a dead English oak with a girth of 3.79m in September 2009. It's in the middle of the Woosehill Spine Road central reservation. When WDVTA committee members had a meeting with John Stokes to discuss becoming Tree Wardens, he looked out of a window, saw this tree and commented that explaining the need to keep dead trees like this one is an important aspect of the Tree Warden role.

After the hot dry weather we are all concerned about the health of our trees and gardens. The Tree Council has advice on watering newly planted trees during a hosepipe ban. Denise Tolan, our Tree Warden Coordinator, has been very busy in this regard, as she describes on page four. We hope we won't lose many trees, but we must hope that any dead ones will not be automatically felled.

The next issue of Tree Watch will be November 2026 and the copy deadline is 31st October.

If you have any comments or responses to anything in this issue or contributions for future issues please send them to:

Elaine Butler - TreeWatch @ wdvta.org.uk

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

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Events – Sept-Dec 2026

- None planned

Non-WDVTA events:

- Saturday 19 Sept 11:00-6:00 **Barkham & Arborfield Green Family Fun Day** Farley Hill Primary School, Baston Road, Arborfield Green RG2 9YW Tree Warden stand. Admissin free.
- Saturday 10 October – 10:00-16:30 – Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) Autumn **Conference 2026**, Upper Basildon Village Hall. **Book tickets** by 5 October

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

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Cathy Boddy

Thank you for letting me take over the tiller of the WDVTA ship. I am very aware of the impressive legacy I inherit and hope, in partnership with Denise Tolan, our new Tree Warden Coordinator, and all of you, to build on that as we transition from the tree survey onto broader tree projects.

At the Forum in April we discussed the possibility of changing WDVTA's name to something that might be more attractive to new (possibly younger) members, but it was decided that, given our enviable reputation and high profile in web searches *etc*, we would keep it as is, at least for now.

However, as the focus of our work going forward will be Tree Warden related, we agreed to start raising our profile under that identity. To which end I created an email address and footer which Denise now uses when she emails as Tree Warden Coordinator: *treewardenswb@gmail.com*. The footer for emails I send from *chair@wdvta.org.uk* leads with WDVTA but introduces the fact that Tree Wardens are now part of the picture. We have also requested a pull up banner (*photo right*) from the Tree Council to use at local events.

Denise and I have both been posting on our **facebook** page which has increased our Followers from, I think, 80 when I took it on, to 138 now, small beginnings but it all helps to raise our profile. It's called "Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association & Wokingham Tree Wardens" (a bit of a mouthful, we might look to shorten that!) - do drop by, Like, Comment, Follow, Share etc.

I'm also pleased to announce that Anthony Dracott has stepped up and volunteered to be our Treasurer once Derek stands down at the next AGM. He is now working as Assistant Treasurer so Derek can show him the ropes, including a round of funding requests to the borough's Town and Parish councils which is already bearing fruit – thanks very much to both of you.

Thanks also to those who stepped down from the committee at the AGM, but have been incredibly supportive of Denise and myself as we get to grips with the challenges of keeping the good stuff we've got whilst moving forward, we would not have wanted to attempt it without you!

Some months ago, Barbara and I both reported a dead and dangerous tree in Manor Road play area which was duly removed by WBC, but when I asked for a replacement to be planted, they said they did not have a budget for that. I managed to get an online meeting with Laura Buck who agreed that if I could get people to plant and care for a replacement tree, we could plant one - and that is now in hand, but I sensed an opportunity to work with the council(s) to get more trees planted across the borough, which could be a great Tree Warden project.

After a later meeting with her and her main tree guy, Mike Pearce, it transpired that it wasn't so much the buying of saplings that was the problem, but the cost of contractors to plant and care for them that was prohibitive. Mike agreed to

produce a list of trees which have been felled across the borough over the past year. We will then meet and discuss where replacements might be planted. Stephen Loyd came with me to the first meeting and Denise will be coming to the subsequent one. Whilst waiting for the list, I am gathering the team of Tree Wardens and friends who will coordinate and do the planting and aftercare. **Please get in touch if you are willing to lend a hand** in the physical planting and/or watering or maybe you are less physically active but happy to help coordinate the efforts of others or support with your expertise.

Also, if you have contacts in local scouts or other groups that may take on some of the watering do let me know, as that is the key to success. My colleagues at Wokingham Rotary Club have agreed to be partners on this, taking the lead on a section where we are light on Tree Wardens. Holme Grange School are also showing an interest in being involved. With this in mind, I reached out to Carolyn Davies, who I met when Freely Fruity helped Rotary to plant a native species hedge in Howard Palmer Gardens in central Wokingham, as I knew her to be an experienced tree planter and Denise has now onboarded her as a Tree Warden. The planting itself won't be until the end of November but there's lots of planning to do in the meantime.

The walnut tree planted in Redlands Farm Park by Rotary and Wokingham Town Council is doing well, having been faithfully watered by 1st Wokingham cubs. They are now on summer holiday but I, my husband and a local Rotarian are watering it in the meantime. I put a sign on it asking for volunteers for the tree planting project via a QR code to our Tree Warden email address. One lady responded quickly and positively, followed by a dissenter but that's par for the course. It's early days.	

Whilst we were pleased to see trees planted around the new Molly Millars roundabout it was soon clear that they weren't being watered enough. Our ever-tenacious Denise launched a two-pronged attack - putting pressure on WBC to water them, especially the "Molly Millars Three" on the roundabout and putting "*Please Water Me*" labels on the accessible trees – *see her account below*. Good work, Denise!

On the 22nd of July the Three Chairmen, Barbara Stages, Alison Griffin and myself presented to the Wokingham Society about WDVTA's origins, the tree survey and our plans for the future, including introducing Denise. One of them reached out to us afterwards and we were able to help him in researching a couple of trees local to him and this led on to him suggesting we put together a Tree Walk for Wokingham Town. This is something that WDVTA have done in the past but we agreed that it could be revitalised as a joint venture, once we can find the time to do it.

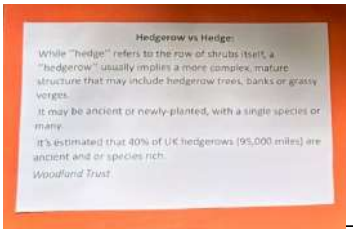
Back in April, Denise, Gabriella and I joined a Reading Tree Warden walk on Fobney Marsh (*photo right*) and were fascinated to hear what they've been up to. We will soon be meeting with the new Coordinator for Reading's Tree Wardens and look forward to future joint ventures such as Gabriella's very well received walk around Arborfield. So many exciting things going on!

TREE WARDEN NEWS

Denise Tolan

Whilst the warmer months are no time to be planting, the Tree Wardens were still busy, out and about amongst the trees and hedgerows.

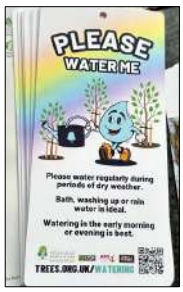
May saw the Tree Council's celebration of all things hedgerow during National Hedgerow Week.



The Tree Wardens, alongside staff at the Wokingham Library, put together a display (*photo right*) to highlight the importance and beauty of our hedgerows. Janet Firth, a WDVTA member and the Barkham coordinator for our Veteran Tree Survey, shared her fascinating work on the hedgerows of Barkham, some of which are around 500 years old. This

information was a fascinating addition to the display.

The arrival of the hot weather in June highlighted the challenge of sapling survival during the summer months. Newly-planted trees around the new Molly Millars roundabout began to show very obvious signs of water and heat stress. It seemed like they were getting no water during this dry spell even though they had watering pipes sunk into the ground



next to them. Fortunately residents and businesses in the area came to the rescue having been recruited as waterers by local Tree Wardens. The addition of 'Water Me' tags to the 7 roadside trees (not the 3 on the roundabout), followed by a chat to residents, helped to highlight the trees' plight. The watering has now been taken over by the Borough Council, the tags removed and water bags installed on each of the 10 trees. The 7 roadside trees seem to fairing reasonably well; the 3 on the roundabout, which could not be reached by local people during the first phase of watering, seem in poor condition now. The tags were supplied free of charge by the Arboriculture Association.

In July, Tree Wardens from across the south of England gathered for the Tree Council's Regional Tree Warden Forum at a very warm Sheffield Park, Sussex. A fascinating series of talks - outdoors under the trees -

culminated in a presentation about the WDVTA Veteran Tree Survey by Alison Griffin (*photo right*). It captured the imagination of quite a number of other Tree Warden groups. They were keen to understand more about how it was carried out with a view to starting their own veteran tree surveys. The day finished with a guided walk through the park learning about the many unusual, non-native trees on the site.

Later in July, Arborfield was the venue for a wonderful Tree Walk (*photo right*), hosted by the Reading Tree Wardens and led by our own Gabriella Eöry. It was well-attended with 13 wardens from Reading joining forces with the Wokingham Tree Wardens. As well as being an extremely interesting walk, new links with the Reading group were forged along the way. We discussed plans to organise more joint ventures in the future.

Looking ahead:

- We are hoping to begin a tree planting campaign across the Borough in November as described above by Cathy.
- Wokingham Tree Wardens will be attending the Barkham and Arborfield Fete on 19th September to raise awareness of our work and to potentially attract some new members. All offers of help on the day are warmly welcomed.
- On September 11th, WDVTA and the Tree Wardens will be joining Wokingham Borough Council's '**Net Zero Heroes**' group to talk about the Survey and the broader issues around the role of trees in the Climate Emergency.
- Tentative plans have been made to replace the felled poplar outside the '*Two Poplars*' pub on Finchampstead Road. The landlords are keen to see a new tree outside the pub and we are in the process of assessing the site to find a suitable spot.

Local News

Green Corridor Trail

The Earley Green Corridor has been a long time in the planning, spear-headed by the Earley Environment Group (EEG). Now there is a published Green Corridor **Trail**. The Loddon Valley Ramblers (with EEG help) have erected sign posts (*photo right*) along the route. It goes through woods, meadows and parkland taking in some of Lower Earley's more attractive areas such Pearmans Copse

(actually in Shinfield), Swallow's Meadow, the Wood of Eagles and the River Loddon (via a side path from Sindlesham to Loddon Bridge). All four are featured on the logo, with the Loddon Lilly representing the river. From next month, leaflets should be available in local libraries, doctors' surgeries, and council offices, and on the **EEG** and **LVR** websites. EEG is planning an official opening next March.

Laurel Park Orchard

W063 in our Commemorative and Special Trees Inventory.

This community orchard is looking good following work in May organised by the EEG. They weeded, added bark mulch around the trees and sorted our wire cages and props. The finished result is shown in the photo right.

New Nature Parks

Not quite joined up to form a green corridor, but alongside the new South Wokingham Distributor Road there will be three new **Nature Parks** along with Buckhurst Meadows, which is already open. Chapel Green and Home Park will be contiguous to the west, with St Anne's abutting Buckhurst to the east.

Covid Memorial Woodland

By the time you read this, there will have been commemorative opening ceremony in the **Covid Memorial Woodland** to recognise everyone who's contributed to its establishment. It's planned for the evening of 27th August to include a moment of reflection, a commemorative watering and time to explore the woodland as the sun sets.

Shinfield

I'm delighted that Shinfield now has a parish representative for WDVTA. Many of you will remember John Heggadon, who was a very important committee member in our early years. He sadly died in 2012 (see his obituary in **issue 14** page 6). He was Shinfield's representative, but no parish councillor had volunteered for that position since him, until now. Hilary Pollock, a recently elected parish councillor, is very enthusiastic about being involved with WDVTA and all tree matters in the parish. I don't know whether there are WDVTA representatives in other parishes. I do know some Parish/Town councils have a designated member and/or working group with responsibility for the environment, but Shinfield doesn't.

Tree for Life Garden

Also in Shinfield, this is a community planting scheme by the **University of Reading** and **Freely Fruity**. The garden, near Alder Grove Primary school, will celebrate the birth or adoption of a child. The project aims to support local wildlife, create new habitats and help children develop a lasting connection with nature as they grow. There will be 36 locally sourced fruit trees and a wildflower meadow. To be eligible for a dedication, children must live in Shinfield and be under 11 years old, or due to be born in 2026. Closing date for **application** is Sunday 27th September. If demand exceeds 36, the trees will be allocated at random. [As of August 22nd there is nothing on the Shinfield Parish website about this!!]

My Tree

Kevin Lenton

I am an Executive Committee member of the Wokingham Society and attended an Open Meeting in July at which the WDVTA gave a presentation of their Veteran Tree Survey that was completed in 2025. They kindly recognised that a "generous" grant of £10,000 from the Wokingham Society in 2006 enabled them to commission a database and recruit and train volunteers to survey trees in Wokingham Town. The survey was then expanded to the whole of Wokingham Borough.

The talk inspired me to find out about a large oak tree (*photo right*) standing on a green in Bedfordshire Way in Wokingham Town, the road where I live.

So, as a result of the talk, followed by valuable assistance from Cathy Boddy and Barbara Stagles of the WDVTA ,what did I find out?

The tree, registered as MRN **2058**, is an English Oak, one of two species of oak trees native to Britain. "My Tree" is what is called a maiden tree which is of seedling origin, single stemmed and has not been decapitated. All WDVTA tree records are sent to the national Ancient Tree Inventory (ATI) and this tree is classified by the ATI as a Veteran Oak, one of many oaks (1798) in the parish of Wokingham Town.

That there are so many oak trees in Wokingham reflects the history of Wokingham, once being part of the Royal Forest of Windsor, providing a source of wood for building and oak bark for tanning.

The Wokingham Town Council Coat of Arms has a field of acorns on a gold shield representing Wokingham as a forest town. The Motto on the Coat of Arms is "E.GLANDE.QUERCUS", which translates from Latin as "*from the acorn, the oak*."

So, '*My Tree*' started as one of those acorns. Its girth at 1.5m above ground level is 3.98m, and it is in good condition, suggesting it is about 200 years old.

The "Full Record" of the tree in the WDVTA database documents that bats are seen regularly flying around the tree. I have seen them in my garden.

The database also records that there is another oak on the green. I have to admit that I had not noticed this as it is at the back of the green and not clearly visible from the road. This tree is not a Veteran, with hawthorn in between, suggesting that the combination was possibly an Old Hedgerow.

The WDVTA sent me a copy of an old ordnance survey map of Woosehill from the Royal Library of Scotland, dated 1871. This map gives an indication of where the hedge lines existed across the land on which the 1970s Woosehill estate was built. I identified locations that still exist, Woosehill Lane, Windmill Pond, Fox Hill and Chestnut Avenue. I then homed in on where I thought the trees were located. At that time there were actually three trees shown on the map. I then took a compass bearing along the line of the two oaks in Bedfordshire Way. This matched the bearing of the three trees highlighted below, looking south east from the road. I assume that the third tree was lost as part of the development of the estate.

My Tree was situated in the middle of what, until the 1970s was arable land, and indeed was part of a hedgerow. If it was growing in a hedgerow, it may well be older than 200 years, perhaps 250. Richard Gibbs in "*Wokingham – A Potted History*" tells us that due to the soil condition in Wokingham, farming of crops was not particularly productive, so agriculture was focused on livestock, the majority of which was cattle.

I now visualise a herd of cows sheltering from rain under '*My Tree*', which stands proud, a silent witnesses to Wokingham's history.

The Veteran Tree Survey

Although the database is closed and we aren't adding any updates, we are still interested in the trees we have recorded. In the last **issue** (page 8), I featured a review and update for MRN **2193**.

If you find one that has died or been felled or if you have a good photo of any of them, please send them to me and I can include them in Tree Watch (and keep a record of them of course).

MRN **8038**, in the grounds of Oakbank School in Ryeish Green (Shinfield), was measured and photographed (*left*) in February 2017, with a girth of 2.7m. It was described as '*significant visually-landmark tree along Hyde End Lane*'. Unfortunately it's just a stump now (*photo right*). Why is was felled is unknown.

Sadly Departed – MRN 4479

This lovely veteran English oak was in a front garden of a house in Arbor Lane, Winnersh. It had a girth of 3.15m (at 0.9m) when measured in September 2010. It was felled sometime between September 2024 and July 2025; but we don't know why.

The Major Oak

It's in Sherwood Forest and also known as the '**Robin Hood Oak**' because of a legend that Robin Hood hid in its hollow trunk. The Sherwood Forest website has pages describing how they **cared** for the tree, why it **died** and what will happen to it now. It is one of the 50 '*Great British Trees*' trees designated by Tree Council to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. A **podcast** from 2024 captured its sound!

Its first recorded name was the '*Cockpen Tree*'. During the mid-18th century game birds were stacked inside the hollow trunk in wicker baskets or hessian sacks, before used in cock-fighting. Also called the '*Queen oak*' in 19th century, probably referring to its size rather than any royal connections, it's been widely known as the '*Major oak*' since it featured in a **book** published in 1790, '*Remarkable Oaks in the Park of Welbeck in the County of Nottinghamshire*' by Major Hayman Rooke.

Illustration in The Illustrated Guide to Sheffield and the Surrounding District, by John Taylor of Sheffield (1879) **CC0, via Wikimedia Commons**

Major Oak in 2014 - ***Nilfanion***, ***CC BY-SA 4.0*** *via Wikimedia Commons*

National (Tree) Treasures

Sarah Swatridge

Polesden Lacey

This National Trust property is a 1,600-acre estate with elegant gardens, an Edwardian house and plenty of room to play. It was the country home of Edwardian socialite, Margaret Greville. The downstairs part of her house has extensive collection of paintings, ceramics and fine French furniture. In 2026, there are no exhibitions taking place upstairs, so the first floor will remain closed to the public during the year. When they do re-open the upstairs area, it's worth visiting because of the beautifully large curved bay windows which once overlooked the driveway to the house.

Polesden Lacey is in Great Bookham, near Dorking, Surrey, RH5 6BD, about an hour from the Wokingham area.

For us, it is a great half way point to meet up with friends living in Meopham, Kent. Over the years we've visited and no matter what the season, there is always something of interest in the gardens. There are a variety of walks, either just around the immediate area of the house or further afield with great views - we clearly saw the arch of Wembley stadium at one point. There's good parking and two indoor cafe areas, both have outdoor seating as well. There are areas of ancient woodland, sweeping lawns, fields where cattle may have grazed and a very impressive rose garden. It's well worth a visit.

On our most recent trip, I saw this small but beautiful *Cornus kousa*, commonly known as a Korean or Kousa Dogwood.

I was also delighted to see several signs explaining how they are experimenting by adding earthworms to the soil around some ancient and veteran trees and/or adding mulch to others to try and improve the soil. This research is in tandem with Bartlett Tree Experts. They have an interesting **website** which shows some of the work they

do and the research they carry out. I particularly appreciated the article about pests to look out for at this time of year. It's got good, clear pictures which will help in identifying any potential problems and ideally dealing with them

Glynn Percival and Bartlett Tree Experts

Many of you will remember Glynn Percival, who gave us several talks over the years as well as a visit to his experimental site in Cutbush Lane in Shinfield, before Bartlett and Glynn were told to vacate that site by the University of Reading. He kept us up-to-date about tree pests, diseases and methods of care, especially the use of mulches and how different mulches have different properties. He always entertained us with snippets of information about his work at Buckingham Palace. His profile featured in the February 2017 **issue** of Tree Watch (*page 10*). It's well worth re-reading.

Now Bartlett is back in Shinfield. In 2025, they **announced** the opening of an arboretum and research laboratory in Spencers Wood dedicated to "*world-class tree research and the creation of robust tree collections*". "*Research work will support the advancement of plant health care, bringing benefits to both our arborists and the properties they serve*." This Shinfield site complements two existing American facilities in Charlotte, North Carolina and in Cornelius, Oregon.

It was opened in **June** this year, as **reported** in several arboricultural and forestry publications, at White House Farm near the A33.

Perhaps we can arrange a visit there, although probably not for a while since the site is still being developed, as these photos show.

It's on the south side of White Horse Lane, opposite the fields where the Swallowfield Show was held before it moved to Swallowfield Park. It's also across the road from one of our Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), "*Woods between Whitehouse and Highlands*" (SU 707 661). This is part of the '**Spencers Wood Southern Ridge Landscape**' comprising "*lowland mixed deciduous woodland, with the wider area containing some ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW) and plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS)*".

I live in Spencers Wood, but only heard about this when told about it by Mike Dawson.

Incidentally **Glynn** was recently made an Honorary Visiting Research Fellow at Reading University and is listed as a Senior Arboricultural Research Manager at **Barletts**

FAQ: Where are the Local Wildlife Sites in Wokingham ?

They are all mapped on one of WBC's seven interactive **maps**. As well as the '**Protected Tree Map**' and '**Public Rights of Way**' there's '**Planning Policies and Constraints**' and that's the one mapping such things as designated sites (LWS, LGS, LNR, SSSI). They are in the '**Ecology and Environment**' layer. There are several layers, including '**Trees and Landscape**' (including TPOs), '**Heritage and Conservation**' and '**Hydrology and Drainage**'. There's a 'Public Rights of Way' layer here too.

Tick the box against the name of the layer you want. Click on the '>' symbol to get the extended list. The legend appears below the main heading or click on the symbol to the right of the name to display the legend below that name. Type a location into the search box or zoom in and around the map to find the sites. Clicking on the mapped site displays the site name and perhaps some details.

REMARKABLE TREES - *Taiwania cryptomerioides*

Brian Hunt sent me an **article** headed "*A thousand years old and 20 storeys high: tracking down Taiwan's tallest trees*" about this tree (*photo below*). He thought, correctly, that Tree Watch readers would be interested in it. It's also called the '***Heaven Sword***'.

Follow the links to read both articles.

Steven Pearce, CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons

TREE OF THE YEAR

Voting for this year's Tree of the Year is open until 17:00 on 29th September. The winner will be announced in October. As you'd expect, some very nice trees have been nominated. One of them is the '*Donnington Castle Oak*', near Donnington Castle in Newbury. It's ATI number **53657** , an English oak with a girth of 5.8m at 0.8m (in 2022). Like all of the candidates it was chosen by public nomination and is described as a mammoth ancient oak that would have been a young tree during the English Civil War. Donnington Castle survived 20 months of assault, including cannon fire, in 1644/5. Weapons were highly inaccurate at the time and the oak was certainly within range of the attacks, but it survived.

It has been designated a '*Tree of National Special Interest*' (TNSI) by the Woodland Trust. These are trees which, because of their age, size, condition, associated species, rarity, heritage or cultural value have significant qualities that differentiate them from most trees of the same species.
Unfortunately this designation confers no statutory legal protection.

HOW GOOD IS THE TREE COVER IN YOUR AREA?

There's a **postcode checker** that will tell you whether the tree cover in your area is low, moderate or high (although there isn't information for all postcodes - it only covers urban areas). However, this 'tree equity' score is not based on the number of trees, but is calculated using six climate, health and socioeconomic factors: air quality, age, employment, health, heat disparity and income. The lower the score, the greater the need for trees and the more likely it is the area is missing out on vital physical and mental health benefits that are provided by trees.

Wokingham Borough has a score of 94%, whilst Shute End (RG40 1BN) has 100% and there is no score from Dinton Pastures (RG10 0TH) or for my post code. Perhaps Spencers Wood isn't considered urban. I know a lot of people who'd dispute that!

BUDLEIGH SALTERTON GROUP - UPDATE

In the last **issue** (page 3) I mentioned Ellen Singleton-Wood, our original membership secretary, setting up a new tree group, inspired by what we have done. It was launched in May as part of a community evening on environmental issues and how to plan for the future. They initiated a '*Treasured Tree*' competition as well as giving away over 150 tree saplings. The photos here are a view over Budleigh from the south-west coast path and Otter Head in Budleigh with its iconic Scots pine trees. It's a very different landscape from Wokingham! It's difficult to find veteran oaks in Budleigh!

SPECIES IN FOCUS – THREE KINGS KAIKŌMAKO (*PENNANTIA BAYLISIAN*)

12 miscellaneous facts about Pennantia baylisian

By Krzysztof Ziarnek, Kenraiz - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0

1. Endemic to the Three Kings Islands, an island chain about 55km from Cape Reinga, at the extreme tip of North Island, New Zealand.
2. The species was discovered in 1945 by Geoff Baylis (hence the species name) as a single female tree growing on Great Island, on a steep north-facing scree slope inaccessible to browsing goats. The vegetation on Great Island, an area of less than 7km^2, had been almost totally denuded by goats. [*In 1889 four goats were released as an emergency food source for any ship-wrecked sailors. The population exploded rapidly to 300-400 by 1900. In 1946 all 398 goats there were killed.*]
3. It's often known as '*the loneliest tree in the world*' (along with many others for different reasons) and the rarest tree in the world.
4. It was described and named in 1948, but, with only herbarium specimens to examine, there was debate about its classification and it wasn't until 2002 that it was recognised as a unique species.

By Beeveria - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0

5. Balis successfully propagated one broken-off sucker. It grew into a tree with four slender trunks, just like the wild tree. However, there was no success with cuttings taken from the canopy. Assuming hardwood cuttings would be better, one of the trunks of the original tree was cut down and cuttings taken from the re-growth were successful propagated, although the success rate was very low.
6. By the 1970s, enough trees had been propagated to make them available to gardeners, as well as botanical gardens and other sites in New Zealand. They grow readily in sun or shade, tolerating wind, drought and even light frosts. They are shrubby, multi-stemmed trees with a broad crown, growing to a height of 8m in cultivation. (The original tree is 4.5m tall). They flower in October and November. (The photos here are of trees growing in Botanic Gardens).
7. The species is dioecious (separate sexes), and all trees propagated from the original were female, but not entirely female. They produced sterile pollen. After many attempts to make it viable, self-pollination was achieved in 1985. Pollen grains were treated with a weak herbicide solution mimicking natural plant hormones and softening the hard coating of the pollen grain. Careful hand pollination of flowers of the same tree was successful and the tree set ripe fruit. The first seedlings didn't mature until the 1990s and one of these, named '*Martha*', was naturally self-fertile producing a good amount of seed without hand-pollination.
8. In 1989, after nearly 40 years of close observation, the same thing happened naturally to the original tree on the island. It produced self-pollinated fruit. However only one seed in 2000 germinated. Such self-fertilisation in dioecious trees is very rare.
9. Mature fruits are purple to black with a single hard seed (9x3.5mm).
10. By 1998 hundreds of seedlings had been grown from seed and were planted across New Zealand, but not on Great Island until 2010 because of concerns about unintentionally introducing fungal or bacterial disease. Extreme measures are taken to ensure this doesn't happen.
11. You can watch an informative 16 minute video on **YouTube** (don't be put off by the initial screen display/advert).
12. It was available from County Park Nursery in Essex in 1998; but their last specimen was sent to Kew Gardens around 2012. However I can find no reference to Kew having a living specimen.

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

- **Tree Health Forum** report for spring & summer 2026 (from the Tree Council).
- **Evolution of trees** – an episode of radio 4's "In Our Time".
- TreeFA World Cup **quiz** from the Woodland Trust.

Oak trees:

State of the UK's oaks **report**.
Finding solutions to the UK's oak **generation gap**
The **Ancient Oaks** of England including **distribution maps**.
Oaks of London – Unlocking Landscapes.
Oak trees - species in UK, how long they live and why they are crucial for our ecosystem.
'Common oak'– Kew **webpage**.

Sycamore Gap tree:

'**The tale of a tree:** An archaeological history of Sycamore Gap on Hadrian's Wall'.
Sycamore Gap sapling **stolen** from Wray Castle, near Ambleside, Cumbria.

Trees planted and saved:

Britain's **rarest native tree** (black poplar) among hundreds to be planted in Dorset.
Rewilding London: Councils have **planted 550,000 trees** in 7 years (as shown on an interactive map).
Regeneration in Bedfordshire after 35 years.
Historic oak tree near Grantham **protected**.
Saving UK's **junipers** from *Phytophthora austrocedri* through natural regeneration.
River Waveney **land purchased** to save it from risk of development.
Quebec town recognizes trees as **living beings** with rights
China's Great Green Wall - **66 billion trees** planted and appear to be growing faster than natural forests and **capturing more carbon** than it releases.

Trees felled and lost:

Residents of **Twyford** outraged as Croudace destroys trees and hedges
A Scots pine used as the **official logo** for Hythe and Dibden parish council in Hampshire is cut down, causing outrage.
Row over 300 trees **chopped down** for holiday homes in ancient woodland – West Yorkshire.
Tree faces axe over damage to Yorkshire **golf course** green.
Loss of 150 trees at National Trust Trengwainton garden near Penzance during **Storm Goretti** – garden now re-opened.
Trump administration to rescind rule protecting **old-growth forests**.
Logging and the slow disappearance of Australia's **large old trees**.

Forests:

Eight enchanting **rainforests** to explore in the UK.
Bussaco National Forest in Portugal becomes fourth certified '**therapeutic forests**' in the world.
The 15 countries with the **most forest** .
Neolithic farmers in Poland not responsible for widespread **forest destruction**.
The **old forests** nobody knew were there - northern Maine, USA.
Large forest experiment offers hope for **carbon storage**.
Palaeontologists reconstruct **forests of 56 million years ago** with chilling parallels for our warming planet.
Popular **Miyawaki reforestation** method lacks evidence.
World **rainforest quiz** - twelve interesting facts.

Tree bark can be used to trace air pollution.

Cooling effect of city trees in **Singapore** and generally – but only if they are the **right type**.

Portugal is home to hundreds of **ancient olive trees**, one may be over 3,700 years old.

Germany's oldest tree discovered - a **yew** more than 1,100 years old.

Why **Giant Sequoias** grow in only one place on earth.

Veteran Tree Survey snapshot – Largest tree recorded in each Parish/Town (with MRNs)

	Maiden	Pollard	Coppice	Multi stem	Stump	Total
	5	1	2	7	1	16
English Oak	**RU** - 2278 **SW** - 8844 **WW** - 7370			**HU** - 361		4
Sweet Chestnut		**WA** - 5845	**WT** - 4045	**WI** - 5578		3
Alder				**CH** - 9010 **ET** - 1187 **FI** - 2352		3
Cedar of Lebanon	**RE** - 1413			**AN** - 5920		2
Wellingtonia	**BA** - 1888				**SH** - 5114	2
Crack Willow				**TW** - 8847		1
Hazel			**SO** - 4756			1

Key: *AN-Arborfield and Newland; BA-Barkham; CH-Charvil; ET-Earley Town; FI-Finchampstead; HU-Hurst; RE-Remenham; RU-Ruscombe; SH-Shinfield; SO-Sonning; SW-Swallowfield; TW-Twyford; WA-Wargrave; WI-Winnersh; WO-Woodley;WT-Wokingham Town; WW-Wokingham Without*

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

Chichester District Council refused permission to fell an oak – because it is a 'significant feature of particular visual importance' in the local landscape.

The request to fell was based on the claim that the tree posed a health risk to a boy living nearby, who was allergic to oak pollen and mildew. The request was refused in January this year, but went to appeal. In June , the planning inspector upheld the decision not to fell because removing the tree would not reduce exposure to mildew, oak pollen or other allergens, since other oak trees grew nearby. Hence the reason given for its removal did not "*meet the threshold required to override the public benefit of retaining a protected tree in good health and structural condition*".

Some sources used in this issue: *all web pages accessed 27-08-2026 (unless stated otherwise) Links embedded in the text are not repeated here. Email me if you want a list of them.*
p 11-Species in Focus: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pennantia_baylisiana https://treevitalize.com/worlds-loneliest-tree-pennantia-baylisiana/ https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pennantia-baylisiana/ https://everything.explained.today/Pennantia_baylisiana/ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7LDkZPlrIl https://www.treesandshrubsonline.org/articles/pennantia/ County Park Nursery (personal communication)

Don't forget: You can download pdf versions of our ***10th anniversary report*** *and the* ***Veteran Tree Survey Completion Report*** *from our website - but you can also access extended versions of them, with links to the trees mentioned:*

wdvta.org.uk/report10.php

wdvta.org.uk/Rsurvey.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.