



Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association

Tree Watch

Issue 1

May 2009

As of 8th May 2009, we have **2371** trees in our database and **1809** photographs

Welcome to the first issue of "Tree Watch" - an informal newsletter in which we can pass on interesting observations, tips and anecdotes. Unlike the main Association Newsletter that gives details of all our various meetings and activities, Tree Watch is primarily aimed at surveyors. The Association Newsletter is sent to every member, but Tree Watch is an e-newsletter. It is only distributed via e-mail and is formatted for screen reading. We think it will contain items of interest to our general membership and hence it will be sent to everyone with an e-mail address in the membership database (unless of course you indicate that they don't want to receive it). It will also be on the Yahoo site along with the main newsletter.

The plan is to have some regular features, including a favourite tree and a profile of one of our recorders, as well as selected references and frequently asked questions. So if you have a question - or an answer to a frequently asked question; a profile you'd like to submit; a favourite book that you think others would enjoy; a useful web site - or indeed any item that you'd like to share with other members, then please send it in.

All comments and contributions please to: Elaine Butler datamanager@wdvta.org.uk

Those of you who were at the AGM in March will have heard my summary of the database and if you weren't there you can access a *pdf* version of my presentation on the Yahoo site, currently filed in the 'News and Events' folder [*Files > News and Events > LATEST NEWS > Database summary mid-March*]. This includes a summary of the number of trees recorded per parish as well as the most frequently recorded trees and their girths.

THE WOODLAND TRUST AND US

If you've read our constitution (which of course is also on the Yahoo site) you'll know that one of our objectives is to work with the Woodland Trust. When we were setting up the database and the new recording sheets, we spent some time discussing whether we should record all the Woodland Trust features. At that time they could not accept our data because they weren't set up for bulk input. Now they are and we have sent them our database and photos. However, they did want some changes, hence the recently revised spreadsheets.

When we sent our database, they put one record onto their web site as a trial and asked us to check it. They chose tree number 649 - I don't know why they chose that one, but the photo is one of my favourites. You may well have seen it on our display board. Note the diligent recorder - a rather useful 1.5m tall !!



A FAVOURITE TREE

I think it might be nice to feature a different tree in each newsletter. So if you have a favourite tree why not tell us about it? If you look at the Wokingham Town folder on the Yahoo site you'll find nominations for their favourite trees. Perhaps other parishes could do the same. Here's one nominated by Sue Farrington. It's a large oak in the football field at Cantley, master record number 36, and Sue says, "*It is not the largest but is beautifully situated in the open part of the first field on the left (north) side of the road that goes to Miltons restaurant/Wham theatre.*" She suggests calling it "*The Cantley Oak*". Girth = 4.45m



WHEN IS A SCOTS PINE NOT A SCOTS PINE?

The Woodland Trust's tree expert says that most of our Scots pines were actually Corsican pines and he has changed the records accordingly. Now you probably all know that I'm not exactly an expert on tree identification, far from it, and so I was very interested to know how he could tell the difference, presumably just from our photos. I was surprised and pleased when I looked at the photos to find that I could see the difference. Have a look at the photos of trees 678, 2082, 1253, 1259, 1260 and 1760 and see what you think. [Go to wdvta.org.uk; click on the WDVTS MAP button and then type the tree number into the box beside the map. This will display the position of the tree and a pop-up with its details. Click on [Photos](#) to display the photo(s).]

What we really need is to find some tree experts amongst our members so that we can confirm any queries we have concerning identification. Please, please, please do make yourself known if you have any competence at all in this area. Most of us could really do with some help.

PROFILE - STUART CROFT



Stuart has recorded more trees for us than anyone else - 312 trees - 13% of our current total.

"I've found tree hugging is a fantastic way to engage local people and get volunteers and young people out into the countryside. I started surveying veteran trees in Wokingham five years ago as a ranger for WBC Countryside Service, and thanks to the help of all my gaggle of volunteers, we surveyed sites across the district. Tree hugging with my 1st Hurst Air Scouts was definitely the highlight. Together we unearthed some great veteran trees and appeared on the Village Voices ITV programme, encircling an oak pollard in Dinton Pastures Country Park. I can now be found loitering along the south of Wokingham Borough, rangering along the Blackwater Valley."

LINKING CURRENT AND HISTORIC TREES

I did a search for 'oak tree' in the Reading Borough library on-line catalogue and was surprised to get this photo: "An oak tree near Sindlesham Mill, 1900."

I knew that the MERL photo collection was being made available on-line, but I hadn't realised it would be incorporated into the Reading library





catalogue. Having seen the photo of course I wanted to know whether the tree was still there and what it looked like now. So off I went to check. I've driven down Mill Lane often, but don't think I've walked there before and I was surprised at how noisy and intrusive the traffic is, especially rumbling over the bridge. Anyway, although more trees have grown up and rather obscure it, the tree is still there, - or so I think - if you think differently do let me know!! It's in our database now (# 2630), and will be on the web map later this month.

This prompted me to set up a separate folder on the Yahoo site for '*Individual or historic trees and maps*'. Currently there are four files in that folder including the '*Old maps guidelines*' produced last year by the embryo historic maps group within WDVTA. The '*Sindlesham Mill oak*' is there, along with the identification of trees in Maiden Place, Earley on a

1756 map (thanks to Sheila Crowson). It's difficult to imagine what Earley looked like then, but it's also changed so much within living memory. I was surveying in Silverdale Road and was surprised when the house-owner told me there were cows in the field at the bottom of his garden when he moved in. There are lots of houses there now of course. The other file contains reminiscences about an oak tree in Mill Lane, Earley by Alan Broodbank, chairman of the Earley Environmental Group. Do have a look at these files. I'm sure that there are lots more interesting reminiscences or anecdotes about individual trees, as well as historic information. If you've got any stories or historical links, please put them onto the Yahoo site so that we can all share and enjoy them.

SADLY DEPARTED

Unfortunately we do lose some trees.

This oak (#2364) on the corner of Culloden Way & North Way, Woosehill, was presumably part of an old field boundary, since it is in line with another veteran oak in a garden and a stump across road. It had to be felled because it was infected by the decay fungus, *Inonotus dryadeus*, making it liable to collapse in high winds. You might just be able to tell from this photo that the foliage is looking rather sad (and its neighbour, not in the photo, looked much healthier).



DID YOU KNOW?

Resin can be collected from Corsican pines, and it is in certain parts of Eastern Europe, although not, as far as I know, in Britain.

The Scots pine, *Pinus sylvestris*, is a native tree, whereas the Corsican pine, *Pinus nigra* subsp. *laricio*, is a native of Corsica, Southern Italy and Sicily. It was introduced into this country in 1759 and has been widely planted in parks, gardens and churchyards for ornamental and shelter purposes. According to the Royal Forestry Society, Corsican pine is "*the most profitable and suitable conifer for planting in much of lowland Britain It grows quickly and the combination of its straight trunks and light branches produces good timber with few knots.*" Its timber is used in buildings as roofing, flooring and interior framing.

Corsican pines dominate the largest man-made pine forest in Britain, Thetford Forest in East Anglia; and the Forestry Commission has planted them extensively throughout southern and eastern England. However, in 2007 it suspended all planting of Corsican pine for five years because of the extent and severity of red band needle blight, a disease caused by the fungus *Dothistroma septosporum*. [Ref: Forestry Commission news release 9339; on the Yahoo site of course!]



So look out for needles like this!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Currently the two that are most frequently asked are "How many recorders do you have?" and "How much of the Borough have you surveyed?" Barbara is asking co-ordinators for details about recorders and we think we have about 50 active recorders. That raises another difficult question - *When is a recorder active?* The question of coverage is one that I'd like all co-ordinators to address. Some of you have divided your parish into set areas and know when they have been completed. Malcolm Inglis has just such a map for Wokingham Town on the Yahoo site. Do look at it if you haven't done so already; [*Files > Parishes > Wokingham Town (WT) > Areas-status-map.jpg*]. It would be really useful, for monitoring our progress, if all co-ordinators did something similar - in words if you don't want to produce a map - electronically or on paper. (I don't have to have everything on a computer, contrary to what you might think!)

YOUR YAHOO SITE

That leads on nicely to the Yahoo site. So far, I've been putting most of the stuff on the Yahoo site, but it is your site and you should use it. There is a folder for every parish, but currently only WT is using it (see above). It should be a useful facility for co-ordinators and recorders to disseminate information. The great advantage of putting files on the Yahoo site is that they are there when you want to access them. If I e-mailed you copies of all the files I've put on the site you'd have me thrown out. It really is very easy to use, and if you aren't using it because of some teething difficulty, do ask for guidance.

Some recommendations from the Yahoo site:

WEBSITES:

- ① www.saps.plantsci.cam.ac.uk/trees - A useful key for the identification of winter twigs.
- ① www.histreetrail.com - Have a look at what they've done on the Isle of Wight.
- ① www.wokingham.gov.uk/environment/conservation/veteran-trees - new from WBC

READING: (in the Useful Files folder)

- ① Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Guide no. 4 - What are ancient, veteran and other trees of special interest? - Useful description of ancient, veteran, notable and significant trees, including a girth chart for 11 species on page 4. [Hard copies available from Barbara.]
- ① Ivy on trees: - Chiltern Woodland Project - Ivy on trees - is it a problem?
- ① Grey squirrel damage: Chiltern Woodlands Project - Description of damage caused to trees by grey squirrels

Don't forget: The latest database and all the latest files relating to the survey are on the Yahoo site:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/WDVTA>

The maps on our web page (hosted by TVERC) are updated monthly: www.wdvta.org.uk

Finally, and most importantly,
THANK YOU to everyone who is out there recording our trees.
We wouldn't have a database without you.