

Wider application

Tree Dressing Day is fast becoming recognised as an annual opportunity to celebrate trees in the UK. As a way to raise awareness of the value of trees, it provides an opportunity for people of all ages, cultures and backgrounds to celebrate and enjoy trees. Tree dressing has grown in popularity since 1990, and in 1998 there were over 400 separate events. The response to *Tree Dressing Day* has been particularly strong in urban and urban fringe locations and it provides a useful forum for the co-operation of local people, local authorities, statutory bodies and the business community.

Further information

National Urban Forestry Unit

This leaflet is one of a series produced by the National Urban Forestry Unit. NUFU provides a national focus for the exchange of information and good practice in urban forestry.

If you would like further information on other case studies or their application, or if you have examples of good practice to share with others, please contact:

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If you would like further information on tree dressing, please contact:

Common Ground	Tel/Fax:	0171 267 2144
PO Box No 25309		
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NW5 1ZA		

Further reading

Common Ground (undated)

Tree Dressing - Starter Pack, containing 20 colour transparencies, *Tree Dressing Day News*, *A Tree Dressing Manual & contact notes* (£30 inc. p&p) Common Ground, London

Common Ground (undated)

Tree Dressing Day Poster Common Ground, London, (£6.50 inc. p&p)

Sinden N (1990)

In a Nutshell : A Manifesto for Trees and a Guide to Growing and Protecting Them Common Ground, London

Photographs: Mike Hadfield and Margaret Warhurst

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Urban Forestry in Practice

Tree dressing



Tree dressing

Introduction

Tree dressing is a traditional part of many cultures around the world. Since 1990, it has been revitalised in the UK through the vision and commitment of Common Ground, a charity working to encourage local people to value, enjoy and care for their own familiar surroundings, often by linking art and the environment. From the first of the modern Tree Dressing Days, held in London under the theme of *Every Tree Counts*, Common Ground has actively promoted an annual celebration of trees under the *tree dressing* banner in the first weekend of December.

Specific example

Project name and location

NORTON PRIORY TREE DRESSING FESTIVAL, Norton Priory, **RUNCORN**, Cheshire.
Grid reference: SJ 547831

Project partners

- Norton Priory Museum Trust
- Cheshire Landscape Trust
- Friends of the Earth, Halton
- Halton & District Guides, Brownies & Rainbows
- The Park School
- British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
- 1st Weston Point Cub Scouts
- Musketeers Theatre Company
- Cheshire County Council Arts Service
- Soroptimists International
- Nick Bowman tree surgeon
- The Enabler's Band
- Halton Borough Council
- Grange Primary School
- St Marie's Primary School
- TOC H
- Threshold Lifestyles
- Phil Bewes, land artist
- The Woodland Trust

Project objectives

- To encourage the celebration of trees and to help highlight the responsibility of the community for long term tree care.
- To raise awareness, and understanding of the cultural and environmental importance of trees.
- To engage a wide variety of people from the local community through decorating and celebrating living trees in the Community Orchard at Norton Priory.
- To promote *Tree Dressing Day* as an annual celebration of trees in street, garden, park, playground, hedgerow and field.
- To encourage by practical action, the planting and care of trees.



Tree dressing is very popular with children

Site description

Norton Priory was founded in 1134. Since the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536, the site has been a private house and is now a museum, run by the Norton Priory Museum Trust. Set in a wooded landscape, the Priory overlooks the Mersey estuary and its associated industry. It is adjacent to the towns of Runcorn and Widnes and is encircled by a complex network of roads and motorways. The approach to the site is through a modern industrial estate and a large area of playing fields. Norton Priory is a quiet haven in a busy industrial area.

Implementation

In 1998, a tree dressing project took place in the Priory's ancient pear orchard. The project aimed to reach beyond existing users of the Priory and its walled gardens by involving other groups within the community.

A practical workshop was run by the Musketeers Theatre Company and a local artist, with the help of staff from Cheshire Landscape Trust and Norton Priory Museum Trust.

The theme for tree dressing in 1998 was **local distinctiveness**. Trees were dressed during the week leading up to *Tree Dressing Day* with hangings designed and made by pupils from three local primary schools and with additional contributions from local Cub Scouts, Guides, Brownies & Rainbows, TOC H, Threshold Lifestyles, the Boys Brigade and Soroptimists International. The trees to be dressed were chosen with care for their size, form and accessibility.

Advice on safety and insurance was obtained. As the activity involved climbing large trees in a public place, a professional tree surgeon was engaged to hang the dressings. All decorations were fastened securely without using nails or damaging the tree and they were removed from the trees on 6 January (Twelfth Night). In addition to the tree dressing itself, participants enjoyed a variety of other activities including poetry reading, story telling, dancing, a lantern procession and candlelit singing.

Funding for the project, including publicity and refreshments was secured from Cheshire County Council's Art Services, Cheshire Landscape Trust, Halton Borough Council and Norton Priory Museum Trust.

Some people take great care over their decorations
- string lanterns in an oak tree



Common Ground has given Tree Dressing Day a national identity