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[www.wiltshiretreewardens.co.uk](http://www.wiltshiretreewardens.co.uk)

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I hope you will all enjoy taking part in the full programme of training and events which is being planned for 2014. Amongst others, it will include practical tree and shrub identification (we are lucky enough to have secured Richard Cripps for one of these), learning about ancient trees and how to measure them, a visit to Barter's Farm Nurseries in Chapmanslade and a visit to Westonbirt Arboretum. For more information and dates, please check the [website](#) for information as it becomes available.

### **The Tree Council's Jubilee 'Diamond' Trees**

You may be wondering what is happening with this project. The Tree Council has been gathering together all the material that has been sent but they are still waiting for the remaining few trees to be planted following problems experienced by a small number of projects. The book will be A4 size, in a landscape format, and a forward is being written by HRH the Duke of Kent which will appear opposite a picture of HRH The Princess Royal planting one of the trees in Scotland in July 2013. There will be a short introduction to the project as well as a map showing the locations of all the trees that will act as the contents page. The book is apparently near completion; printing options are being investigated and the plaques linked to the website are being finalised so that they can be sent out before too long.

### *News from Tree Wardens*

#### **Strimmer damage in Salisbury**

Janet Davies, Salisbury



The damage was first noticed in mid August 2013 when it appeared that some of the smaller trees at the bottom of Wyndham Park needed water. They had been looking stressed, one going very brown. It had been very dry with no substantial rain for weeks. However, the reason the trees were suffering was not just dry weather, they had been severely damaged (in some cases completely ring barked) by strimmers!

The damage seems to have built up over the past few years. Many will have to be removed and be re-planted. Photographs were sent to Chris Stringer, the Parks Manager for Salisbury City Council, our local councillors and Shane Verrion, the Salisbury Tree Officer. Although the person responsible has been taken to task it was thought that a more serious commitment should be made to put things right. It was agreed that trees should be mulched one metre around around the bases in future and the damaged trees would be replaced. (See article by Steve Russell about the importance of aftercare later in this newsletter.)

All the trees in the St Edmund's Ward were visited - Wyndham Park, St Edmund's Arts Centre, The Greencroft and Bourne Hill Gardens. It was agreed that Salisbury City's Parks Department would replant the worst affected in the autumn and mulch one metre around others as far as possible. No trees have yet been replaced and there is as yet no sign of mulching. There is similar damage all over Salisbury so more evidence has been sent in the hope that Salisbury City Council will make a proper plan. This problem has been written up to alert other Tree Wardens to watch out for and report any damage in your area to the Local Authority or Tree Team. More pictures on the [website](#).

## **Tisbury Community Orchard**

Debbie Carter, Tisbury

This orchard has been planted at the top of the Jubilee meadow for the benefit of all Tisbury residents and in a year or two we will be able to use the fruit and have sessions of apple pressing, cider making maybe, and pick the plums, pears and cherries. However, the trees need expert pruning and Gary Lamont from Wiltshire Wildlife Trust will be coming to the Tisbury community orchard to show us how to prune the 60 fruit trees. All helpers and anyone interested in learning how to look after an orchard will be welcome.

Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> February 10 am until 2 pm in the orchard below King George V playing field, Tisbury.

Tools will be provided but bring your own pruning saw and sharp secateurs if you have them. Coffee and biscuits will be provided.

Contact Debbie Carter for more information on 01747 871311

## **Oak trees free to a good home**

Jenny Pearson, Malmesbury

Jenny has been contacted by Peter Howell, a member of her community, who has been growing oak trees from local seed. Two years ago, he planted approximately 1500 acorns in his garden and allotment. The small trees have grown well and are, on average, a foot high now. If you would like any or all of these trees for FREE for projects in your area please call Peter on 01666 823178 or email [peterhowell1@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:peterhowell1@hotmail.co.uk)

They are ready now and can be dug anytime; however, it is recommended that they are re-planted by the middle of March so that they can settle in before the spring. Peter would welcome help in digging them out if you would like to take some, and will wrap the roots in newspaper and tie them up in bundles of about two dozen, suggesting that they are heeled in to keep the roots moist until they can be re-planted. Many of the trees are grandchildren of a tree that Peter himself planted in Malmesbury over twenty years ago. It has been another great 'mast' year and he already has a few hundred acorns collected, so if you need any more in years to come another crop is on the way!

## **Management of a Community Wood**

Don Davies, Aldbourne

Around 22 years ago Aldbourne Parish Council became responsible for a small wood in the middle of the village resulting from a property development. The wood is protected and subject to supervision and control by Wiltshire Council.



Rectory Wood is 0.56ha consisting mainly of indigenous Beech, Ash and Sycamore species. These trees are close together and are very spindly with many weak and subdued trees. There is a thick undergrowth of bramble and nettles augmented in spring with a show of cow parsley. There is little in the way of bluebells, anemone, celandine or other woodland floor fauna.

Over the years management of the wood by the PC has been haphazard at best, depending on the interest of the responsible councillor. This has resulted in a lack of continuity leading to an unsatisfactory state of the wood.

Since becoming responsible for the wood I have coordinated closely with the Arboriculturalist of Wiltshire

Council and begun a programme of improvement and annual maintenance. However, this has resulted in some objections from residents who wanted the wood to be left untouched and left to grow wild. The majority, though, wanted the wood to be managed for the benefit of the community. It therefore became necessary to devise a strategy and plan for approval by the PC which would also determine the required continuity for the management of the wood. This was eventually adopted by the PC in November 2013 and is shown below.

The Vision approved states that the wood will remain in a semi-wild state with only essential management provided by the Parish Council with the purpose of providing an area for recreation, a habitat for diverse flora and fauna, carbon sequestration and an educational resource. In time weaker trees will be removed and replanted in accordance with recommended spacing to enable strong and healthy trees to predominate. Species mix will be in accordance with WC recommendations. Wood from felled trees will be available free of charge to those who wish to collect it for firewood, otherwise it will be left to rot in situ.

As the wood matures and older trees die or are removed, a boundary area of at least five metres will be developed for low canopy trees and shrubs to provide a transition from shrubs to trees that will also encourage species biodiversity. A time frame for the implementation of the strategy will be determined taking into account advice from Wiltshire Council.

### **The Secret Garden**

*Janet Davies, Salisbury*

A grant of £185 was obtained from the Tree Council for some yellow rattle seeds and wildflower plugs to try to improve the wildflower lawn in what we call 'the Secret Garden', the 18<sup>th</sup> century walled garden at the back of Wiltshire Council's Bourne Hill offices. After the garden was replanted in 2009 a wildflower lawn was made there. The oxeye daisies and scabious there have reduced somewhat as the grasses have been taking over. This was an attempt to reduce the grass by cutting and raking and sowing the rattle seeds. Yellow rattle is partially parasitic and will hopefully reduce the grass by 'feeding on it'. After the lawn was mown in October, together with a group of friends who do some gardening there, we raked the surface to remove as much grass as possible and sowed the rattle seeds. We then planted 140 more wildflower plugs of native grassland species which we hope will provide more flowers and improve the habitat for wildlife - Red Clover, Knapweed, Self-heal, Betony, Great Burnet, Bedstraw, Autumn hawkbit, Yarrow, Quaking grass and Vetch. We won't know how successful this has been until the spring but we're hoping there'll be a noticeable improvement and that more bees and butterflies will be attracted and perhaps we hope to have a photograph for the next issue of the newsletter!

### *Other Items of Interest to Tree Wardens in Wiltshire*

#### **Exciting bat find at Drews Pond Wood, Devizes**

*Ali Rasey, Countryside Officer*



In August 2013, as part of a bat research project, a male Bechstein's bat was caught in Drews Pond Wood in Devizes. Bechstein's bats are very rare not only in the UK but also on a European scale, and are one of the few species for which 'Special Areas of Conservation' (SACs) can be designated under the EU Habitats Directive. The first UK maternity roost for this species was found only in 1998 in Sussex, although we do now know of a couple of roosts in Wiltshire too.

What was very interesting about this particular Bechstein's bat was that it had been caught previously, and had a ring on it. With a bit of detective work it turned out to have been ringed at Box Mines in 1999 as an adult; so this bat is at least 14 years old. Breeding female bats tend to have a foraging territory of around 1ha; this male Bechstein's bat had travelled over 20km from where it had been ringed. They are very particular about the type of habitat they use for foraging and roosting – they need to fly and forage in areas of fairly dense cover and, unlike something like a noctule bat, they will not be found flying out in the open. For this reason, they tend to prefer woodlands in excess of 25ha in size so that they can fly and find their insect food 'under cover'; they have been found in smaller woodlands, but these have invariably had excellent connections with other woodlands.

Bechstein's bats prefer mature deciduous woodland, utilizing trees with lots of nooks and crannies like woodpecker holes; also important for them is a water body within the woodland (which Drews Pond Wood has), and good levels of understory vegetation (again, Drews Pond Wood has this). Important areas for this species seem to be Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire, Hampshire, IoW and West Sussex. A major conservation concern for the habitat of this species is large scale coppicing in woodlands where this bat has been recorded, lack of

connectivity between woodlands, and the need to retain not only the trees with bat roost potential but also a good buffer area around them.

### ***The importance of aftercare in successful tree establishment***

*Steve Russell, Woodland & Countryside Management Ltd.*

Planting trees is very rewarding. Some of you will remember 'Plant a Tree in 73', the national campaign aimed at encouraging the population to participate in planting trees. It resulted in the Tree Council being formed in 1974. However, 40 years on, how many of these trees have survived? With a bit of care and attention more could have been done to help them thrive and develop.

You may have seen on the [Wiltshire Tree Warden website](#) that the Highways Department in Wiltshire has been planting trees along the highways. For large scale planting schemes involving thousands of trees it is usual to have 3 years maintenance including weed control and replacement of dead but for a few trees it is not always cost effective to send a team and vehicle out to water these trees. The move away from large local authority workforces and resident ground staff has resulted in a reduction in skilled and knowledgeable tree staff; this is why volunteers such as Tree Wardens are so important. So what can you do?

**Trees need moisture.** Once a tree starts to suffer it is much harder to bring back to health. Most civic trees are planted as large specimens. A new standard tree needs 30 litres (6 gallons) a day in the spring and during dry periods in the summer. Watering regularly for the first year will greatly reduce problems later. Watering early or late in the day reduces water loss by evaporation.

**Mulching will greatly improve moisture retention and suppress weed growth.** It reduces evaporation from the soil and gradually fertilises the tree as it breaks down. Mulching is probably more important than watering because the effects are more lasting. The area around the tree stem should be kept clear of mulch to avoid the tree rotting. Mulch should only be applied to well watered ground.

**Stakes should be used to provide adequate anchorage.** If not staked, the root-ball can quickly become loose and roots will fail to establish. Ties must be loosened or removed as a tree grows as, if left too tight, they will cause serious bark damage. Ties may need adjustment annually and can often be removed after three years.

**Trees need protection from damage.** One of the biggest threats to trees is damage; this comes from all directions, the enthusiastic mower or strimmer operator, wild and domestic animals, vehicles and vandals. Guards help to protect young trees but they need to be maintained if they are to be useful. The type of guard will be dependent on the damage risk. The removal of guards is also dependant on the period of protection required.

So, when you plant a tree, don't just plan the planting but plan the establishment and aftercare. There should be a commitment of at least three years of follow up, watering, replacing mulch, adjusting stakes, ties and guards and eventually removing them. Keep an eye on young trees in your area; notice if something needs to be done and pass this on to someone who can deal with the problem.

Please have a look at the  
Provisional Programme of Tree Warden Events for 2014 on  
[www.wiltshiretreewardens.co.uk](http://www.wiltshiretreewardens.co.uk)

Also on this website you will find information on where to go for funding, useful links, diseases to look for, past activities and who to contact