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www.wiltshiretreewardens.co.uk

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Message from Vicky

vicky.roscoe@wiltshire.gov.uk or 01225 718647

During this last winter of 2013–14, the British Isles were in the direct path of several winter storms, which culminated in record breaking winter rainfall and storm conditions. Although Wiltshire didn't take the full brunt of the storm, the extent of the damage caused to Wiltshire's trees was significant. Wiltshire Council alone dealt with over 600 tree related cases across the county, the majority of which occurred during St Jude's and the Valentine's evening storm. The south of the county took the brunt of the storms (see *Recent Thoughts by a Wiltshire Farmer*) with Salisbury worst hit losing several iconic trees.

It would be wonderful to replace the trees lost this winter across Wiltshire. [The Woodland Trust](#) has over 4000 packs to give away to groups and schools to mark the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War. The deadline is 4 September but they may close the offer early if it is oversubscribed so the advice is to apply early! If you require more details about information mentioned in this newsletter, do please contact me.

News from Tree Wardens

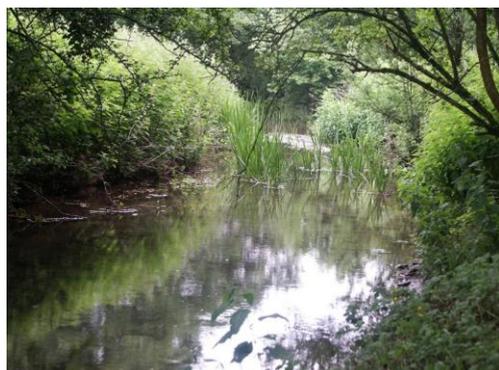
Spring into Action

Irene Johnson, Sherston

During the spring, our small but stalwart group of volunteers have been planting more trees than usual, thanks to funding from the Parish Council and other sources. We have identified two particular areas of the village which will eventually be transformed by the new arrivals.

Our recreation ground has a broad grass perimeter that will become home to a selection of species, all of which were featured in a recent Daily Telegraph article on the best varieties to plant for future climate change. They range from Lime (*Tilia cordata* 'Greenspire') and Chinese Crabapple (*Malus huphensis*) to Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*), Honey Locust (*Gleditsia*) and Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulis* 'Franz Fontaine'). Each one offers some seasonal interest, be it pretty spring blossom, berries and/or spectacular autumn foliage.

Grove Wood, our community woodland, continues to thrive after five winters of coppicing and clearance work. We're giving the cutting back a rest this year, having completed all four sections, and concentrating instead on declaring war on brambles and planting wild narcissi and snowdrops-in-the-green. New broadleaved native trees will also shortly find a home here, joining saplings planted by the local primary school children a couple of years ago.



Our neglected river bank of the Avon flowing at the base of the wood is to receive a make-over thanks to the Bristol Avon Rivers Trust (BART). Their experts visited us in early February to advise us on how to improve the river and the riverside to increase diversity and the number of fish, flora and wildlife. We have already seen kingfishers and little egrets so are looking forward to providing them with a greatly enhanced natural habitat. We're also hoping that a grant application for a community garden on the recreation field will be successful.

An Example of how Tree Wardens can help with trees in Conservation Areas

Norman Hodnett, Sutton Benger

Last October Wiltshire Council changed the procedures for processing applications for work on trees in Conservation Areas (see **Matters of interest to Tree Wardens** at the end of this newsletter). The main effect of the change is that Wiltshire Council's tree officers will no longer look into tree applications in conservation areas unless an objection is raised by the parish/town/city council.

Like many other Tree Wardens, I was not aware of the change to procedures but within weeks I was receiving e-mail copies of each application as soon as the Clerk received it from the Planning Staff. Each time I receive a copy of an application I go and look from outside the land boundary; occasionally calling on the owner if access is needed. I then respond with my comments to the Parish Clerk who in turn circulates them to Councillors and then comments to the Planning Staff.

This smallish Wiltshire village (with a population about 850 and close to an M4 junction) saw a good deal of development in the the 1970s and 1980s; new houses, conversions of redundant farm buildings, and major extensions to agricultural cottages. Most were accompanied by garden upgrades and the planting of trees. Many of those trees are now too large, too close and need work but the 1991 creation of the Conservation Area embraced about half the village complete with new houses, new school, conversions and extensions. Thus there is a flood of applications.

Last year successful planning applications were made to build on two adjacent sites (the old Buxted Chicken factory site and an abutting semi-derelict farm - a total of 84 proposed new houses.) The chicken factory was outside the conservation area; the farm within. Between the two runs a right of way path then partly lined by scrubby willows. Developer A (the chicken factory site) bought site B (the farm) from the other developer this spring and submitted fresh plans for development of the now one site. The Parish Council received a complaint that the right of way was obstructed and the trees cut down. As Tree Warden I was asked to investigate.

The problem was a drop in the land levels of about two feet across the right of way. Levelling was needed to join the two sites and the existing trees would not survive the raising of the soil level at their base so, after levelling, the developer planned to restore the right of way and replant the expensive way using semi-mature trees with large rootballs. As Tree Warden I was able to act as go-between and talk to the developers and provide the information needed by the Parish Council to allay the concerns of any residents. The village will benefit from an improved right of way lined with suitable well-planted and maintained trees.

Malmesbury Big Tree Survey ... take two!

Jenny Pearson, Malmesbury

In April last year Jenny and the conservation charity Malmesbury River Valleys Trust (MRVT) ran an event to help survey the local nature reserve Conygre Mead, which is owned and managed by MRVT, in order to gain a comprehensive list of the tree species there.

There was an excellent turnout with 28 people coming down to take part. Over 520 trees were identified and recorded. But that was not the end of the story. The Mead is roughly 3.5 hectares and not all of the trees were sampled during that morning's event, so it was decided to hold another Tree Survey this year in order to finish the good work and gain a full list of the tree species, their total number, height and girth, and overall health. Part two of the survey was held on 13 April this year and yet again the turnout was excellent. Thirty people came to help including volunteers and committee members of MRVT, ten members of Malmesbury's Air Cadet Troop, Ross Shepherd - Tree Warden from Swindon as well as Vicky Roscoe, our coordinator of the Tree Warden Scheme in Wiltshire, Rich Murphy, the Council Tree Monitoring Officer, and Jim Mullholland, the Council Tree & Woodland Officer, who were all a great help.

The survey was a huge success, and the Malmesbury River Valleys Trust now has data on over 970 trees on the Mead, which will be used to feed into a long term management plan for the nature reserve. If you fancy going down to the Mead for a stroll by the river and to enjoy the setting and various habitat types, park at the long stay car park in Malmesbury and the nature reserve is at the far end, you can't miss it! Jenny is grateful to everyone that came down to help, and particularly Vicky Roscoe for all her support.

A Cautionary Tale about Tree Planting in Community Woodland

Don Davis, Aldbourne



On 1 March a group of volunteers planted 35 trees in a cleared area of our community wood. The trees were planted in protective plastic tubes and supported with canes. Soon after about half the trees were stolen, all the tubes removed and scattered and all the canes stolen. This was obviously very frustrating but lessons can be learned from it.

Lesson 1. Don't publicise new plantings.

Lesson 2. Plastic tubes and canes stand out against the surrounding area and attract attention. In future we shall use hazel sticks and green ties to support the trees that will blend in and become almost unnoticeable.

Matters of Interest to Tree Wardens

The Tree Council's Jubilee 'Diamond' Trees

There has been no further news on the progress of the book, the website or the plaques required to complete this project.

New film warning about the spread of phytophthora

There is great concern about this threat across a wide range of environments – woods, moorlands and gardens. This new 18 minute film covers points such as the different types of phytophthora, why they are a threat, symptoms to look out for and what people can do to prevent the spread, and who to contact if you suspect the fungal outbreak. It can be viewed on the [Food and Environment Research Agency \(FERA\) website](#).

Changes in Planning Procedures on Trees in Conservation Areas

Tree Wardens should be aware of the recent changes in the system, so that you may be able to safeguard some of the trees in conservation areas within your parish.

Currently, the owner of a tree in a conservation area has to notify Wiltshire Council of their intention to either fell or to carry out works to a tree. Wiltshire Council then has six weeks in which to decide whether or not the tree should be protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). Under the current procedure, Wiltshire Council notifies the parish/town/city councils and requests representations within 21 days. Following this, Wiltshire Council's Tree Officers assess the application taking into account the representations received. They then make a decision which is either to raise no objection or, in a **very** small number of cases, to make a TPO. In the event of the Council not issuing a decision before the expiry of the six week period the landowner is entitled to proceed with the works.

New procedures have been introduced to assist Wiltshire Council's Tree Officers in managing their significant workloads. A 21 day consultation still takes place with the parish/town/city councils. However, after this, **assessment of the application by Wiltshire Council's Tree Officers will only take place in the event of an objection being raised by the parish/town/city council**. Should there be no objection or support from the local councils, or should there be no response, Wiltshire Council will assume that there is no objection to the proposal. More detailed information about TPOs can be found on the website for [Planning Practice Guidance](#).

Tips to help trees survive drought

The [Tree Council website](#) has information on spotting a tree with drought stress and ten tips on watering trees in a drought can be downloaded from their website.

Recent Thoughts from a Wiltshire farmer

Martin Shallcross of Wallmead Farm, Tisbury
Member of the Royal Forestry Society

We have lost the veteran Scots pine that stood alone in the meadow clearly visible from the road from Wardour and from the nearby railway. The foliage had been dying back year by year and the trunk was clearly hollow. It used to be a nesting site of a Little Owl that we have not seen for many years.



I knew that its days were numbered but was not prepared for the mighty storm on the Friday night in February that toppled it. I measured it as it lay on the ground. It was 65 foot high and the diameter measured 10 foot near its base. It has now been cut up and several people have attempted to count the rings. They are extremely close together near the outside as it put on very little girth over the last 50 years. We reckon that it was probably at least 230 years old which means that it was planted in the late 1700s. It was one of several trees which grew along the bank which I'm told was the original boundary of Cranborne Chase.

Another casualty was the young oak tree which I had planted at the end of our garden about 30 years ago. It had grown to about 25 foot in height. I had cared for this tree and was very fond of it because it framed the view from the house up to the high ground beyond. On St Jude's day last October the sudden storm shattered this tree, although the trunk was quite sound. The wood is all now logged and stacked up German style in my woodshed ready to be burnt in a year's time but the tree would never have made useable timber as it had a twisted form.

Most of us who use the A 30 will have been concerned about the state of the high conifers on the right-hand side of the road near the Heath Farm mobile home site. I can remember when these Cupressus trees were planted perhaps 50 years ago as nurse trees to a row of beech which were designed to form half of an avenue. Unfortunately earlier owners, having planted the two species of tree, seemed to have neglected them. The conifers should have been thinned and then removed many years ago and the beech pruned and encouraged to form straight mature trees.

During last winter the now enormous conifers have blown across the road one by one taking the telegraph wires with them each time. Perhaps 15 trees came down and I think that they hit at least one car. The road was frequently closed to clear the debris. Eventually in March all the remaining conifers were taken out across the adjoining field at enormous expense. This would have cost thousands of pounds. The remaining beeches are mainly poor forked specimens. The moral is that trees near roads need careful management.

In England we are not very good at looking after trees. We are enthusiastic planters but much less diligent in thinning and pruning trees to the best advantage. Tree cover in this country is less than in most parts of Europe. I am a member of the Royal Forestry Society and we have a variety of interesting summer meetings out in the woods. Some woodland, such as that at Stourhead, is beautifully managed. Much of the local woodland is neglected. We owners have a reasonable excuse in that thinning and pruning is extremely expensive and the market value of standing timber is uncertain, though the value of firewood is strengthening as wood-burners become more popular.

In the end it all comes down to a matter of pride in owners caring for woods which should be the glory of our countryside. Perhaps it is better not to have too critical of view of these things and just enjoy nature in its apparently natural state. I say 'apparently' because there are few areas of natural woodland, nearly all were planned and planted by our forebears.



Tree Survey - Wednesday 28th May
Barter's Nursery - Wednesday 30th July
Westonbirt Arboretum - Friday 10th October
Book an event – details on the website
www.wiltshiretreewardens.co.uk

Also on the website you will find information on where to go for funding, useful links, diseases to look for, past activities and who to contact. Alternatively contact Vicky Roscoe.