



September 2015

www.wiltshiretreewardens.co.uk

Issue No.15

Message from Vicky

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

The Wiltshire Tree Management Policy for the management of trees on Council owned land has now been approved by cabinet. The Tree Management Policies set out when Wiltshire Council will and will not undertake tree works. In effect, it sets out what Wiltshire Council's legal responsibility is in relation to its duty of care as a landowner. It enables a fair and balanced approach to tree management across the county by providing a defensible position to justify why tree works will only be undertaken when there is a legal requirement.

Unfortunately the scope does not extend beyond these management policies into areas such as replanting or the danger of strimmers in proximity to new trees. We are currently working on the next document in what will hopefully be a suite of documents, the Tree Risk Management Strategy, and if this is approved by cabinet, we can look at producing a Tree Strategy which can cover these types of issues and complete the set. The policy can be seen on the website www.wiltshiretreewardens.co.uk

If you have any unwanted pine cones or ice-cream tubs with lids we would happily take them off your hands for the upcoming woodland event at Drew's Pond Wood in Devizes – a Children's Woodland Engagement Day. Bring the family along for a fun woodland scavenger hunt to find acorns, conkers, beech nuts and pinecones then create a woodland creature to take home. Bring your children to learn about seeds and growing trees. Alternatively if you would like to come along and help out on the day we would welcome volunteers. Cost – children £1. For more information please contact me.

You may be interested in joining the Marlborough Downs Space for Nature Project in a Bat Walk around Avebury on 11 September or a Heritage Walk on 20 September. For more information on both of these events, please contact 01380 871012 or email mdnep@btinternet.com

News from Tree Wardens

Longleat Estate

Rick Gunning – Tree Warden Horningsham

News of three trillion trees on earth this month got me thinking - how many were planted by humans? The only way to find out would be to examine planting records, which begs the question - how many of us keep planting and management records?

A couple of years ago I was lucky enough to have access to the archives at Longleat Estate to view the forestry records whilst studying at Bristol University. The records are extensive and I would have happily spent a fortnight looking over them but alas I only had a few hours to look at the specific areas I was researching. The Longleat Estate is positioned on the border between Wiltshire and Somerset resting on Oxford Clay and Upper Greensand. The forests cover approx 1630 hectares and consist of a mixture of softwood and hardwood species.

The majority of the forests on the estate were planted in the period 1772-1800 as part of the aesthetic enhancement of the grounds after 'Capability' Brown's work landscaping the Longleat parkland (1757-62). Records show planting on a massive scale. In the winter of 1787/8, 45,000 trees were planted including 4,000 oak, 8,000 beech, 3,000 birch and 10,000 thorn. In the winter of 1788/9, 50,000 trees were planted; in the winter

of 1793/4, 110,000 trees were planted including 45,000 Scots pine and in the winter of 1796/7, 82,000 trees were planted. This changed the local landscape and ecology in a big way.

The original objective of the planting was for amenity value but over the years the remit has broadened to Silviculture with a careful consideration to amenity value. The economic value of the forest to the estate is highlighted in the 1903 report on the visit of the English Arboriculture Society to see the 'famous Longleat woods'. The report comments on the 120 year old Silver firs (*Abies alba*) growing on the fertile, free draining Greensand. The writer notes that an area of approximately a third of an acre contained 27 trees roughly 130 feet high with a girth at 5ft off the ground of up to 14ft. There are still some fantastic trees on the Estate including fine specimens of Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) growing between Center Parcs and Shearwater Lake that make many visiting foresters weep with envy.

The produce from the woods supported a lot of local industry ranging from timber to faggots and coppice products to pit props for the Radstock coal field. Forestry records show reasonable revenue and a considerable number of people were employed by the estate. Locals recount tales of 10 gangs of 10 men working within the forestry department during the 1940s with the assistance of 200 prisoners of war.

The forestry on the Longleat Estate has been managed for hundreds of years traditionally as 'clear fell' forestry but since the heavy losses due to strong winds in the 1960s and 1970s, the forest changed to being managed as 'Continuous Cover Forestry' in the 1980s. This involved little and often thinning, less drastic changes in habitat and less large scale disturbance. In the last few years there have been outbreaks of the pathogen Phytophthora (*P.ramorum*) which is affecting the larch (*Larix*) species, especially the Japanese larch (*Larix Kaempferi*). The Forestry Commission (FC) drew up guidelines in an attempt to contain the disease. This involves felling all potential host tree and shrub species within a 100 metre radius of a diseased tree. This has created large areas of open space and disturbance within the forest canopy and created opportunities for dispersed & dormant seeds to germinate and colonise the new environment.

Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) trees are abundant throughout most plots as understory and occasional mature trees capitalising on the natural regeneration policy. Initially it looked like a remnant of a previous ancient woodland mosaic but although the present Longleat forest has been established for over 200 years, it is a well recorded



A softwood plantation on the Longleat Estate in May with a carpet of Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*)

plantation, not ancient woodland. So, I pondered, are the ancient woodland indicator species present today relics of a previous era or slow colonisers gradually getting a foot or root hold? Longleat archives record the planting of rowan in 1784 and the specimens present today probably descend from them. There are records too of planting elms in certain areas during the same period which may explain the presence there today of the occasional large Wych elm (*Ulmus glabra*).

As I walk through the woods today I often visit a large over mature beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) just beyond the Center Parcs fence line and like to think it was maybe one of the original trees planted in those early years the forest was established. The forestry records suggest that it probably is, so, the moral of this story is; keep records of planting and management as you never know who will need them.

All information within this article is gained from the Longleat Estate Archive which is a private collection - thanks to the Longleat Estate and Dr Kate Harris, Curator Longleat Historic Collections.

The Trees on Rood Ashton Estate

Peter Loxley-Smith, Tree Warden Steeple Ashton and Biss

Whilst walking around Biss wood recently, I remembered my childhood which was spent on the Rood Ashton country estate. The Manor was once the home of the 1st Viscount Long, and during his residence it was visited by various members of the British Royal Family, including the Prince of Wales, later Edward VIII. However, when I was young it was owned by Mr. and Mrs. Shaw and they lived there with their son Courtney and Lady Dolby. As children we had the run of the woods and parkland and I was always in awe of the wonderful trees that had been planted over the years - maidenhair tree, cork oak, monkey puzzle, tulip, magnolia, lime, black and white poplar, walnut, sweet chestnut, horse chestnut, giant redwood, Douglas fir, Japanese maple, elm, oak, Holm oak and beech to name just a few. I still keep a lookout for the wellbeing of the trees that remain as part of my job as a Tree Warden and a Wiltshire Wild life Reserve Warden.

There were lots of times whilst walking home from West Ashton School, back to the cottage we lived in, when the chauffeur would stop and give us a lift. Often we used to go to the Manor with newspapers. The tradesman's entrance had two large wooden doors and a ring pull at the back and, once pulled, Mr Leggett the butler would open the creaky doors and would shout "Madam!" We would be invited into the kitchen and normally would be given something to eat and drink by the cook.

Ancient Tree Project

George & Jenny Lisle, Tree Wardens The Donheads

This event was rained off in July and has been rescheduled for Friday 25 September from 2 – 4pm. We will be learning how to identify and record ancient trees in the Donheads, following the very successful meeting at Wincombe Park in June. This will provide an opportunity for those who missed the first training day to join the group but all are welcome. On 12 June we had a fascinating talk by Jill Butler, from the Woodland Trust prior to setting forth to learn how to identify and record ancient trees in Wincombe Park. On 25 September, we plan to identify trees in the fields along or near a footpath between the two Donheads, setting out from Berrywood Lane, Donhead St Mary at 2pm. Steve Russell of Woodland and Countryside Management Limited and David Blake, the Project Development Officer for the AONB, will be leading the group and providing guidance.

Gavin Tait, Chairman of Donhead St Mary Parish Council, has kindly suggested we use the cider orchard, Berrywood Lane, as a mustering point and has generously offered refreshments, teas, coffee and cider in his barn so that everyone can meet beforehand at the barn. If you would like to join us please contact jrhauk@globalnet.co.uk or tel. 01747 828081. We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible.

Matters of Interest to Tree Wardens

Alert for a damaging new tree pest!



Oriental chestnut gall wasp (*Dryocosmus kuriphilus*) was discovered in sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) trees in Framingham Wood, near Swanley in Kent in June. A second outbreak was then found in nine street trees in St Albans in Hertfordshire. The wasp is a tree pest because its larvae (immature life stage) cause abnormal growths, called galls, to form on sweet chestnut leaves, twigs and petioles (the stalks that attach the leaf blades to the stems). These green or rose-coloured galls weaken the tree and make it more susceptible to other pests and diseases. It can also reduce nut production, and there is some evidence that it can affect timber production.

We are anxious to find out whether there are outbreaks elsewhere, and hope you can help by checking any sweet chestnut trees in your neighbourhood and reporting any sightings of galls to the Forestry Commission. We are only interested in sightings of galls on sweet

chestnut in this instance. Negative reports are also extremely useful, so if you do look at local sweet chestnut trees, do send the Forestry Commission an email (see email below) to report that that you have looked, but not found any problems. To report sightings email tree_health_england@forestry.gsi.gov.uk or call 0300 067 4000 (08.30 - 17.00 Monday to Friday)

When reporting sightings, please be sure to:

- provide a precise location of the tree/s. An Ordnance Survey 10-digit grid reference is ideal; otherwise provide a full address, including the full postcode; and/or precise instructions for finding the tree/s, e.g. '35 metres north-west of the park entrance in XXX Street';
- provide a telephone number where we can reach you during the daytime to clarify any points;
- and provide a clear, well lit photo if you can.

Note that you are unlikely to see the wasps which are less than 3mm long. A useful PDF of a symptoms guide is available and there are other electronic versions on the [Forestry Commission website](#).

Cranborne Chase Woodfair at Breamore House near Fordingbridge, Hants on 3 & 4 October

This celebrates traditional and contemporary rural life with woodcrafts, woodland produce and all kinds of entertainment. They are looking for volunteers to act as stewards! 20% discount for pre-event tickets. Contact 01749 814088 or email woodfair@bradsons.co.uk

The Tree Council's Jubilee 'Diamond' Trees

Unfortunately the book and the plaques to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee are still to materialise.

Training

Basic Tree Survey – Friday 6 November, 10am-1pm, Monkton Park, Chippenham

Join the Rights of Way & Countryside Team's Tree and Woodland Officers as they introduce the skills needed to carry out a basic tree inspection to determine the condition of a tree and to help recognise hazardous trees. The morning session will also cover tree safety legislation, statute and common law, occupier's liability and identification of structural defects. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided. Free but booking essential.

Winter Tree Identification – Friday 13 November, 10am-12.30pm, Southwick Country Park

Join the Rights of Way & Countryside Team to look at trees in Southwick Country Park near Trowbridge. You will learn how to identify trees in winter and it will include native species and some common non-native species. Tree Wardens/Conservation volunteers free. Other adults £3. Booking is essential.

South West Regional Forum – Saturday 14 November, Plymouth

This Forum will look at the role Tree Wardens can play in planning new landscapes. The practical implications of changes to the treescape in your area will be explored and the best ways of putting new trees where they are wanted and needed. There will be a visit to Central Park in Plymouth where there is a mix of old and new landscapes. Cost £15

Remember

Seed Gathering Season 23 September – 23 October

National Tree Week 28 November - 6 December 2015