



# Wiltshire Tree Warden News

January 2016

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

Issue No.16

*Message from Vicky*

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I have recently been training as a Forest School Programme leader. (**Forest School** is a long-term approach to education for children, young people, families and adults that maximises the benefits of learning in the outdoors. It offers children and young people the opportunity to engage with the rich natural diversity of the woodland environment to help build confidence, sensitivity, resilience and curiosity.) The assessment is next month so hopefully I will have more time to focus on the training programme and project updates then.

The following training events are planned for this year but locations and dates still need to be finalised. As well as a basic tree survey, summer tree identification, a practical woodland management day and bats, Steve Russell of Woodland and Countryside Management is organising an ancient tree and archaeology day at Savernake. The date is still to be confirmed but it is likely to be on Saturday 16 July entitled *The History of Savernake – A look at the Archaeology and Ancient Trees of this Ancient Forest* with Ted Green of the Woodland Trust and Graham Bathe, an Environmental Consultant. This meeting will be open to other organisations, so early booking is recommended.

*News from Tree Wardens*

## **Churchyard Renovation**

Norman Hodnett, Sutton Benger

On 6 November I attended the Tree Survey course in Monkton Park, Chippenham - much learned on a very useful morning. Little did I realise how soon that knowledge might be put to use!

Within a matter of weeks I was approached by the chairman of the Parochial Church Council of All Saints Church in Sutton Benger, where I live. The Committee was concerned with a number of issues regarding the fabric of the church building and the state of the churchyard. Would I look at the trees in the churchyard? While explaining that I was not a tree surgeon and that they would need such professional advice to confirm any judgments that I might reach, I reminded them that the churchyard lay within the conservation area and that planning consent would be required for work on any trees above the specified size. The proposal was to form a Maintenance Group of volunteers who would do the work identified which was within their competence while leaving those tasks requiring planning consent and expertise to professional tree surgeons.

A first reconnaissance revealed that, apart from trees requiring significant work, there was a secondary problem of self-seeded saplings which had taken root in a variety of spots. The churchyard stands on a piece of high ground (above the flood plain) with a ten foot high dry stone retaining wall holding the earth in place on the two sides directly abutting the roads. Collapse of that wall would have expensive consequences. In places, overgrown shrubs and self-sown saplings were growing very close to or even into the wall.

Unsurprisingly, there are a number of mature yews most of which have never had any work done on them. Boughs overshadow the church and swoop low over old gravestones. There are two hedgehog hollies, a slightly battered but wonderful old lady of a box, and a very old hawthorn (not yet fully identified). The survey identified 39 tasks to be done of which 17 potentially required planning consent and the skills of a qualified tree-surgeon.

The Maintenance Group had its first session in early December focusing in particular on the smaller self-seeded saplings. Three tree surgeons submitted estimates and the one chosen by the PCC has been instructed to submit the application for planning consent for the work to be done this spring before the nesting season.

The Maintenance Group meets again in early February and will focus in part on the removal of large clumps of thinly sprouting lilac roots rather too close to the wall. For my part I am glad to report that the three tree surgeons, whose judgments were not always exactly identical, largely agreed with my survey recommendations. Thank you, Rich, Jim and Vicky, for that session in Monkton Park two and half months ago.



*Boughs overshadow the Church and swoop low over old gravestones*

**Editor's note:** If there are proposals for work on trees in your local churchyard, the Parochial Church Council may need to apply for a 'Faculty' which can take longer to obtain than planning permission! The faculty jurisdiction is the Church of England's regulation of works to church buildings, their contents and churchyards. More about Faculty rules [here](#).

### **Hedge laying and Community Orchard**

Debbie Carter, Tisbury



A group of volunteers, led by the chairman of the allotment society has relaid a long hedge between the allotments and the new development of 90 houses. This was first done about 5 years ago and is now a much thicker hedge as a result. See photos attached

A community orchard was planted in Tisbury in February 2013 of some 60 different types of fruit trees including 8 Heritage Wiltshire apple trees. Unfortunately we are going to have to relocate these eight plus a plum and a walnut tree and 5 cob nut bushes. This is because it is the only suitable area for the new state-of-the-art skate park which has been approved.

However, it is not all bad news as St John's Church of England Primary school has offered to have them so we are planning a hole-digging tree re-locating session in February. In fact they will be safer there from vandalism. (We had 10 trees damaged 2 years ago by children.) The present orchard is very exposed to winds. Children from the school will help with the replanting on Friday 12th February.

## Ancient Tree Project

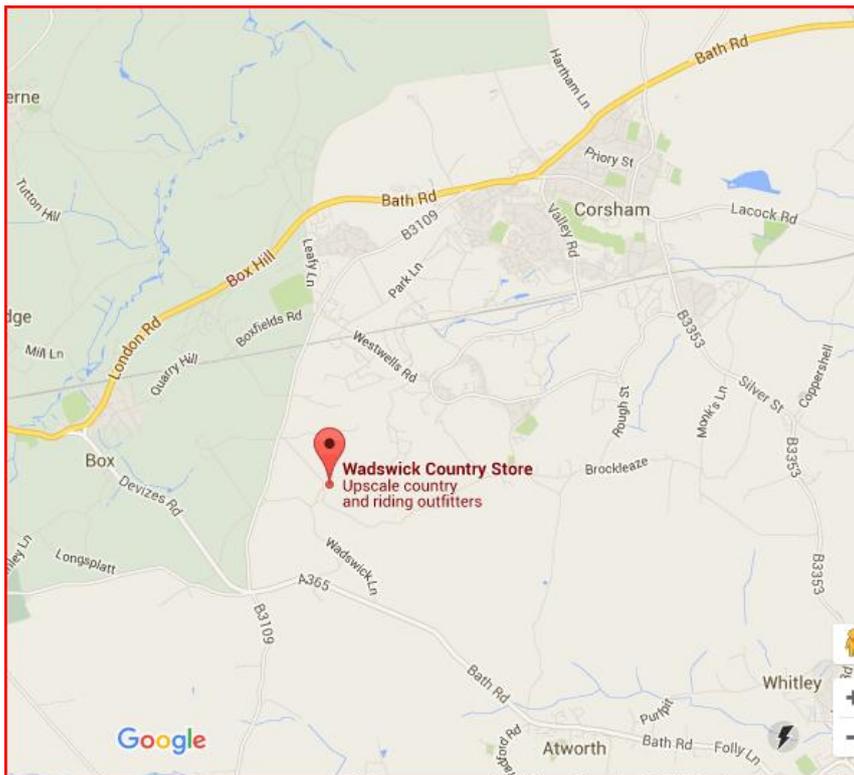
George & Jenny Lisle, The Donheads

This survey looking for ancient trees in the area covering Donhead St Mary and Donhead St Andrew is continuing and a large number of new trees have now been added to the Woodland Trust interactive map. It is hoped that this project will be completed soon so that some conclusions can be reached. If you would like to help or find out more please contact [jrhauk@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:jrhauk@globalnet.co.uk) or tel. 01747 828081.

## Matters of Interest to Tree Wardens

### Chalara Update

There has been a confirmed case of Chalara in mature ash near the Wadswick Country Store outside Corsham.



The latest guidance on Chalara from the Forestry Commission is that it is still their priority to destroy recently planted trees but mature trees with the disease do not need to be felled. It is worth keeping as much of the current population of ash trees as possible to maintain a diverse genetic resource and identify and retain those trees (and any of their progeny) showing the highest levels of disease tolerance. Felling diseased trees will not limit the spread of this wind-dispersed disease to other parts. It is likely that the remaining ash trees have already been exposed to the disease anyway as the spores are wind-borne. Diseased trees that are dying could shed limbs, or lean and collapse. Where this is likely to pose a safety hazard (adjacent to roads, footpaths or in heavily used areas) such trees should be felled.

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

Although there has been no publicity, all 60 trees can now be seen on the [Tree Council](http://www.treecouncil.org) website. Unfortunately, there is still no news on the book or plaques to commemorate the trees as originally planned.

### Woodland Trust Community Tree Packs

Thanks to funding from Sainsbury's, IKEA FAMILY, players of People's Postcode Lottery and Yorkshire Tea, there are 4,750 tree packs available for autumn. Applications by community groups and schools for November delivery close on 7 September 2016.

### MULCHING

With the tree planting season upon us it is important to remember why we need to give our trees the best start by mulching.

#### Why is mulch necessary?

There are lots of reasons why a layer of mulch around a tree is useful. It controls weeds - a good layer of mulch will keep weed levels down, reducing competition for water and nutrients; it retains soil moisture - a layer of mulch helps to keep the soil moist, reducing the need for additional watering later in the year; it protects the soil around the tree from the elements - rainfall can wash away soil from around a tree, whilst the sun can bake the ground dry; it improves the soil - as the mulch decomposes it provides extra nutrients and organic matter to the

soil; it maintains an even temperature – warms the soil in spring and protects the soil from heating up in the sun in summer . It keeps away the grass cutting machines.

### **So what is mulch?**

Mulch is a substance that covers the surface of the soil and reduces the growth of grass and other plants. There are many materials used as mulch and they can be split into two main types: biodegradable and non-biodegradable. Biodegradable mulches break down, releasing their nutrients into the soil. This has an advantage in that it improves soil conditions around the tree, but means that they need to be replaced as they rot down. For trees, biodegradable mulch usually means wood or bark chips. Non-biodegradable mulches don't break down and are usually man-made. They can be a sheet of plastic, old carpet, or a proprietary mulch mat, which is laid at the base of the tree. Their advantage is that they usually don't need to be replaced or restocked. However their disadvantage is that they provide no additional nutrient to the soil.

### **How much mulch should be applied?**

To be effective against weeds and to retain soil moisture, biodegradable mulches should be between 5cm and 8cm thick and should be at least a metre circumference around the tree. Pull up any existing weeds before applying the mulch layer. Note – it is important not to apply mulch directly around the trunk of the tree as this can encourage rot.

### **What is good mulch?**

Ideally mulch should be partially composted, to prevent nitrogen leaching from the soil as the mulch decomposes. Therefore to avoid this problem try to use bark and tree chippings that are at least 6 months old.

### **Can there be problems with mulch?**

Yes too much mulch - a layer greater than 8cm - can generate heat as it decomposes, which can damage the tree. If a deep layer of mulch is too close to the base of a tree, then the increased moisture levels can also cause the base of the tree to rot. Therefore create a lower layer of mulch (less than 2 cm) immediately around the base of the tree.



### *Remember*

**Tree Care Campaign** - Saturday 21st March to Monday 21st September 2016

**Walk in the Woods** - Friday 1st May to Sunday 31st May 2016 – Would anyone be interested in running a guided walk in their parish? If so please get in touch with [Vicky](#).