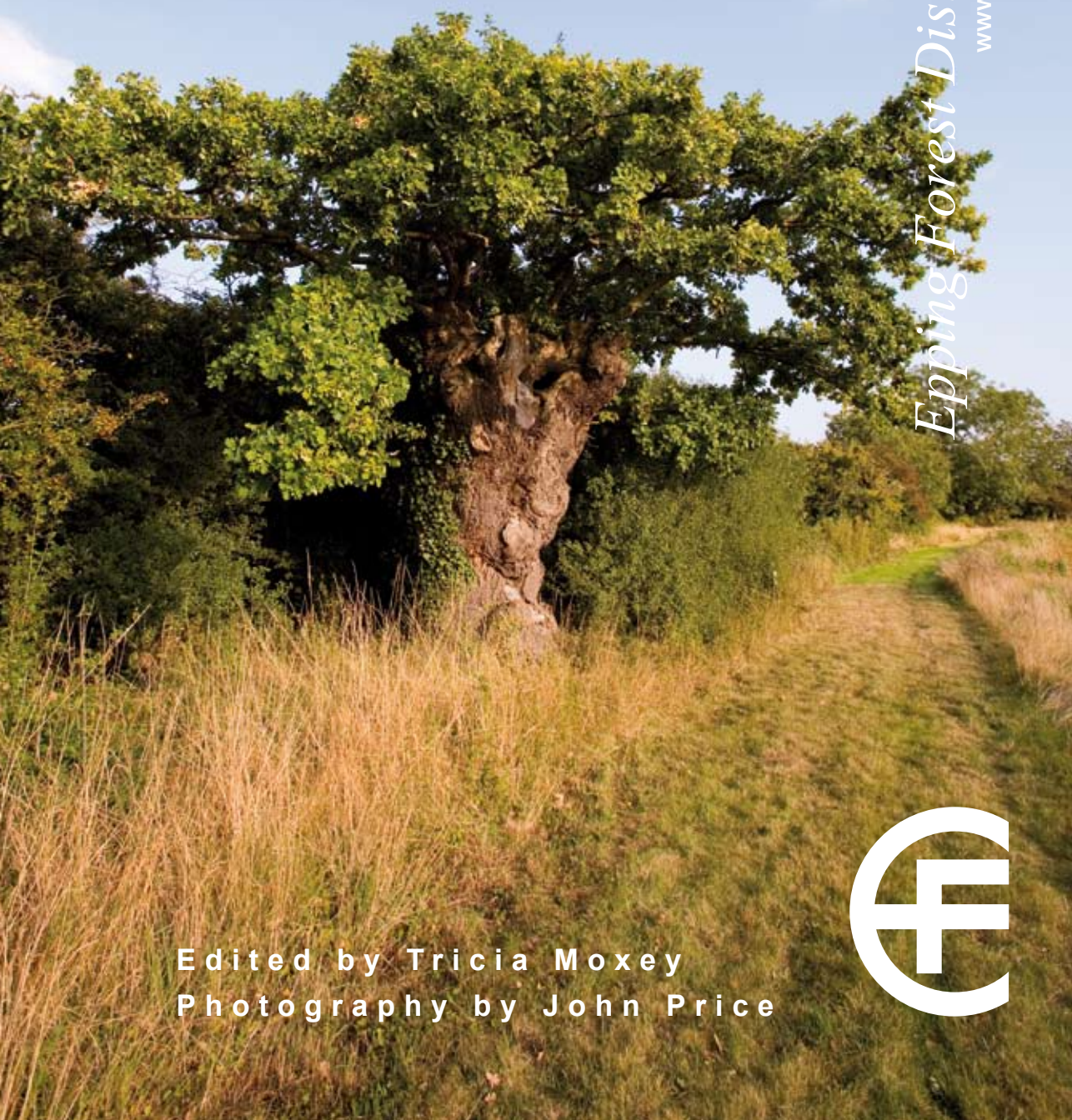


# FAVOURITE TREES

*Epping Forest District Council*  
[www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk)



Edited by Tricia Moxey  
Photography by John Price



## Favourite Trees

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*In memory of Paul Want whose love of trees and database expertise helped to make this project a success.*

Contributors: Paul Hewitt, Tricia Moxey and Chris Neilan  
Photography: John Price  
Editor: Tricia Moxey

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# Favourite Trees



A celebration of the favourite trees of Epping Forest district

**Edited by Tricia Moxey**  
**Photography by John Price**



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## Foreword

In Epping Forest district we are proud of our trees. This may be unsurprising, given that we are named after one of the finest natural assets in Europe.

However, the survival of Epping Forest into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is little short of a miracle. We, who now enjoy it, are indebted to an unlikely alliance of local working men who fought to protect their rights to lop (take wood from) the Forest, several enlightened landowners who sided with them and the Corporation of London, who agreed to fund the acquisition and management of the Forest. Thomas Willingale of Loughton, still celebrated as the chief of the loppers, is now commemorated by the school that proudly bears his name and by a blue plaque.

The District Council is committed to the protection of trees throughout the district by management and the use of planning and other powers. But we understand that this, by itself, is not enough. We recognise the need to work in partnership with local people, to hear what they say and act on it to protect as best we can the richness of our environment and pass it on to future generations.

The Favourite Trees project is an important new contribution to that effort, expressing as it does the importance of trees to the life of the community. We are indebted to both the Heritage Lottery Fund and GreenArc for their support. I commend this book to you and invite you to explore our website [www.favouritetrees.com](http://www.favouritetrees.com) to see the results of the competition and our new veteran tree survey. Most importantly, I invite you to enjoy the trees in the best way possible, by visiting them in person.

Councillor Caroline Pond  
Chairman, Epping Forest District Council, 2007-2008

Many acorns grow on this ancient tree, providing a chance for new growth for future generations.



## Introduction

The 50 Favourite Trees project was launched by Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) in May 2006, when local people were asked to nominate their favourite tree. The winners were chosen by an independent panel including Tony Kirkham and Jon Hammerton of Kew Botanic Gardens, joint presenters of the BBC series *'The Trees That Made Britain'*. Photographic portraits of the 50 winning trees were exhibited at the Epping Forest District Museum from November 2007 to January 2008 and these form the major part of this book.

All the entries can be found at the dedicated website [www.favouritetrees.com](http://www.favouritetrees.com) which also includes information about other trees in the district. Children from local schools were invited to participate in the project, using art and design to express how trees mattered to them. The website contains a record of this and also work involving local nature conservation volunteers, art groups and other organisations.

This project is the latest in a series aimed at celebrating the importance of trees within the Epping Forest district. We are grateful to the Local Heritage Initiative for the main funding of the project and to GreenArc, who have provided this opportunity to publicise the winning entries more widely.



The judges hard at work selecting the winning entries. Chris Neilan (Landscape Officer, EFDC; advisor) back to camera bottom left. Then clockwise: David Jackman (Editor Epping Forest Guardian), Tracy Clarke (Tim Moya Associates), Sue Doody and Tim Green (BBC Wales), Mark Iley (Essex Biodiversity Partnership), Jon Hammerton and Tony Kirkham (Kew Botanic Gardens), Paul Hewitt (Countryside Manager EFDC; advisor) and Jon Stokes (Tree Council).

Local schools were invited to participate in a tree project using art and design as the theme.

The primary way of protecting trees is to use legal powers to impose Tree Preservation Orders. However, the Favourite Trees project sprang from the belief that trees may also be protected through the community's understanding and celebration of their importance.



In selecting the winners, the judges were asked to consider chiefly the explanation or story given by those who had nominated their tree. Some were suggested as reminders of historic events or individuals, others for the character they give to a specific location or for their rarity within the district. Many were nominated because of their great age. In most cases several reasons were given. In this book the winners are grouped according to what seemed the chief reason given for each.

Twenty-three of the parished areas in the district are represented amongst the winning entries. No fewer than 34 of the 50 are oaks. This must reflect the attachment felt by most people towards what can be considered our national tree. The other winners are predominantly native trees but four specimens of the introduced horse chestnut were winners, perhaps reflecting their special beauty in spring or the fun of conkers in the autumn.

'Tree shadow', photograph by a pupil at Thomas Willingale School.



## Speaking for the Trees

The tree which received the most nominations in the 50 Favourite Trees project was the Willingale Oak, a tree which stands in the grounds of Thomas Willingale School in Loughton. This school is named after a local folk hero, Thomas Willingale, a commoner who exercised his lopping rights in Epping Forest in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. It is possible that had it not been for Thomas Willingale, Epping Forest might not be here today.

He resisted the plans of the Reverend John Whitaker Maitland, Lord of the Manor of Loughton, who in 1865 had enclosed some 1,300 acres of Epping Forest within his manor to be used for building. Thomas was jailed for attempting to exercise the rights he claimed to lop pollards in John Maitland's manor. However, he received the support of other local gentlemen, in particular Edward North Buxton, a leading figure in the recently-formed Commons Preservation Society, who became involved in the struggle to prevent the destruction of the Forest. The full story may be found in *'Epping Forest: Figures in a Landscape'* by Sir William Addison.

At that time, forests were widely seen as suitable places for development but Thomas' case delayed the felling of trees and allowed public sentiment to change in favour of keeping them as recreational areas. This paved the way for the Corporation of London to agree to buy out the landowners in the 1870s. The Epping Forest Act, which still protects the Forest, was passed in 1878.

Queen Victoria visited it as part of a great public celebration in 1882, where she declared: "It gives me the greatest satisfaction to dedicate this beautiful Forest to the use and enjoyment of my people for all time." Thomas Willingale has been commemorated in various ways but not least in the school that bears his name. An oak in its grounds is now one of the Favourite Trees of the district.

### A Mature Tree's Year

*Spring, leaves revive,  
A brand new year, a chance to thrive.*

*Summer, soaks up the sun,  
A child climbs, so much fun.*

*Autumn, loses its leaves,  
All bare and creepy, a cold breeze.*

*Winter, Sleeping?  
Dead,  
A giant branch, Hanging by a thread.*

By Adam Perry  
year 6,  
Thomas Willingale School.

Recently the headteacher and children of the school found that they needed to display some of Thomas Willingale's firmness of purpose, when faced with a threat to their own oak. The insurers of an adjacent property claimed that the tree was causing subsidence and required it to be felled. By good fortune, this one tree was protected by a Tree Preservation Order, so the Council became involved. The school explained to the Councillors how important the tree was to their children, as the only large tree in the grounds, and that the area around the tree was set aside for nature conservation. As a result the Council refused to allow the felling, saying that the tree was too valuable and that there were other ways to solve the problem, not involving the loss of the tree.

An appeal was made against the Council's decision, which might have led to the decision being overturned or a compensation claim against both the school and the Council. However, the school invited the representatives of the insurance company to come to meet the pupils so that they might hear directly the importance of the tree to them and why it should be kept. Shortly afterwards the appeal was dropped. No reason was given, however, it seems clear that it was the school's determination to safeguard their tree that was the critical factor.

For the school, although they have other trees, it is the presence of the oak that makes the difference. As a tree it is perhaps not any more or less outstanding than hundreds of other oaks in the area. It is the importance of the oak in the life of the school that makes it special and indeed the association with Thomas Willingale and his fight for Epping Forest.

With the effects of climate change unknown and those of increased urbanisation uncertain, we do not yet know how serious the threat will be to the environment in the future. However, like Thomas Willingale, we need to know what is really important to us and be willing to protect it or we may well lose it. The Favourite Trees project is intended to be a small contribution to speaking for the environment and for our trees.

We did not ask the judges to nominate an overall winner but as the Willingale Oak received the most votes it appears first.

## Thomas Willingale Oak

*Quercus robur*

This notable oak stands in the 'Wild Area' of Thomas Willingale School, Loughton. It is a private tree but clearly visible from Willingale Road. The grid reference is TQ 44276 96654.

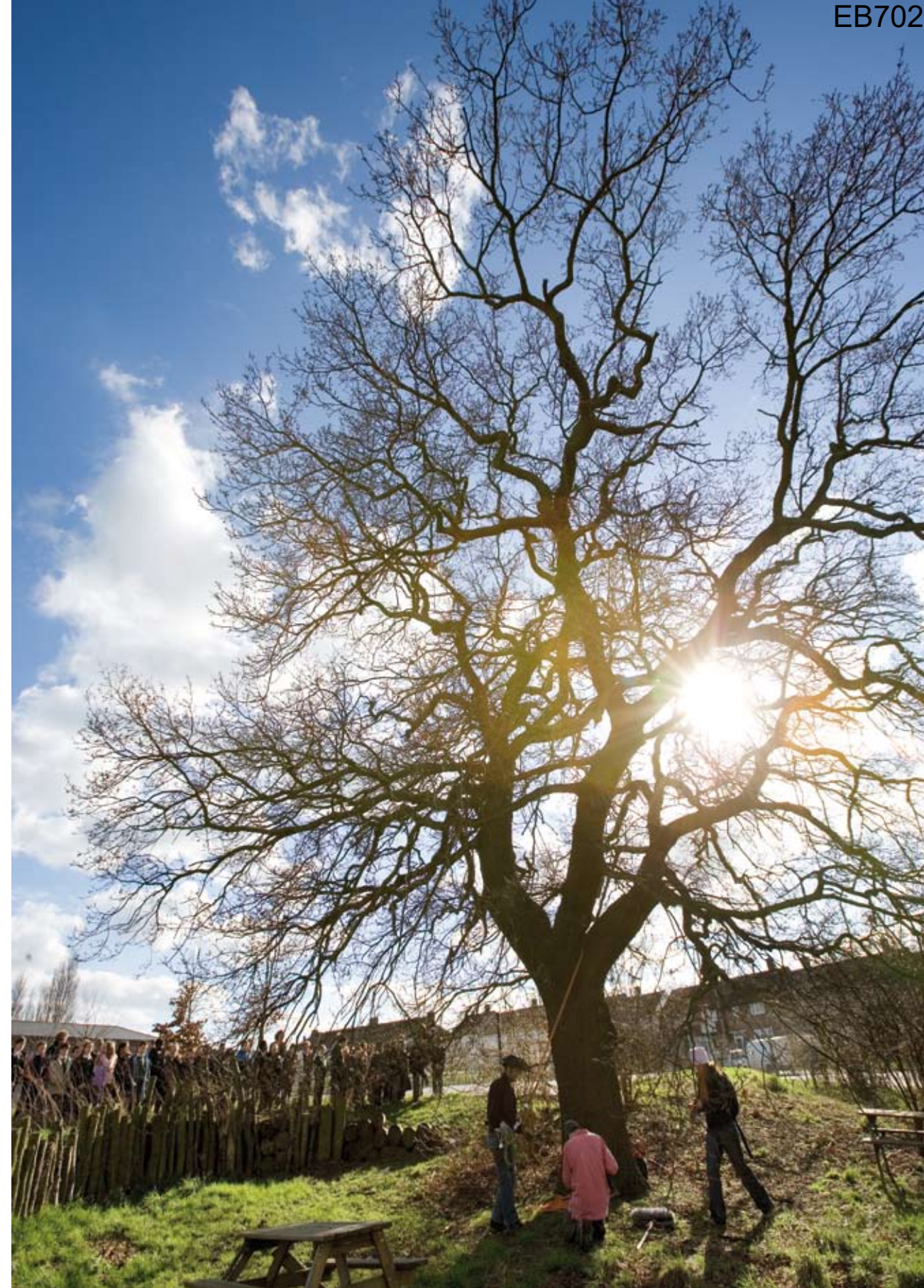
The Thomas Willingale Oak was nominated over 500 times by all the children in the school. Here is a selection of their reasons for the nomination: "We are nominating the oak tree because it has been there for over 200 years." "There is a fox's den right next to it and it is home to loads of birds and millions of insects." "I like the oak tree because of the colour of its leaves." "The oak tree is big and green." "We like our oak tree because of its bendy and twisted shape, because it is big and wobbly and twisty and it has hard and knobbly branches." "We like the oak tree because it is a lovely shape and size and is a nice tree." "We like the oak tree because it is rough and has old bark." "I am nominating our oak tree because it is the biggest tree and the oldest tree and it produces millions of seeds every year." "Because the tree makes me happy."

The Thomas Willingale Oak was filmed by the BBC film crew and the pupils watched as Jon Hammerton from Kew Gardens climbed up into its branches to check the condition of the tree.

Pupils watch as the BBC film crew take action shots for the BBC Two series '*The Trees That Made Britain.*' One episode of this series featured the 50 Favourite Trees project.



Jon Hammerton uses a safety harness to climb the Thomas Willingale Oak.





## The Epping Forest District Veteran Tree Project



If you were to stand at the southern edge of Epping Forest district, in the ancient parish of Stapleford Abbots and look to the south from the Hainault Ridge, you would see London spreading away below as far as the eye can see: the suburbs of Redbridge giving way to the

towers of Docklands and the City, with a glimpse of the Dome and the London Eye and on the clearest of days a suggestion of the hills of Hampshire and Surrey beyond.

But turn around and your gaze would still meet the intimate and largely intact landscape of ancient Essex, with its farmland of irregular fields delineated by hedgerows, parkland dotted with veteran pollards, meandering streams marked by alder and willow and coppiced woodland. Even where the towns and villages of the district spread into the countryside during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, until arrested by the Green Belt legislation, they incorporated elements of the countryside and particularly the ancient trees, into open spaces and gardens, where many may still be found.



Of course most of the trees in the town and the countryside are not veteran but those that are, are important for their visual qualities, wildlife value and a living link with the past. Moreover they mark the skeleton of the ancient countryside as they are found in the oldest hedgerows and mark the boundaries of the oldest woodlands.

If GreenArc's plan is to re-invigorate the countryside, to

This veteran oak pollard stands in the corner of a garden in Fyfield, which was once a field.

Veteran trees are often found in old hedges. These contain many different species of shrubs such as blackthorn, elderberry, hawthorn, hazel and spindle. The brilliant coloured spindle fruits appear in late autumn.

make it more accessible and enrich it for people and wildlife, whilst continuing its use as productive farmland, then the preservation of its network of veteran trees has to be a key priority. Finding and recording all those trees in the open countryside is the first step to being able to do that, which is what the Epping Forest District Veteran Tree project, funded by the Department for Communities



Paul Hewitt and Melinda Barham measuring this immense veteran pollarded hornbeam. It stands on the Saxon boundary bank between the parishes of Loughton and Theydon Bois, near Hatgate Plain to the north of Birch Wood.



and Local Government (DCLG) via GreenArc, has set out to do. Because it is a complete record of the current network of veteran trees in open countryside within the parishes surveyed, it is a particularly important contribution to the national database of the Ancient Tree Hunt. This is being co-ordinated by The Woodland Trust, with whom the data will be shared. To see their results so far go to: [www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk](http://www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk)

Of course veteran trees have been recorded before. What makes this project special is that the results are comprehensive, that they are published to a dedicated website, include a photographic record of the tree, with as many images as are required for each entry and that their locations are shown against a plan and satellite image.

A wider aim has been to increase general awareness of the importance of veteran trees. The project has also included a programme of public events and school visits have taken place with art and photography projects involving nearly 300 pupils in four primary schools. Some audio-visual material showing these



Standing in the Deer Sanctuary at Theydon Bois, this ancient hollow oak trunk provides a special habitat for rare beetles which feed on the rotting wood. Ideally, the gap between such trees should be less than 200 metres as most of these beetles do not fly far.

Woodpeckers drill nest holes like this in trunks. Other birds may use these after the woodpeckers move out, occasionally a swarm of honey bees moves in instead.

Ian Cox (in white shirt) a former Forest Operations Manager with the Corporation of London, Epping Forest, briefing local Tree Wardens before they start out on a tree survey.

projects will be available on the website. Several tree hunting open days involving Tree Wardens have been organised for interested members of the public. One such event was held on Harold's Park Farm on the Nazeing and Waltham Abbey border, where 80 oak pollards were recorded.



The grant, awarded in November 2007, allowed EFDC to take on a full-time surveyor, Abigail Oldham, to record veteran trees for three months between January and March 2008. Six parishes (out of a total of 24) were chosen, from Stapleford Abbots in the south to Roydon in the north as well as Lambourne, Theydon Bois, North Weald and Epping Upland. This was achieved with the help of volunteer Tree Wardens and two part-time surveyors. By the end of March 1,044 veteran trees had been recorded in these parishes with another 282 regarded as notable. For the district as a whole the number was over 2,000. This compares



Emerging from the December fog, this line of hedgerow oaks marks a Tudor field boundary on Latton Priory Farm north of Epping.

with just over 7,000 on the national database at the same time. The intention is to complete the survey of the remaining 18 parishes but in a timescale dependent on the availability of external funding. The work built upon existing surveys and in particular credit should be given to the Roydon Tree Wardens and their co-ordinator Alan Burgess for their earlier work there; and to Paul Hewitt, Countryside Manager for the District Council, for whom collecting records of veteran trees in his own time has become a passion well beyond the demands of duty.



Alan Burgess at the exhibition of his paintings of the 50 Great British Trees at the Epping Forest District Museum in 2006.

The ancient landscape being revealed has more veteran trees than even we expected. For example, Lambourne parish alone has 313 veteran trees (not including Hainault Forest) with 265 of them being worked pollards.



Paul Hewitt, Countryside Manager, Michael Collins, Forest Keeper and Abigail Oldham, Veteran Tree Surveyor, discuss the trees found in the Deer Sanctuary.

The largest oak tree found so far is in the Deer Sanctuary at Theydon Bois. This measures 6.6 metres in girth, has a height of 20 metres and is estimated to be over 450 years old. Access



This young family enjoys a game of hide and seek at High Beach in Epping Forest. This public open space has been enjoyed for more than 130 years and GreenArc aims to provide more open spaces around London.

The inside of a hollow hornbeam is a sheltered habitat for owls, bats, foxes, wood mice and lots of beetles.

is restricted but it can be seen from the public footpath that runs adjacent to the sanctuary. Alternatively you can go on a virtual tour of this tree by clicking the video link on the website [www.favouritetrees.com](http://www.favouritetrees.com).



The vision of GreenArc partnership is 'Bringing the BIG OUTDOORS closer to everyone by creating, linking and managing extensive and valued landscapes for people and wildlife around London'.

To achieve this GreenArc is working in partnership with Epping Forest District Council and other Local Authorities to evaluate the landscape around Greater London.

The Veteran Tree project will assist in achieving this vision by highlighting the importance of independent veteran trees. In addition, by mapping the exact location of these trees and referring to old maps and other documents, it may be possible to reconnect the fragmented ancient woodland habitats with appropriate landscape management.

The work of GreenArc has been made possible with the support of DCLG and the Growth Area Fund.

Winter storm clouds accentuate this landscape looking east from Latton Priory Farm. Managing and maintaining such landscapes is part of the vision of the GreenArc partnership.



## The Countryside of Epping Forest District



When Peter Kalm visited Woodford in 1748 he wrote this about the local woods: “The trees were not, however, allowed to grow to their proper height, but were cut down to 9-12 feet from the ground for firewood. This cutting had caused numerous branches to shoot out on all sides so that the stem ended in a round crown.” What he was describing were pollards - trees regularly harvested for fuel. In fact there were hundreds of thousands of pollarded beech, hornbeam and oak trees within these woods, providing not just vital fuel wood but timber for ship building, repairs to bridges, windmills and other buildings. Other woods were managed as coppice, where the trees were cut to ground level and allowed to regrow. Animals such as deer or cattle were excluded from such woods by hedges and ditches.

This tranquil scene of a local woodland painted by James Paul Andre in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century indicates that trees were still plentiful, providing timber for construction, shade and

Local woodland scene by James Paul Andre. This painting is in the collection at the Epping Forest District Museum.

*Beechwood fires  
burn bright and  
clear,  
Hornbeam blazes  
too,  
If the logs are kept  
a year,  
To season through  
and through.*

*Oak logs will warm  
you well,  
If they're old and  
dry,  
Larch logs of  
pinewood smell,  
But the sparks will  
fly.*

*But ash logs, all  
smooth and grey,  
Burn them green  
or old,  
Buy up all that  
come your way,  
They're worth their  
weight in gold.*

Anon

fodder for livestock as well as fuel for fires. Both Epping Forest and Hainault Forest were still working woodlands as they had been for centuries. But changes were on the horizon.

With the construction of rail lines into Essex in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, these Forests were seen as prime targets for development and in 1851 some 3,000 acres of Hainault Forest were clear felled in the space of six weeks. This caused considerable alarm and when illegal enclosures were made in Epping Forest, there was considerable opposition and a successful legal battle to protect it.

Once Epping Forest had been secured for public use with the passing of the Epping Forest Act in 1878, the right to lop the pollards ceased. Over the next 80 years thousands of veteran pollarded trees were removed from the dense woodlands as they were considered to be unsightly. This felling was halted in the late 1960s and over 50,000 veteran pollards remain in Epping Forest. Their immense bulk is valued and appreciated as a very specific wildlife habitat. Sadly, a number of these split apart or are blown over by high winds each year. There is some limited re-cutting or crown reduction of selected trees in an attempt to prolong their lives.

What has been revealed by our Veteran Tree Hunt is the huge number of old pollarded trees surviving in the hedgerows and copses of the district as a whole. For centuries, these hedgerow trees have provided shade and browse for animals and of course timber and fuel. Ash, elm and oak and to a lesser extent beech and hornbeam were the species concerned and their cut poles were used in many different ways. Although there was a considerable demand for timber trees in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, for whatever reason a great many of these trees were retained in the hedges. Dutch Elm disease struck in the 1960s and 70s and as the elms died a considerable number of beautiful trees was lost and the landscape was irrevocably changed.

With the agricultural change from dairy units to a greater emphasis on arable farming during the 1960s and 70s, many hedges were removed to enlarge fields but a significant number of individual trees survives.

The Veteran Tree Hunt has identified many mature trees but has also revealed that very few young trees are present within surviving hedges.

## Trees in the Landscape

Thirteen winning nominations were selected for their contribution within local landscapes, of these ten are oaks, overwhelmingly the most popular species. Here there may be a link with the perceived national character that associates the oak with British traits such as strength, endurance and fortitude. The remaining trees include a cedar, a hornbeam and a London plane.

Three nominations were for trees located within ancient woods. Such places were woodlands before 1600 and although the specific trees may not be more than three to four centuries old, they are the descendants of trees which were growing well before the Norman Conquest. They are surrounded by other old trees and they provide a stable continuity of special habitats for fungi, lichens, mosses and wood-eating beetles that have developed over many thousands of years. These habitats are impossible to replicate within a short timeframe and although planting trees will help to fill the gap, they cannot even begin to mimic the vast assemblage of nooks, crannies, rot holes and other habitats found in veteran trees in ancient woodland.

There were several hedgerow oaks included among the winners, two of which have been incorporated into the urban scene as houses have spread out over former agricultural land. Often protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), such trees remind us of a lost landscape of fields and hedges. Gardens can be surprisingly good habitats for wildlife as many woodland edge or hedgerow species adapt to the conditions found among borders and shrubberies.

Cedars and London planes have been a well-established part of the landscape of England since the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. As they grow to become impressive large and well-formed trees, they require space and are best appreciated in an open setting.

The single hornbeam in this group was selected as a reminder of the value of such trees as a source of fuel in former centuries.

The last winning nomination in this group was for a small

plantation. It is important to remember that the regeneration or development of woodlands, hedges and copses is vital if the countryside is to remain green.

### List of nominators of landscape trees:

**Grimston's Oak** in Epping Forest nominated by Melinda Barham and Susan Sparkes.

**The Squires Oak** in Hainault Forest nominated by Peter Comber.

**Gernon Bushes Hornbeam** in Coopersale nominated by Brian McGhie.

**Moor Hall Farm Oak** in Matching nominated by Paul Hewitt.

**Clatterford End Oak** in Fyfield nominated by Fyfield Parish Council.

**Great Gregories Oaks** in Theydon Bois nominated by Helen Slater.

**Blackacre Oaks** in Theydon Bois nominated by Theydon Bois Parish Council.

**Theydon Green Oak** in Theydon Bois nominated by Mr and Mrs V. F. Dowsett, Graham Law and Peter Newton.

**Palace Gardens Oak** in Buckhurst Hill nominated by John and Patricia Wiltshire.

**Lynceley Grange Cedar of Lebanon** in Epping nominated by Ron Newberry and Mrs Tarling.

**St John's Green London Plane** in Epping nominated by Robin Hellier and Moira Clark.

**Broomstick Hall Road Horse Chestnut** in Waltham Abbey nominated by Markham Bailey.

**Abbess Hall Farm Plantation** in Abbess Roding nominated by Michael Brill.

## Grimston's Oak

*Quercus robur*



Grimston's Oak is a significant tree in Epping Forest and stands in a clearing at the junction of several rides between Fairmead Bottom and Connaught Water. It is a fine example of the many veteran oaks within this part of the Forest. Unusually, this tree has three alternative names: The Cuckoo Oak, Bedford's Oak and Grimston's Oak.

The most evocative name, The Cuckoo Oak, refers to this summer migrant bird, which often calls in this part of the Forest. A small stream and some nearby old gravel workings are called the Cuckoo Brook and the Cuckoo Pits respectively. Deputy J. T. Bedford persuaded the Corporation of London to become involved in the battle to save Epping Forest from destruction in the 1870s. This fine oak tree was named after him in recognition of his rôle in achieving this. The Hon. Robert Grimston was a distinguished 19<sup>th</sup> Century cricketer. He died in 1884 and this tree seems to have been named after him. The grid reference is TQ 40420 95658.



This tree has grown in a clearing as its branches spread out from the trunk. They are liable to be wrenched off in a high wind but a veteran tree like this can survive such damage. Recently, careful trimming of the tips of its remaining branches has been carried out to encourage fresh growth nearer the trunk.

Measuring the girth of an oak gives an indication of its age. In 2007, tree enthusiasts measured it noting its girth of 4.95 metres. It has increased in girth by 109 centimetres in 113 years. Its age is estimated at about 350 years and it shows every sign of growing for many more years. Photograph by Kathy Harnett.

Melinda Barham gave this as her reason for nominating this tree: "After a busy day at work or studying, this is the place I cycle to for a bit of peace and quiet. It is nice to watch the world go by at a sedate pace and it is a reminder of what a great place Epping Forest is whatever the season."

Susan Sparkes nominated her favourite tree as: "A tree with a beautiful, feminine soul."

The roots of a tree like this spread out beneath the canopy and need protection from damage by trampling. Allowing leaf litter to accumulate beneath a tree will help to protect its roots and conserves water too.



## The Squires Oak

*Quercus robur*

This tall veteran oak is situated on the very northeast corner of Hainault Forest at Crabtree Hill and can be reached via Crown Park off Bournebridge Lane, Lambourne. With a girth of 4.8 metres, it is well over 250 years old and was last pollarded at least 150 years ago. The trunk is heavily burred, a feature characteristic of many oaks of this age. It is located at grid reference TQ 48763 94481.

Peter Comber commented that: “This large tree stands like a ‘Sentinel’ overlooking the rest of Hainault Forest. It is probably the oldest oak in Hainault Forest and it has survived because it was pollarded as most mature spire oaks were taken regularly for ship repairs.”

Hainault Forest supplied timber for ship building over many centuries. Ideally, straight trees about 50 feet tall were favoured but curved branches were also put to good use. A record from 1794 states that 470 loads of timber were felled in Hainault Forest for use by the Navy. However, only 442 loads of this were actually used for ship building. The rest were sold. Twenty-eight loads of timber raised just £68.13s.6d. and the lops and tops £139.16s. The bark was worth £312 as it was used in the tanning of leather.



This tree is called The Squires Oak because the Squire or Lord of the Manor owned the trunk of this pollarded tree but the tenants or commoners were allowed to harvest the branches when it was lopped.

Bluebells carpet the ground in spring, flowering before the overhead leafy canopy becomes fully developed.



## Gernon Bushes Hornbeam

*Carpinus betulus*

This veteran tree stands among many other pollarded hornbeams in Gernon Bushes Nature Reserve, Coopersale, Epping. It is close to a permissive footpath near Coopersale Primary School. The 32 hectares (79 acres) of Gernon Bushes Nature Reserve are registered as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because of the ancient hornbeams and boggy pools where the rare marsh fern flourishes. It is managed by the Essex Wildlife Trust and there is open public access including a circular surfaced path. The grid reference is TL 47766 02605.

In nominating this tree Brian McGhie, who is the Voluntary Warden of this Reserve, remarked that this is: "A superb neglected hornbeam pollard with several thick limbs, which are like trees themselves. It has a well-balanced appearance and a 'bole' diameter of 2.74 metres."

This is one of the few sites in the district where a number of hornbeams are cut or re-pollarded each winter and the branches sold for fuel. The income is used to help maintain this valued Reserve. New growth shoots from the bollings and will be allowed to grow for several years before being cut again. Although only two hornbeams were winning entries, many others can be found in other local woods where they can be easily recognised by their gnarled and twisted trunks.



Brian McGhie standing beneath his nominated pollard, which is well over 200 years old. Its branches have grown from the bolling, or cutting point, to an impressive height since they were last cut 50 or more years ago.

Hornbeam leaves turn yellow in autumn before falling to form a thick carpet on the woodland floor. These brown frost rimed leaves are starting to decay, providing food for worms, slugs and woodlice.





## Moor Hall Farm Oak

*Quercus robur*

This huge veteran oak stands beside Matching Road, north of Moor Hall Farm, Harlow Tye, in the parish of Matching. It is on a field boundary not far from the M11 motorway. Trees of this size are uncommon in the Epping Forest district but there are several thousand younger oaks with girths between three and four metres scattered in surviving hedgerows and ancient woodlands. The landscape in the northeastern part of the district has fewer hedges and scattered small copses. Trees as old as this one are a welcome sight. They provide varied habitats for many different creatures such as owls, woodpeckers, bats, wood mice, beetles and spiders. The grid reference is TL 49764 11527.

Paul Hewitt commented: “This is a fantastic landmark tree, which I have driven past for almost 15 years. I had never stopped to examine it until this project. When you get up close you realise just how tall and massive it is with a girth of six metres. Surely it must be one of the largest trees in the district outside of Epping Forest?”

The land around Moor Hall has been farmed continuously for well over a thousand years and the hedges contain several different species including ash, elder, field maple, hazel and spindle as well as oak. Suckering shoots are reminders of where elms once stood.



The strength of this mighty tree is obvious when the sunlight picks out the details of textured bark, branches and leaves. A tree with a girth of over six metres is classified as an ancient tree by The Woodland Trust.

An oak of these dimensions has at least 700,000 leaves and requires thousands of litres of water in high summer to function!



## Clatterford End Oak

*Quercus robur*

This veteran pollarded tree stands on the junction of Clatterford End and Moreton Road in Fyfield Village. In 2006 it had a girth of 5.50 metres, suggesting that it started growing at least 300 years ago. It is located at grid reference TL 56476 06741.

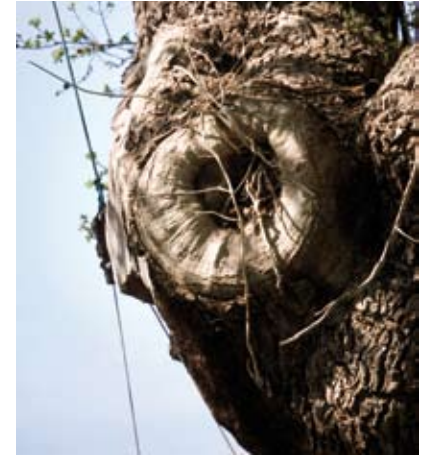
Fyfield Parish Council nominated this tree: “The residents of Fyfield were asked to nominate their favourite tree. The competition to select a tree to represent the village was judged by Members of the Council. The winner is a noble and ancient oak and is a prominent feature of the street scene.”

This tree has been part of Fyfield for many centuries. Significant trees such as this are mentioned in various historical documents. Many of these are oaks as they live such a long time but other species may be noted such as elms and field maples. These trees were selected as they grew on the boundaries between one parish and another. Historically, it was important to know the location of such trees. A ceremony, ‘Beating the Bounds’ helped to instill a practical geography lesson. The villagers walked or perambulated the boundary armed with branches of birch or willow and forcibly introduced the young folk to each tree in turn! This event took place in Rogation Week, the second week before Whit Sunday and it was a chance to pray for a good harvest and have a celebration at the same time.



Bud burst in oaks is controlled by spring temperatures. As the climate becomes warmer records show that leaves on oak trees are appearing much earlier. For more details see [www.naturescalendar.org.uk](http://www.naturescalendar.org.uk)

The picture shows how new tissue formed after careful surgery removed a damaged branch on this old tree.



## Great Gregories Oaks

*Quercus robur*

This group of oaks stands at the top of a steep field to the south of Great Gregories Farm, Theydon Bois. They are visible from Central Line trains on the journey between Theydon Bois and Epping.

Since 1989 40 hectares (100 acres) of this farm have been owned by the City of London as Buffer Land to Epping Forest to protect it from urban development. There is permissive access to this area. The grid reference is TQ 45522 00130.

Helen Slater, who was the first person to post an entry onto the Favourite Trees website in 2006, said: "I love this view, it is very cheering as I go into work every morning and brightens up my day! I always sit in the carriage so I face in that direction. It equally cheers me up when I come home - I know that my working day is over when I see these trees again!"

In the early 1990s a large field of 10 hectares (25 acres) was planted up with a mixture of native trees and shrubs, including ash, dogwood, field maple, hazel, hornbeam and oak to create some new woodland.

Since 2001, pupils from Theydon Bois Primary School have been involved with further planting of many thousands of trees as part of National Tree Week celebrations. National Tree Week is held at the end of November each year. It is an initiative of the Tree Council to encourage a greater awareness of trees throughout the UK by planting new trees in appropriate locations. This site was identified in the Theydon Bois Tree Strategy published in 2003.



The image on the left was the first nomination received. It caught the imagination of the judges by the way in which it was taken. Helen Slater used her mobile phone camera to record this view through the carriage window of the Central Line train.

Aftercare is just as important as planting hedges and children should be encouraged to revisit their plantings to record the development of the hedge year by year. Photograph by Tricia Moxey.



## Blackacre Oaks

*Quercus robur*

These veteran maiden oaks stand in a line on the ridge of a hill within an arable field at the former Blackacre Farm site, Theydon Bois. They stand on the line of a former hedge, which was removed to allow greater access for large farm vehicles onto these fields. Access to the trees is limited as they are on private land but they are best seen by looking east from Loughton Lane, Theydon Bois. The grid reference is TQ 45040 98384.

These trees were nominated by the Members of Theydon Bois Parish Council, who stated that: "These majestic oaks grow on the skyline where their image and majesty remain all powerful despite the loss of the smaller hedged fields and the development of both the village and countryside all around."

In 1428 Theydon Bois was a very small hamlet with fewer than ten houses. Gradually the population increased, reaching 676 by 1831, with most people working on the land. All the farms had many fields enclosed by stockproof hedges. On Blackacre Farm these hedges had ash, elm and oak trees to provide shade for the cattle or sheep, as well as wood products such as fuel and poles for the labourers.

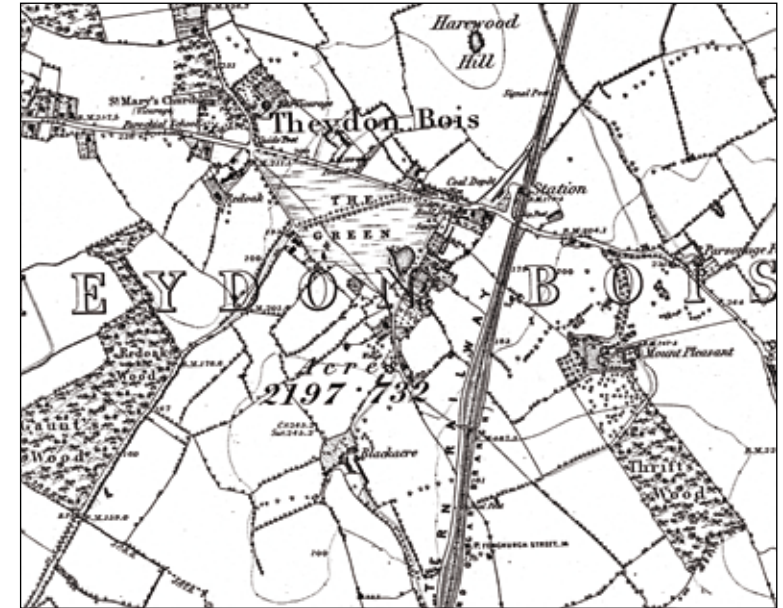
In 1865, the railway line into London was completed and speculative development began. New houses were built on some of the farmland nearest to the station. Blackacre Estate and Woburn Avenue date from 1885. In the last 60 years, many ancient trees and hedges have been removed from almost all of the remaining fields around Theydon Bois, opening up the landscape and reducing its wildlife value. To prevent root damage, farmers should not plough too close to trees within their fields.



(Lower right) three isolated majestic oaks stand on the crest of the hill, silhouetted against the sky.

The trunk of this mature oak with a girth of 3.90 metres indicates that this and its companions were established trees in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

This extract of the 1870 edition of the OS Map shows the field pattern of Blackacre Farm and the location of trees within the many hedges. It shows a landscape largely unchanged for at least 350 years. Copyright Essex Record Office.



## Theydon Green Oak

*Quercus robur*



This maiden oak tree stands on the western side of Theydon Bois Village Green. The area is part of Epping Forest and is owned and managed by the City of London. This young oak with a girth of 2.54 metres has

grown well since it was planted shortly after the end of the Second World War, by children from the local primary school. Saplings from beside the oak avenue across Theydon Green were dug up by the children and replanted elsewhere. Sadly, many of these young trees did not thrive but this one did and now reaches a height of 18 metres. It is located at grid reference TQ 45010 99072.

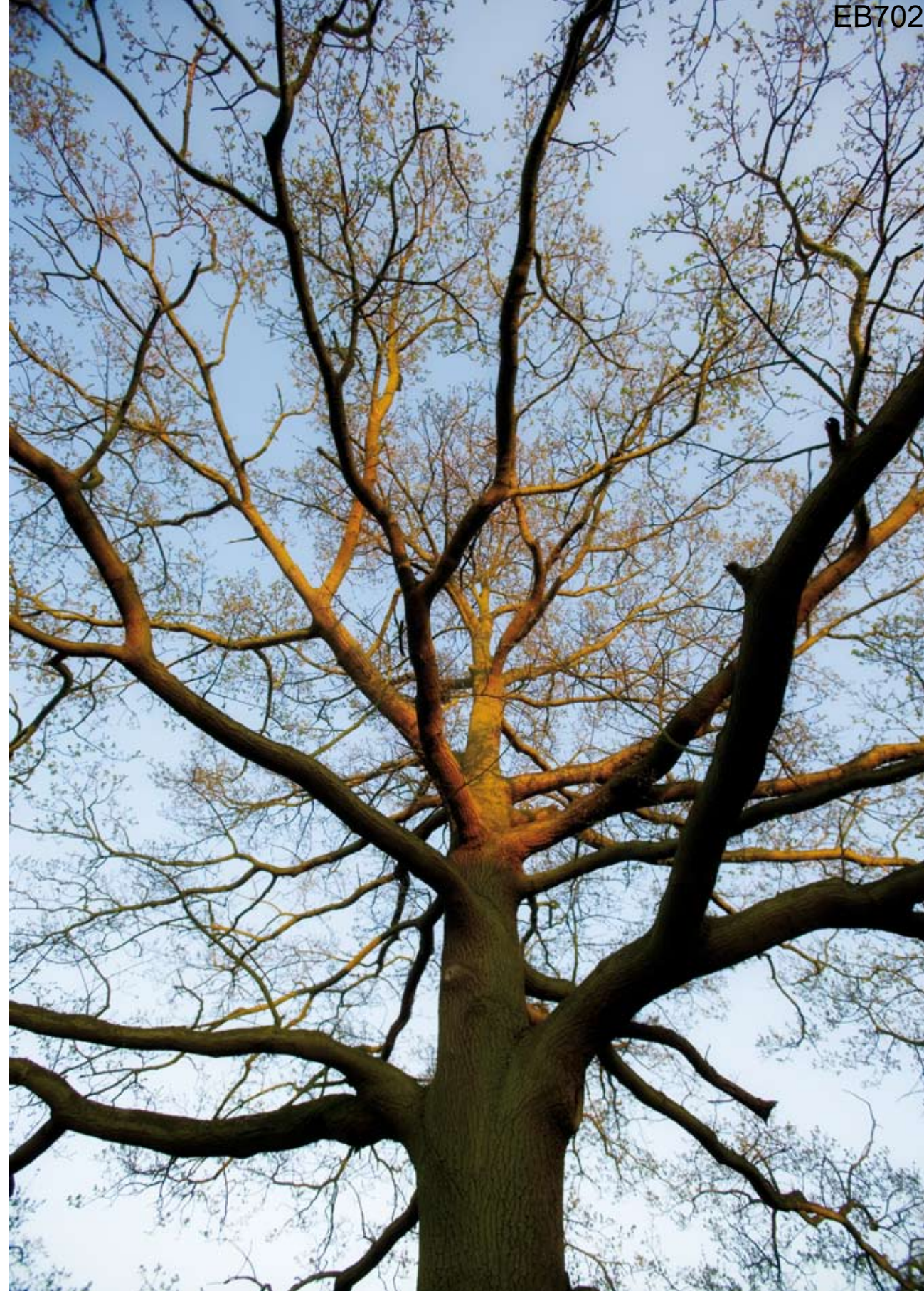
This tree has been nominated three times. Mr and Mrs Dowsett stated that: “This oak is a particularly well-shaped specimen and gives us pleasure as we walk past on the adjoining footpath.”

Graham Law reminisced: “I am now 64 years old and I remember this tree being planted as it was on my route to the old Theydon Bois Primary School. I still walk past this tree daily and believe it to be a perfect example of an English oak.”

Peter Newton commented that: “This oak has grown evenly in all directions and is now a textbook specimen of some maturity. It is in a position where it could continue to grow without hindrance as the site is well watered by a nearby watercourse and the root run is unlikely to be obstructed. The land being owned by the City of London affords the tree a high degree of protection.”

In recent years several more oaks have been planted on Theydon Green to commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar and the Queen’s 80<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The beauty of this young oak is enhanced by the golden evening sunlight on this early spring day.



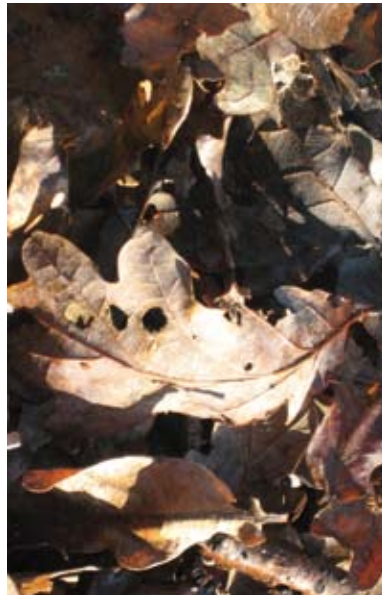
## Palace Gardens Oak

*Quercus robur*

This maiden oak stands in Palace Gardens, Buckhurst Hill and is an excellent example of the many old oaks which are a feature of the local streets. With a girth of 3.70 metres it is at least 170 years old. It is located at grid reference TQ 41642 94105.

Patricia Wiltshire commented in her nomination of this tree that: "John and I have lived opposite this grand old oak for some 20 years. We have in the past had a love-hate relationship with our tree. On the hate side it blocks light, looms large over our little house, it drops acorns and at some point in the year a sticky sap covers my car. This sticky sap is joined by bird droppings of various sizes and intensity. During gales it has frightened me and I have had nightmares about it falling on our house and wiping us all out, cats and all, in one fell swoop. Epping Forest District Council has kindly reduced it twice and assured me that it is strong and steadfast. The love part comes from knowing that whatever slings and arrows have been thrown at it in 20 years and the many centuries it has been standing, it will be there long after we are gone. Hopefully people who live opposite it in the future will come to love it and respect it as we have. It is a truly magnificent tree."

In the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century oaks like this one were growing within the woodlands of Epping Forest or in the hedges of fields. When the railway line between Loughton and London was completed in 1856, speculative developers enclosed land from Epping Forest and built over local farms. Many trees were incorporated into gardens or roadside verges.



This stately oak growing in the hedgerow enhances this residential area in Buckhurst Hill.

Picture of fallen oak leaves by Katie Obeney of Roydon Primary School. Decaying oak leaves form an acidic mulch.



## Lynceley Grange Cedar of Lebanon

*Cedrus libani*

The tree stands outside No. 9 Lynceley Grange, off Lindsey Street, Epping. Although it has a girth of 4.84 metres, its topmost branches have yet to develop the flattened table-top form characteristic of much older specimens. It is owned and managed by Epping Forest District Council. It is located at grid reference TL 46315 02855.

Ron Newberry nominated it because he felt that it was: “An extremely large and perfectly formed tree. Probably at least 200 years old, from when Lynceley Grange was a private residence. There could not be a better example of a cedar of Lebanon.”

Mrs Tarling composed this:

*“Nominate your favourite tree,  
Well that certainly done it for me.  
Without our two trees in Lynceley Grange,  
Would look very bare and strange.  
Our cedar of Lebanon has pride of place,  
Whilst the weeping willow stands full of grace.  
So do come and view the best trees in Epping,  
And agree with me, they're very fetching.”*

Cedars of Lebanon were first introduced into England about 1638 but as they take as long as 60 years to produce viable seed, they did not become widespread until the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century when many landowners planted them as specific feature trees within their parks.

Given sufficient space, they mature into large spreading trees. There are many fine examples in churchyards and the larger Victorian gardens.

Various forms of cedar are still a popular choice of tree for special places, although it is important that they have room to grow.



Photograph (left) illustrates another cedar which was planted in Roydon 40 years ago. It is now sufficiently mature to bear cones for the first time. Photograph by Michael Barendt.

Mature cones of a cedar take two years to ripen before releasing seeds.



This elegant tree in Lynceley Grange is one of two winning cedars among the 50 Favourite Trees.



## St John's Green London Plane

*Platanus x acerifolia*



These stately plane trees enhance the High Street in Epping and help to create a spacious green area beside the busy road.

This favourite tree stands with two other London planes beside the busy roundabout near St John's Church, on Epping's High Street, close to the market place. With a girth of 4.2 metres, it is the biggest of the three trees and provides a vast shady canopy over the pedestrians busy with their daily tasks. It is located at grid reference TL 45910 02025.

Robin Hellier commented: "It was selected as a replacement for a pair of limes clearly visible in a photograph taken in 1910. Over the years it has developed a majestic spreading crown and fills the green space in front of the shops and restaurants in the area. A dominating feature, it is impressive and leads the eye towards the church and the market place. I nominated this tree because I walk beneath it on my way to pick up my takeaway curry on a summer evening and enjoy the lights they lace among the boughs at Christmas time."

Moira Clark selected this tree because: "It is a plane tree, just south of St John's Church. I have seen a photograph of this with a few others, as saplings at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, about the time when the church tower was built. It does make one want to hug it but one would have to be a giant to do so. It is on a stretch of grass, beside a path, with seats for those passing by. I feel so grateful to the people who planted it thinking ahead to the pleasure it would give future generations. It makes one value the worthy souls who accept nomination to stand in our local elections and who serve our town."

The London plane is a hybrid between the oriental plane *Platanus orientalis* and the American plane *P. occidentalis*. First planted in this country about 1680, London planes grow well in urban areas. The striking bark is multi-coloured and large pieces flake off to reveal paler colours beneath.





## Broomstick Hall Road Horse Chestnut

*Aesculus hippocastanum*



This tree grows on the south bank of the Cobbins Brook on Broomstick Hall Road, Waltham Abbey and is opposite the Green Man public house. It is located at grid reference TL 39013 00650.

Markham Bailey commented that: "This tree pre-dates the Victorian development of this area during the 1880s and 1890s and marked an original field boundary by the Cobbins Brook. It was pollarded when a young tree but

has otherwise remained untouched by human hands. This early treatment has caused it to grow a great number of 'trunks' which have caused its massive spread. It looks particularly fine in the spring and early summer. As well as enhancing the streetscape of an otherwise undistinguished area, it is also a haven for local wildlife. It is a main gathering point for the evening departure of a flock of starlings. Our beautiful and much-loved tree would benefit from some TLC from a friendly tree surgeon as it has a few broken branches. This is without doubt the largest and most magnificent tree within Waltham Abbey and its loss would be a very sad loss indeed."



A native tree of the Balkans, horse chestnuts were introduced into this country in the middle of the 17th Century. They grow well in England, maturing to form an elegant tree with a rounded canopy. According to the National Woodland Inventory, there are at least 470,000 now in the UK. Many of these are found in small woods, parks and churchyards. It was a favoured roadside tree in the latter years of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Elegant horse chestnut trees like this one can often be found growing in roadside verges.

Leaves damaged by Guignardia leaf blotch fungus and the horse chestnut leaf miner, a tiny caterpillar. The impact of both these pests is being monitored by the Forestry Commission.



## Abbess Hall Farm Plantation

This small copse was planted in 1990 in partnership with the landowner, in a corner of a field in Abbess Roding. This was part of a campaign run jointly by Countrycare and the Abbess and White Roding Conservation Society to increase the number of trees within the agricultural landscape where many hedges have been removed in the past 60 years. The growing copse is visible from the adjacent footpath. It is located at grid reference TL 56876 11444.

Michael Brill nominated these young trees as they are an example of a successful outcome of practical conservation tasks. He said that: "The copse of trees is growing beside public footpath 11 in Abbess Roding and they were the first trees planted by myself, the Conservation Society and Countrycare. They hold great memories for me and many others. Every one of them has survived and they are growing well."

There are many young trees springing up in the district. Some like these have been planted either as conservation tasks, or by landowners taking advantage of grant aid. Planted trees require some after-care to ensure that they are growing well. They also need protection so they are not eaten by deer and rabbits.

Natural regeneration occurs on field edges, roadsides and on derelict land. These future woodlands contain a mix of species such as ash, blackthorn, elder, field maple, hazel, hawthorn, holly, oak, rowan, sycamore and yew.



Young trees and shrubs are growing successfully in this copse.

Red hawthorn berries add colour to the hedgerows in autumn.

As these new woods mature, they will be used by a wide range of creatures for food, shelter and nest sites.

Plantation woodlands may contain a mixture of species and those well suited to the soil and local climate will grow best. Hawthorns are frequently used in planting schemes as their flowers provide nectar and pollen in the spring. Ripe red hawthorn berries are rich in sugars and are eaten by thrushes in the autumn.



It will take many years for wild flowers, fungi, insects and other creatures to colonise such a site. The multitude of organisms found in an ancient woodland cannot be replicated in just a few years - after all an ancient wood is several thousand years old and the wildlife found there has taken many years to become established in the various habitats.



## Trees in the Right Location

The next thirteen winning Favourite Trees were nominated as they enhanced a particular area, by helping to frame a building or feature, or because their outline played a significant rôle in the appearance of that location. Seven of these trees were oaks, although one was the introduced evergreen or holm oak. Interestingly all of these were associated with meeting places of one kind or another. Perhaps their presence in such localities had some subconscious link with the fact that oaks have long been regarded as sacred symbols of remembrance, strength and longevity.

Holm oaks were brought into this country at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century and have been planted in many locations, especially formal landscaped parks. Many young saplings are now appearing in woodlands, perhaps in response to warming climatic conditions.

Four churchyards feature in the list of locations. Three contained oaks and although cedars can be found in several other local churchyards, only the tree at St Mary and All Saints, Lambourne was actually a winner. After their introduction into this country in 1650, cedars were often planted in the gardens to commemorate specific events. They are also associated with sacred sites. They grow fast but become aged after a couple of centuries and as they shed branches in high winds they can become very lopsided. The yew is also associated with churchyards and although several were nominated, they failed to reach the final.

The Scots pine in Coppice Row, Theydon Bois is a highly-visible tree on this busy road. The mainly conical growth form of this and the many other conifers scattered through the district add an interesting dimension to the landscape.

The remaining winners, the copper beech and horse chestnuts, indicate how these introduced species have become an accepted and very welcome addition to the local landscape.

## The winning nominations in the next section are:

**Copped Hall Holm Oak** in Epping Upland nominated by Denys Favre and John Price.

**The Feast Room Oak** in Matching nominated by Lucy Davis and Paul Hewitt.

**St John's Oak** in Buckhurst Hill nominated by Buckhurst Hill Residents' Society.

**St Mary's Oaks** in Theydon Bois nominated by John Eaton, P. Haslehurst and Muriel Kitson.

**All Saint's Oak** in Berners Roding nominated by Ian Lawrence.

**St Mary's Cedar of Lebanon** in Lambourne nominated by Peter Burns.

**Tea Hut Oak** in Waltham Abbey nominated by David Hollis.

**Castle Farm Horse Chestnut** in Chipping Ongar nominated by the Ongar Millennium History Society.

**Ongar Copper Beech** in Chipping Ongar nominated by the Ongar Millennium History Society.

**Moreton Horse Chestnut** in Moreton nominated by Joe Skepelhorn.

**Nazeing Scout Hut Oak** in Nazeing nominated by Janice Noakes.

**Sixteen String Jack Pine** in Theydon Bois nominated by John Eaton.

**Bobbingworth Elm** in Bobbingworth nominated by Colin Thompson.

## Copped Hall Holm Oak

*Quercus ilex*

These winning trees are owned by the Copped Hall Trust. They stand outside the mansion and can be viewed from the public footpath that runs in front of it. This can be accessed on foot through the main gate off Crown Hill, Upshire but please note that only the side gate is open to pedestrians. The trees are located at grid reference TL 43046 01425.

Denys Favre, Chairman of the Copped Hall Trust mentioned in his nomination that: "These fine examples of mature holm oaks are another foil to set off the austere architecture of Copped Hall's eastern facade."

John Price has known these trees for many years and stated that: "This tree is one of three holm oaks at Copped Hall, Upshire. The hall has undergone considerable renovation over the last ten years. One of these trees stands at the rear of the gardens next to the summer house and the other two stand at the front of the mansion. The leaves are elongated, dark green with a dull fawn underside. They have small acorns unlike the oval shape of the traditional English oak. I used to take my children for walks here before the restoration took place and now I am taking my grandchildren, so this is a special place for me."



Copped Hall and its gardens are strictly private but can be visited by appointment and on specific days. For details of events and open days visit [www.coppedhalltrust.org.uk](http://www.coppedhalltrust.org.uk)

The current Copped Hall is a Georgian mansion, built in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century on a ridge overlooking the surrounding landscaped parkland. Sadly after a dramatic fire in 1917, the building was left as a burnt-out shell and the adjacent Italianate gardens became overgrown.

In the 1980s various plans were made to develop the ruined building and surrounding parkland. Between 1986 and 1995 a campaign was successfully fought by a few dedicated individuals to prevent any large-scale development of the property. The Copped Hall Trust was established which purchased the mansion and gardens in 1995. The Corporation of London purchased the surrounding parkland in 1992.

The main aim of the Trust is to protect permanently the site and carefully to restore Copped Hall and its gardens for educational and community benefit. The partly renovated mansion now provides facilities for a wide range of educational activities and is much in demand as a backdrop for period films.

A vintage sports car beside the holm oak on the terrace of Copped Hall. Special open days are held during the summer months.



## The Feast Room Oak

*Quercus robur*



This photograph was taken in 1955, when cows grazed on the green. Copyright Essex Record Office.

This beautifully proportioned young oak stands beside the square tower of St Mary the Virgin, Matching.

anyone, having been lucky enough to have spent the last 15 years as the Council's Countryside Manager. This oak tree stands in the perfect setting framing both the ancient feast room and church. It is a tree that has always fascinated and intrigued me and been the point of many a discussion on a guided walk. How is it so big? The plaque says it was planted in 1887 - just 120 years ago. I have always meant to try and find out more about the planting and always hoped there may be some old photo somewhere marking the occasion that may give a clue."

Measuring the girth of an oak can be used to help age the tree. In an open situation such as this, an oak would grow about 2.5 centimetres (an inch) a year for the first 100 years. The growth rate then slows to about half of this for the next century or so and then falls to about a third for many more years. If it loses a branch or two, or is damaged in any other way, it will grow more slowly. Counting the rings is more accurate but is difficult without felling the tree, unless a core sample is obtained. Modern technology can be used to find out if the tree is hollow.

This fine maiden oak with a girth of 4.15 metres stands on the greensward in front of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century St Mary the Virgin Church and the 15<sup>th</sup> Century Marriage Feast Room at Matching. The feast room has been used for more than 500 years by the brides and bridegrooms of the village for celebrations with their friends and relatives. It is located at grid reference TL 52489 11928.

Lucy Davis mentioned in her nomination that: "Its sheer size and beautiful setting make this a very impressive tree and it's such a lovely shape. I also like its historic connection with Lady Ibbetson and Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. A metal plaque at the foot of the tree reads 'Planted by Lady Selwyn Ibbetson in honour of the Queen's Jubilee 1887.'"

Paul Hewitt remarked about this tree: "This is probably my favourite spot in the district and I think I know the area as well as



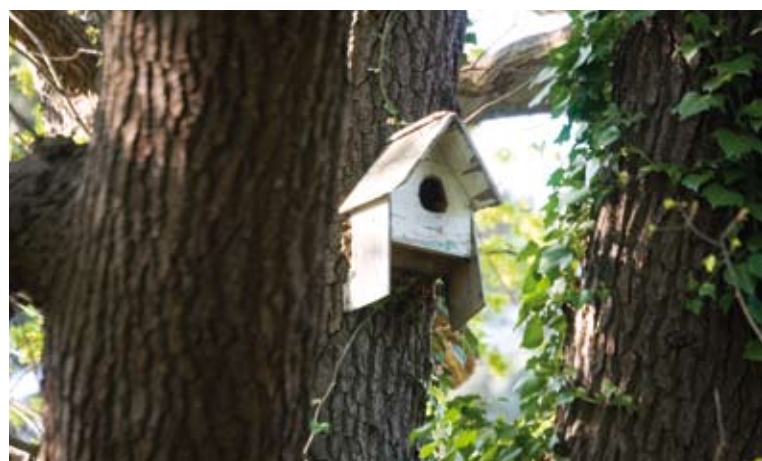
## St John's Oak

*Quercus robur*

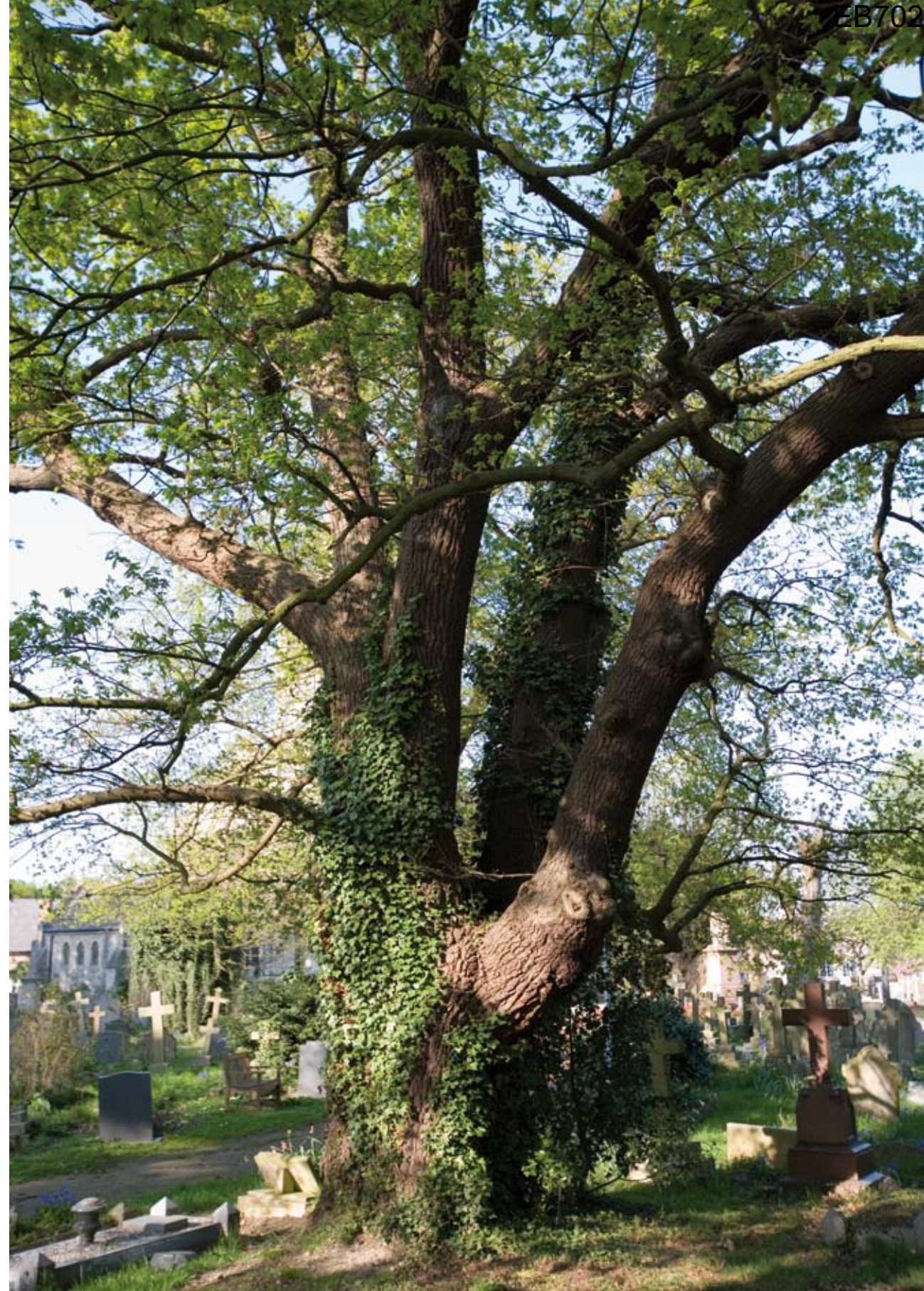
This veteran pollarded oak is immediately on the right hand side of the path beyond the kissing gate at the entrance to St John's Churchyard from Church Road, Buckhurst Hill. It is located at grid reference TQ 40817 94173.

The members of the Buckhurst Hill Residents' Society nominated this tree because: "This ancient oak tree, standing at the highest point in Buckhurst Hill, was a mature tree when the original chapel, which preceded St John's Church, was built. It is a survivor from the days when this area was part of the Hunting Forest. Now venerable and ivy-covered, surrounded by younger trees, it stands guard over the living and the dead."

St John's Church was built in 1837, on land previously enclosed from Epping Forest. This old oak with a girth of 4.62 metres was one of many such pollarded trees which grew close together within the wooded parts of this ancient Forest. The local residents had exercised their right to cut or lop branches from its bole before it was enclosed within the churchyard. The straight upward growth of its branches shows that there were several other trees nearby when it was last lopped. This surviving tree reminds us of just how many trees must have been present in the local woodlands in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.



Nest boxes like this are often fixed to trees to encourage blue tits or great tits to raise their young. They may prefer to use a natural hole in a tree if they can find one.



## St Mary's Oaks

*Quercus robur*



Three magnificent tall oaks stand within St Mary's Churchyard, Theydon Bois. The largest one, an ancient pollard has a girth of 5.15 metres. A maiden oak stands on the opposite side of the lych gate and the third maiden oak is nearer the church. Both of these have a girth of 3.50 metres. The grid reference is TQ 44800 99230.

John Eaton, Deputy Church Warden

commented: "My nomination is of three old oak trees with huge canopies. The first tree, whose age has been reliably judged to be at least 400-500 years old, is situated close to the War Memorial. This tree nearest the church would appear to have had little surgery performed upon it over the years and the canopy extends down almost to ground level. I see a symbolic religious connection with these fine old trees in this location of God's holy acre. Their majesty and age could be earthly symbolism of the magnificence of the Holy Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost."

P. Haslehurst referred to it as: "A beautifully-shaped mature tree in a peaceful setting. Very majestic and no matter what the season is, it is a glorious example of nature in a variety of forms, full leaf or bare boughs."

Muriel Kitson said: "This tree was once in the great Forest of Waltham, the hunting ground of Kings and Queens of England. It would have provided shelter for travellers, pannage for the pigs and kindling for fires. Today, it is a nesting place for birds, it

This fine single oak stands close to the church. The fresh green growth is often stripped and nibbled by grey squirrels. All of the trees in the churchyard have been expertly maintained.

This photograph shows the two trees at the entrance to the churchyard. The ancient oak on the left is at least 500 years old and was last pollarded many centuries ago. The younger oak on the right may be as old as the present church building, which was completed in 1851.

provides a wonderful setting for wedding photographs and a place to sit and contemplate the beauty and peace of the churchyard."

The present church was completed in 1851 and the churchyard is a haven for many wild flowers and birds.

*Betony Stachys officinalis* at St Mary's churchyard, Theydon Bois. A rare plant in the Epping Forest district. Photograph by Paul Hewitt.



## All Saint's Oak

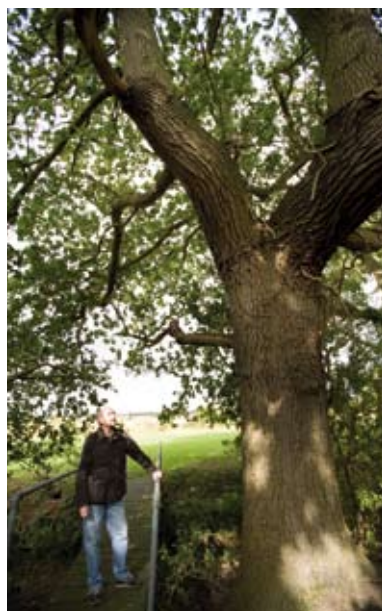
*Quercus robur*

This fine maiden oak stands close to the original moat of Berners Hall beside All Saint's Church at Berners Roding. A secluded tree with a girth of 3.1 metres, it stands beside a public footpath which runs past the churchyard. The grid reference is TL 60190 10047.

Parts of the church date from the 14th Century and it became redundant in 1985. Although it is a Grade II listed building, its future is uncertain.

Ian Lawrence in nominating this tree mentioned that: "This is a large sprawling oak tree. It has interesting and unusual shaped branches. Situated in a beautiful and remote part of Essex it provides a shady and peaceful spot for me to enjoy a picnic with my family. I am sure that this old tree which has guarded over the dilapidated village church has seen many locals christened, married and buried."

The churchyard is ancient grassland, a scarce habitat, found only in 0.3% of the Epping Forest district. Maintaining such habitats is an important part of the work of Epping Forest Countrycare; team members and volunteers have been managing this churchyard since 1995, mowing the grass and removing a hay crop. As a result, the churchyard is an oasis of wild flowers in an otherwise arable landscape. This tree, along with several others, helps to create a shady haven for all kinds of wildlife, from foxes to owls, beetles to butterflies. Frogs, great crested newts and dragonfly nymphs thrive in the adjacent pond.



A mature oak can support over 350 different species of invertebrates. Many caterpillars feed on the leaves, weevils leave holes in acorns. Wood mice make nests in hollows in the roots.

Ian Lawrence standing beside this lofty tree.





## St Mary's Cedar of Lebanon

*Cedrus libani*

Situated in the corner of the churchyard of St Mary and All Saints, Lambourne is an impressive cedar tree. This tree was recorded as part of the veteran tree survey of the parish and has a girth of 5.39 metres. Cedars grow quickly, retaining a conical shape for many years. As they mature the canopy forms layers of extensive flat plates made up of dense short shoots, giving these trees their characteristic 'table top' appearance. It is located at grid reference TQ 47825 96101.

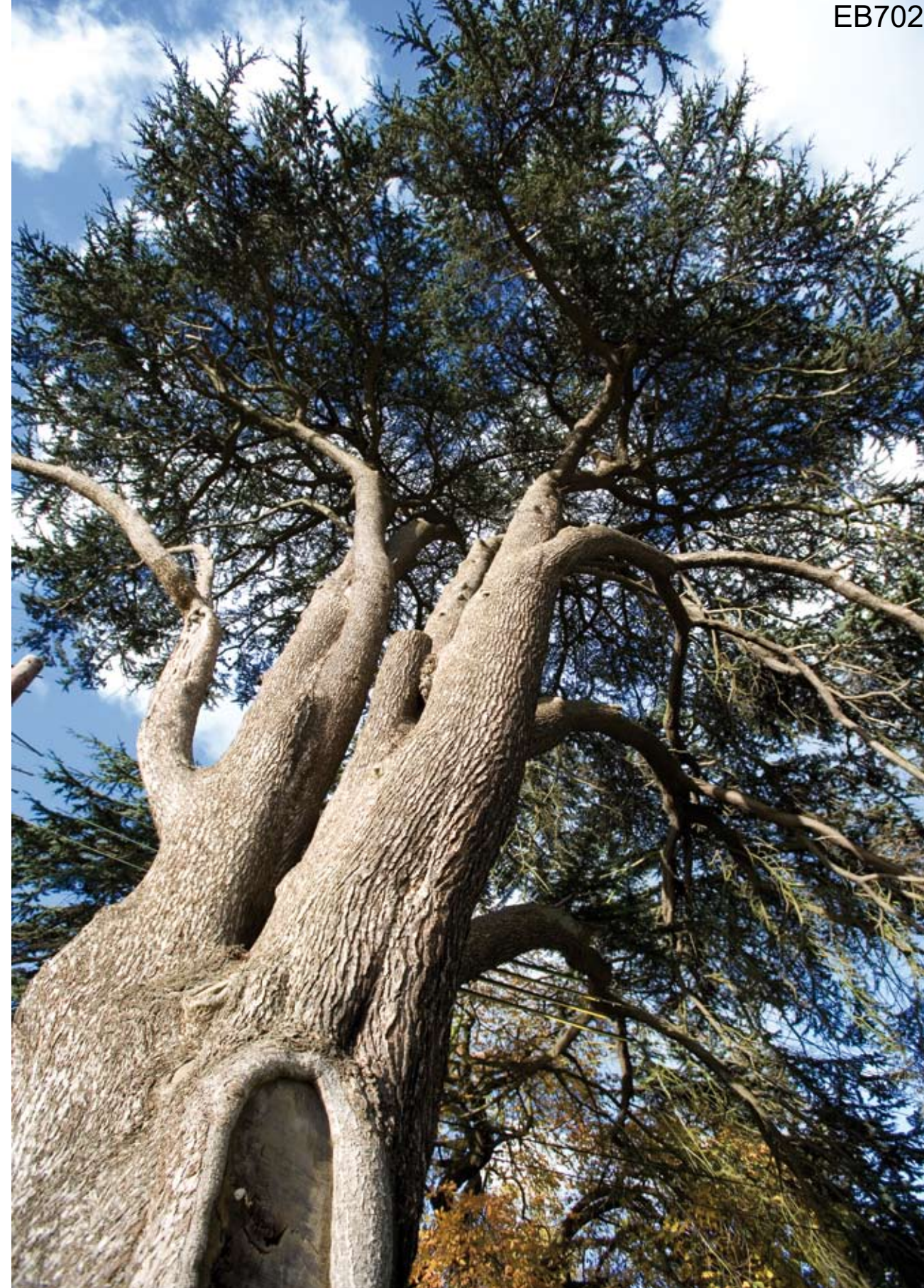
Peter Burns in nominating his favourite tree commented: "Although cedars were introduced in 1638 from Syria and southeast Turkey, this variety of tree became more widespread in the UK in the late 1700s and I suspect that it dates from that period. In the storm of 1987 a huge branch came down leaving a great scar in its side."

This is the second winning cedar in the district although several others were nominated. Many are stately trees but they do not yet compare with the largest cedar tree recorded in the UK. This vast tree is growing at Compton Verney near Wellesbourne, Warwickshire and has massive multiple stems and low branches. In 2006 it measured an impressive 10.85 metres just above ground level.



This massive cedar has recently lost another branch. This is a common problem with cedars and it is advisable not to stand beneath one!

Overshadowed by the cedar, the church of St Mary and All Saints dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> Century but was restored in the 1720s. It contains many interesting architectural features.



## Tea Hut Oak

*Quercus robur*

This prominent and well-known oak stands beside the Bikers' Tea Hut in Epping Forest off Cross Road close to the Robin Hood roundabout on the A104. It is in the Waltham Abbey parish. The City of London, Conservators of Epping Forest, care for this old pollarded tree. The grid reference is TQ 41021 97312.

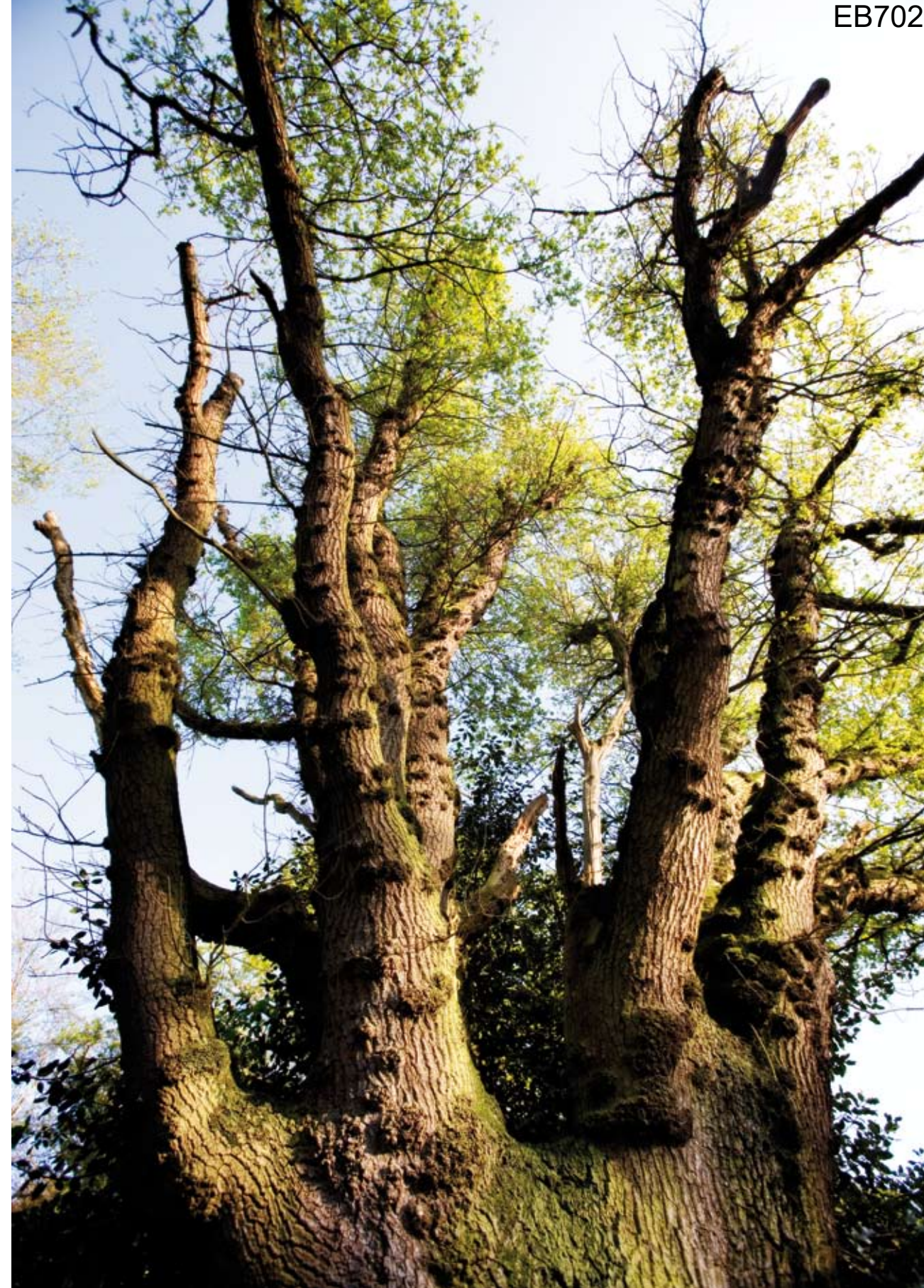
David Hollis in his nomination for this tree mentioned: "A fine oak tree with a large burr at the base. It stands right next to the Lower Tea Hut - our favourite place. It offers shelter to humans and masses of passing and resident wildlife including blue tits, grey squirrels, insects, nuthatches, robins, foxes and a chicken once! It gives shelter from the rain and hot sun and is an important part of the character of the area, a representative of many other oak trees, not seen by quite so many."

With a girth of 3.9 metres, this tree is likely to be over 350 years old. It was last pollarded at least 150 years ago and its massive branches are as large as well-grown oaks! It is tagged with a metallic disc and its details recorded on the database of large oaks of Epping Forest. Skilled tree surgeons from Epping Forest's conservation team will continue to monitor its wellbeing in the future.



Some careful canopy reduction has been carried out on this significant oak to help prolong its life.

This modern cabin replaced the original tea hut, which is a popular meeting place for motorbike enthusiasts. The former hut started life as a converted but mobile chicken shed!



## Castle Farm Horse Chestnut

*Aesculus hippocastanum*

This pollarded tree stands beside the public footpath to the rear of the Pleasance car park, near the scout hut, Chipping Ongar. It has a girth of 4.14 metres, which suggests that it is at least 150 years old. The grid reference is TL 55375 03236.

In nominating this tree, the members of the Ongar Millennium History Society gave their reason as: “A truly magnificent example of this most popular species. It is large, spreading, easily accessible with a plentiful supply of conkers (from *conqueror* or *conche* an earlier game played with snail shells). This particular tree has no doubt provided countless hours of pleasure to many thousands of residents and visitors who flocked to the agricultural show held annually on this site during the early years of the last century.”

Each year, many conkers are produced and as the climate warms it is possible that some more will germinate to grow into saplings and eventually mature trees.

However, do remember to chant: “Oddly oddly onker my first conker” or alternatively: “obly, obly-onker, my best conker, obly olby o, my best go,” when you find your first fresh conker in early September!



The shape of this fine example of a horse chestnut shows why they have become a popular tree in our landscape. This species was introduced into England in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.

A distinguishing feature of the horse chestnut is the sticky bud scales which drop off as the new growth expands.

Young horse chestnut leaves unfurl to catch the spring sunlight. The white flowers are spectacular at this time of year. Their yellow centres turn red after being pollinated by bees.

Why not visit the website of Woodlands Junior School in Kent for more details on how to play conkers as well as some historical facts about the game? See the website at: [www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/customs/conkers.html](http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/customs/conkers.html)



The World Conker Championships have been held for over 40 years on the Green at Ashton, Northamptonshire. Further details can be accessed at: [www.worldconkerchampionships.com](http://www.worldconkerchampionships.com)



## Ongar Copper Beech

*Fagus sylvatica 'Purpurea'*



Copper beech trees were brought over from Europe in 1760. They make a significant impact wherever they are planted and were much favoured by late 19<sup>th</sup> Century landscape designers and horticulturists.

This maiden tree stands in the grounds of the Pleasance Garden, Ongar Castle and Ongar Library and on the edge of the car park off the High Street. With a girth of 3.8 metres it was planted as one of the trees within the garden of the Pleasance, a large Victorian house, now demolished. The tree is located at grid reference TL 55333 03170.

This copper beech was nominated by the members of the Ongar Millennium History Society as it was: "Everybody's favourite and the most commonly mentioned tree at the Ongar Millennium History Fayre held in April 1998. This beautiful tree also provides one of the most specific links with Ongar's past."

The following lines were written as a psalm, *The Wilderness*, by Rev. E. W. Sergeant MA, Assistant Master of Winchester College, whilst he was a guest at the Pleasance:

*"Beneath the shelter of the spreading beech,  
Whose russet foliage soft and sumptuous breaks,  
The rich monotony of the zone of trees.  
Forest or fruitful, carelessly combined.  
Which shield the Pleasance from the intemperate East."*

© Ongar Millennium History Society

Bluebells make an attractive setting for this beautiful copper beech.



## Moreton Horse Chestnut

*Aesculus x carnea*

This young tree stands at the gateway to Moreton on the village green beside its old bridge. In 2006 its girth was 1.2 metres. It is located at grid reference TL 53310 06825.

Joe Skepelhorn who planted this tree said in his nomination that it is: "A well-proportioned horse chestnut which enhances the entrance to Moreton. The tree was presented to Moreton for winning the Best Kept Village competition in Essex in 1976."

The red flowered horse chestnut is a fertile hybrid between white flowered horse chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum* and the North American red buckeye *Aesculus pavia*. It has been used in plantings in parks, gardens and avenues since 1818. It is often used as a commemorative tree as here at Moreton. The leaves are usually smaller than those of the horse chestnut with a broad jagged margin. The fruit has fewer spines than that of the true conker. The conker is smaller and not suitable for playing conkers!

When selecting and planting trees for special places, it is important to choose ones that will grow into fine, well-formed specimens and to check that the ground is suitable for that species. The green in Moreton beside the Cripsey Brook is liable to flooding and two of the three original flowering cherries planted at the same time have died as a result of waterlogging. Sadly, the remaining one is not thriving. Planted trees should also receive appropriate after-care to check that they are growing well.

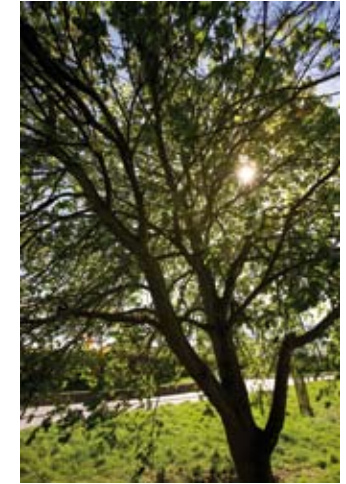


The distinctive flowers of the red flowered horse chestnut in May. Photograph by Tricia Moxey.

The winning horse chestnut planted by Councillor Joe Skepelhorn, Chairman of Moreton Parish Council, in 1976. The flowering cherry by the bridge was planted at the same time.

As a young tree grows, the pattern of its branches is established early on as is shown by this young red flowered horse chestnut. It will form a tree with a very short trunk and spreading branches.

This hybrid horse chestnut is a short lived tree, unlike the white horse chestnut. This becomes a large and majestic tree after a century or so of growth. The lower branches sweep down to the ground and may in time take root. In time, a new tree may grow from this rooted tip.



## Nazeing Scout Hut Oak

*Quercus robur*



This veteran maiden oak tree stands in the grounds of Nazeing Guide and Scout Group HQ, on Perry Hill, Nazeing. It is visible against the skyline from the public footpath that runs close by. The grid reference is TL 40051 05472.

In nominating this tree, Janice Noakes described that after much local fundraising

the land around this tree was acquired for use by the local Scouts and Guides in 1966.

Since then this oak has watched over all of their activities, camp fires, fêtes and the creation of an aerial runway. Janice commented: "When we camp in the field we can hear the various birds, animals and insects in the tree."



Beavers Lena, Nariiece, Nicole, Serena and Sophia summed up their feelings for this tree: "We think this tree is the best tree in Essex because it is large and has lovely long branches. It is also really healthy, really big and some of the acorns on the tree have fallen off and formed baby oak trees, which is great because that tree is the biggest and like a mum to the rest. The tree is a nice

oak tree, we like its leaves. It has been here since our leader, Janice, was a Brownie."

Acorns are buried in the grass by jays so they can eat them later. Any forgotten ones germinate the following spring and may grow into oak saplings. Did you know that the jay's beak is just the right length to bury an acorn?

In the spring of 2007 this Favourite Tree was measured by the beavers. They found it was about six beaver hugs round, or approximately 3.8 metres! So they nominated it: 'The Best Tree in Essex.' A more accurate measurement gives the girth as 3.91 metres.

Knopper gall on oak.



The first acorns disfigured by the knopper gall were noticed in 1962, having reached southwest England from the continent. The galls are caused by the tiny gall-forming wasp *Andricus quercucalis*,

which lays her eggs inside the developing acorn. The larvae hatch and give off chemicals which make the gall instead of a healthy acorn. By 1979 the wasp had become widespread and there was concern that too few acorns would be produced. Luckily, in some years, there is a superabundance of viable acorns and those that are not eaten have a chance to grow into oak trees.



## Sixteen String Jack Pine

*Pinus sylvestris*



This photograph is owned by John Eaton and shows Coppice Row in about 1900, when it was a quiet country lane. The pine is easily recognised. The pub changed its name some time after 1940.

Planted about 120 years ago, this roadside Scots pine tree stands towards the top of Coppice Row near the Sixteen String Jack public house at Theydon Bois. It is 15.5 metres tall. The grid reference is TQ 44454 99241.

In nominating this pine, John Eaton remarked that: “The tree was identified as a landmark tree in the Tree Wardens’ survey of 1996/7. It is a very tall and majestic tree, its stature accentuated in windy and blustery conditions.”

It was fashionable to plant various pines, cedars and other non native coniferous trees in gardens and parks in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Many of these trees are now mature and are clearly visible silhouetted on the skyline. The tallest are the North American giant redwoods or Wellingtonias (named after the Duke of Wellington). Some are now reaching an impressive 24.5 metres. In addition, there are a few monkey puzzles from South America and occasional groups of larches, Norway spruces and various species of fir. The Weymouth pines from North America have drooping cones and their fine needle leaves grow in groups of five.

The Scots pine is a native evergreen coniferous tree. Its orange coloured bark and its shorter paired needles (3 to 7 centimetres long) distinguish it from the European black pine, which has a black-brown bark and longer needles (8 to 16 centimetres long).



## Bobbingworth Elm

*Ulmus procera* (English)



*“Around the fields  
soared tall elms with  
branches like Gothic  
tracery writing  
the unmistakable  
signature of Essex  
across the sky.”*

Glyn Morgan,  
1951.

This tree stands alone to the south of Lower Bobbingworth Green beside the A414 between Chipping Ongar and North Weald Bassett and the crossroads between Rachels Lane and Blake Hall Road in the parish of Bobbingworth. With a girth of 3.0 metres this is a significant mature elm tree, a rare survivor in a county which lost almost all its elms to Dutch Elm Disease in the 1970s. It is located at grid reference TL 52414 05102. The loss of the beautiful elms changed the landscape dramatically but a few other isolated elm trees can be found in the adjacent parishes.

Colin Thompson states in his nomination that: “Most elms have been destroyed by Dutch Elm Disease but this elm has survived and is therefore rare.”

Dutch Elm Disease is caused by a fungus which is carried from tree to tree by the elm bark beetle. The fungus damages the water conducting tissue within the trunk and prevents water reaching the twigs. The leaves are deprived of water and turn yellow in mid summer. Eventually the tree dies back but it often produces suckers from the infected root stock. These can grow for a few years but then die back once they have reached about 4 metres.





## Rare Trees

This short section contains just four trees and three species. Rarity value did not feature highly among the reasons for nominating a tree. They are all, however, trees of great merit: the spectacular swamp cypress and two rare native species, the beautiful wild service and the majestic black poplar.

The swamp cypress, introduced from the southern United States, as its name suggests, evolved to grow in boggy conditions, to which it has adapted by the ability to send up spongy woody 'knees' or pneumatophores which help to aerate the roots. It is potentially a very tall and relatively upright tree. It is one of the few deciduous conifers, particularly lovely in spring, when clothed in new, soft green foliage and in autumn, when the red-bronze colour can be striking. We know of one other mature specimen, also in Loughton but there are likely to be others in the district, planted in large gardens in Victorian times.

Of the many different black poplars now found in Britain only the relatively rare sub-species *Populus nigra var betulifolia* is truly native. Its massive, arching branches proved useful for the roof supports of mediæval timber framed buildings, although it was used for humbler purposes, such as flooring, where its fire-resistant properties were important. Like all species of poplar, the native black poplar is either male or female. Female trees are particularly rare; the reason sometimes given for this, and hence the scarcity of the species, is that the plentiful fluffy seeds were so unpopular with the housewives of the middle ages that they prevailed upon their husbands to remove them, leaving only the males! A combination of the loss of their natural flood plain habitat, a scarcity of natural regeneration and a selection against females when taking cuttings to plant new trees probably provides a more realistic explanation.

Surveys in 1995 found only 1,500 genuine native black poplars in England, so the chance discovery of a female tree in Roydon and a male at Waltham Abbey encouraged local enthusiasts to hunt for more. Since then the number found has increased to 10,000 countrywide.

Were pubs called the Chequers really named after the fruit of the wild service or chequers tree? Or were the trees named after the chequers board, an ancient sign of a drinking establishment? Experts disagree! We can say that the fruit, also called chequers, was widely sold in the south of England into the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Although at first bitter, when over-ripe it could be enjoyed by children as sweets, was of medicinal value and was also fermented to produce a popular fruit liqueur. Ancient chequer trees are often located near country pubs.

Wild service trees occur in ancient woodlands often as a group of suckers round a mature tree. Relatively uncommon, it has been assumed that a wood in which they grow is ancient as they do not usually occur in new or secondary woodlands. The brown fruits are eaten by birds and the seeds dispersed in their droppings but for whatever reason few of these seeds germinate. However, recent surveys in Epping Forest and other local woods now reveal that wild service seedlings are becoming more widespread. This tree is still considered to be an indicator plant of ancient woodlands and is a flagship species for the local Biodiversity Action Plan.

### The four winning nominations in this section are:

**York Hill Swamp Cypress** in Loughton nominated by Brian Holmes.

**Waltham Point Black Poplar** in Waltham Abbey nominated by Nicola Gauntlett and Tim Hill.

**World's End Black Poplar** in Roydon nominated by Charles Abbey and Alan Burgess.

**Ape's Grove Wild Service Tree** in Lambourne nominated by Tracy Clarke and Stephen Jack.



## York Hill Swamp Cypress

*Taxodium distichum*

This magnificent tree stands in the private garden of Rose Cottage, opposite 50A York Hill, Loughton and is clearly visible from the footpath. The grid reference is TQ 42445 96911.

Brian Holmes said in his nomination that: "I first met this tree in 1971 when we moved into our new home in Loughton. Every Friday night we would walk to the Foresters Arms in Baldwin's Hill, passing the tree on the way up York Hill. I have to admit that I usually missed it on the way home! As our family grew up we still walked past this tree and wondered how old it was and how far you could see from its top."

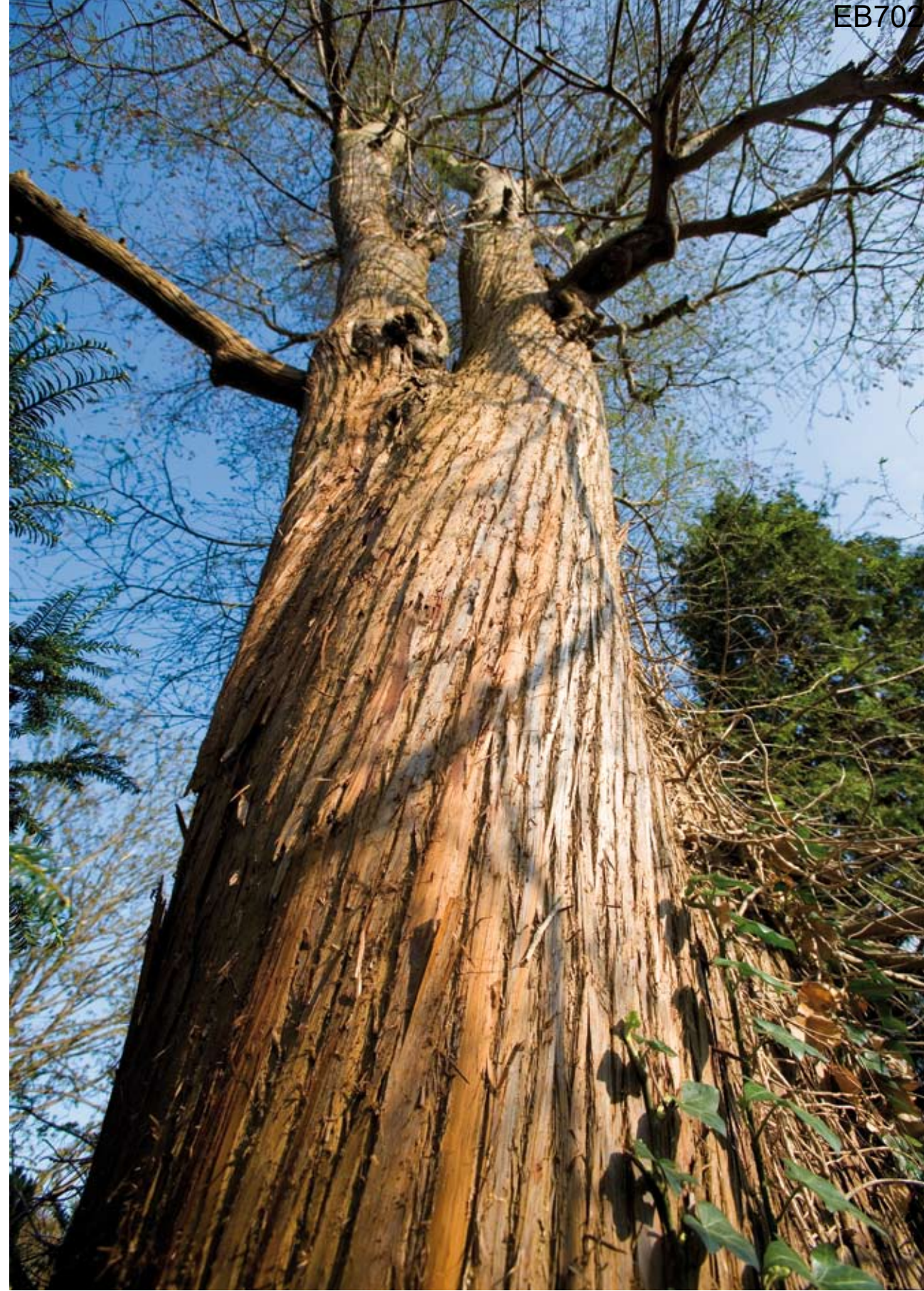
The swamp or bald cypress is a native of North America, growing in the boggy conditions of the Florida Everglades, where it was discovered by John Tradescant the Younger in 1640. They were popular in 19<sup>th</sup> Century large gardens but require warm summers for good growth.

According to a former resident of Rose Cottage, some time in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century this tree was brought back from California in a bag of soil and planted in the garden by a grieving father who had lost his two young daughters. Interestingly, this tree has two leading shoots, instead of the usual one.



A mature swamp cypress can grow up to 45 metres and develop a girth of 11 metres. This particular tree has been protected since 1932, when Loughton Town Council recognised its significance in the local landscape.

This early 20<sup>th</sup> Century view of the lower part of York Hill shows the swamp cypress as a tall tree. This postcard is from the collection of the Loughton and District Historical Society.



## Waltham Point Black Poplar

*Populus nigra subspecies betulifolia*

This veteran male tree is visible from the new Waltham Abbey bypass A121 as it passes the Sainsbury's Distribution Depot at Waltham Point. It stands on the edge of Gunpowder Park, a public open space within the Lee Valley Regional Park, which has been created from the former Royal Ordnance Site. It is located at grid reference TQ 37742 99612.

Tim Hill gave his reason for nominating this tree as: "My favourite tree is a native black poplar, found in the early 1990s by local ecologist Brian Wurzell, who was carrying out a botanical survey of the top secret Royal Ordnance Site. It was quite a find, because it was surrounded by dense woodland and was thought to be the only native black poplar in the Lee Valley. As the redevelopment of the Royal Ordnance Site gathered pace, it was clear that most of the trees would have to be cleared to enable decontamination to be carried out to remove explosive and toxic materials. However, employees of the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority were insistent that this magnificent tree should be saved. I am delighted that the tree still thrives today - a true survivor which provides the only link in this area with Waltham Abbey's explosive and secret past."

Nicola Gauntlett in her nomination added her comments about the fight to save this tree: "It is a rare native black poplar and it once stood with hundreds of other trees on the old Royal Ordnance Site. Because this was a special tree it was protected and it survived. I like this tree as I felt so sorry for it standing all alone after all the other trees had gone. Now with all the new development at Waltham Point, the tree looks less isolated, hiding the fact it was a lucky survivor."



This tree has since 'fathered' many other black poplars, as cuttings were grown-on in pots and buckets. These are now growing vigorously elsewhere in suitable locations.

The leaves of black poplars have a pointed tip and the leaf stalks or petioles often have a mis-shapen gall caused by an aphid *Pemphigus spirothecae*.



The male Waltham Abbey poplar now stands alone and although more are being found, they remain rare. But in Roydon a nationally important female group was found by the local Tree Wardens, led by Alan Burgess and verified by County Recorder, Ken Adams. With only 500-600 female black poplars recorded in the whole country, Roydon's 30+ females are particularly important.



Unripe female catkins before they burst to release their fluffy white seeds which can only germinate on damp ground. These seeds may well be hybrids. Poplars are wind pollinated and there are many foreign poplars nearby.

The Roydon Tree Wardens, advised by Chris Neilan and with the support of the local farmers on whose land they stood, were successful in winning a grant to undertake essential pruning to conserve their trees. This also funded work with Roydon Primary School, recorded in a book, which can be found at <http://www.lhi.org.uk/docs/roydenbook.pdf>.

Like the Waltham Abbey tree, the interest in the species has led to a considerable demand for cuttings from the Roydon females, which have been collected for use elsewhere throughout Essex, Suffolk and recently the Stort Valley in Hertfordshire. The location of each new planting is being noted to provide information for future tree mapping schemes.

Farmer Charles Abbey, of World's End Farm in Roydon, has become a particular enthusiast, not only assisting with the programme of conservation on his land but also growing-on cuttings from his own trees, some of which have already been planted out.

Chris Neilan welcoming Jon Hammerton and Tony Kirkham to Epping Forest district in front of the Waltham Abbey poplar, for the opening of our segment of the BBC Two programme *'The Trees That Made Britain'* broadcast in May 2008.



## World's End Black Poplar

*Populus nigra subspecies betulifolia*



This veteran female tree is located at the eastern end of World's End Wood, which is reached along the public footpath about 1.5 kilometres from Roydon village. This tree was declared a 'Great British Tree' by the

Tree Council in June 2002 to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee. It is located at grid reference TL 41838 09513.

Alan Burgess nominated this tree because: "This tree is a real treasure. We first realised it was unusual when it shed a limb one winter. With the support of the landowner and Countrycare we were able to get it pruned to save it. Our original tree has been declared a 'Great British Tree'. We feel honoured to be in the company of the 'Robin Hood' Oak of Sherwood Forest."

The owner of the tree, farmer Charles Abbey adds: "The World's End Black Poplar is not only a very rare and beautiful tree,

it represents a superb collection of female native black poplars in Roydon. It has become a great favourite of man and beast and it provides safety, shelter and food for all kinds of animals, birds and insects. I am sure further recognition, especially locally, will bring enormous benefits to the local environment by alerting and encouraging the general public to the beautiful trees in our countryside today. I hope you will consider this to be one of the 50 Favourite Trees."



Alan Burgess was instrumental in starting the search for black poplars in Roydon and finding the grant to conserve them. It was the community co-operation that particularly appealed to The Tree Council, leading to the original Roydon black poplar being chosen as a 'Great British Tree'.

This mature tree was once more very severely damaged in a recent storm. It is responding well to a programme of expert tree surgery to recreate a smaller, balanced crown.



## Ape's Grove Wild Service Tree

*Sorbus torminalis*

This tree can be found in the northwestern corner of Ape's Grove Wood near Abridge in the parish of Lambourne. There is open public access to the wood via a public footpath from New Farm Drive, Abridge. This is a very old tree with an estimated age of about 250 years. During a storm it lost half its trunk at the base, hence its girth is just 2.15 metres. It is located at grid reference TQ 47449 96919.

Stephen Jack nominated this tree because: "I had never, ever seen a wild service tree so it was a first. Subsequently it became a regular stopping point on many a guided walk through the woods. The tree is particularly attractive in the springtime with its own creamy-white flowers set against the bluebell backdrop beyond. I recall that the wild service tree has a link to 'Chequers' pubs as well as medicinal properties. I hope it can be included in the final list as I know many members of the public have really appreciated this tree over the years."

Tracy Clarke was enthralled by it as: "This tree is a large and very rare gem within the woodland. Seeing this tree gives me the feeling that I think anyone would have on finding treasure, a real find!"

The distinctive chequered pattern of the bark gives rise to the alternative name of the tree, the chequer tree.



Peter McElarney, a local Tree Warden, points out the features of the leaves of a wild service tree.

## Historic People and Trees

The next section is a somewhat disparate collection of trees which celebrate the links between particular people and trees. Sometimes they were famous or remarkable but others were just simply loved and cherished individuals.

There were ten winning nominated trees in this category, some of which have special names. Once again oaks topped the list. However, two different species, a lime and a horse chestnut, were selected as winners in this category. It is appropriate that two of the winning nominations are oaks associated with War Memorials, thus linking these trees specifically to remembrance.

Four oaks were selected because they are long-term survivors in fields. One, the Gilwell Oak, is highly visible to many thousands of people from around the world, the others are just enjoyed by more locally-based fan clubs! The oak at Alderton Hill was also chosen as it is an excellent representative of the many fine trees which can be found in many of the urban parts of the district and is an example of the significant rôle such trees play in our lives.

Often people achieve sufficient fame or notoriety to have a tree named after them. Charles Dickens (1812-1870) frequently visited Chigwell, which he described in a letter as 'the greatest place in the world ...such a delicious old inn opposite the church ...such beautiful forest scenery ...such an out of the way rural place!'

Dickens used his personal experiences in his writings and as he enjoyed the hospitality of the King's Head public house it re-appeared as the Maypole in his novel *Barnaby Rudge*.

Historically, hermits have been associated with forests and Dido 'Jones' fulfilled this rôle in Hainault when he came to Chigwell Row, Hainault Forest in 1880. He set up camp where he lived a gypsy-like existence. A noted herbalist, he helped cure many who were ill. Around the turn of the century Alice Clark (1890-1964) used to visit him with other local children. She said his camp was under a large oak tree to the left of Sheep Water, a well, and that he always wore a type of 'Fez,' possibly a Victorian smoking cap, with a tassel on the top. She said they used to call him 'Dido

Jones'. This may have been the local children's nickname for Dido, as there are no other known references to the 'Jones'. There was much speculation as to his former life; it was suggested he had been thwarted in love like the Queen from whom he took his name.

The Blacksmith's Forge was a vital establishment in any community and Cutler's Forge at Stapleford Tawney was no exception. The photograph of this building shot in 1955 shows an upright slim horse chestnut which cast a shade over horses as they waited to be shod. This tree was much larger when it blew over in 1987 but new growth has sprouted from its prostrate form - a reminder of just how resilient trees can be.

John Locke (1632-1704), who lived at Otes Manor at the end of his life, was intrigued by the enthusiasm shown by his contemporaries for the new plants arriving from overseas and the desire to plant unusual trees to embellish parks and gardens. The selection of this lime, which may date from that time, recognises not just the longevity of species other than oaks but also celebrates just how important these specifically planted trees are in planned landscapes.

### These trees appear in the following section:

**Dido's Oak** in Hainault Forest in Lambourne nominated by Peter Comber and Devon Scott.

**Dickens' Oak** in Chigwell nominated by Tracy Clarke, Mrs M. Cowling, Sue de Luca, R. Wiskin and David Wixley.

**Grandfather's Oak**, Swaines Green in Epping nominated by Paul Flack and Martin McCleary.

**Cutler's Forge Horse Chestnut** in Stapleford Tawney nominated by the Padfield family.

**North Weald Memorial Oak** in North Weald Bassett nominated by Brenda Perridge of North Weald Bassett and District Rural Preservation Society.

**The Three Graces** round the War Memorial in Epping nominated by Jane Gregory and Monica Ricketts.

**Otes Manor Lime** in High Laver nominated by Margaret Morgan.

**Alderton Hill Oak** in Loughton nominated by Wendy Webb.

**Bushes Farm Oak** in Magdalen Laver nominated by Charmaine Alexander.

**Gilwell Oak** in Waltham Abbey nominated by Peter Evans.

## Dido's Oak

*Quercus robur*

With a girth of 3.5 metres Dido's Oak stands adjacent to Sheep Water, a very tranquil place within a part of Hainault Forest managed by the Woodland Trust. It is located at grid reference TQ 47131 93513.

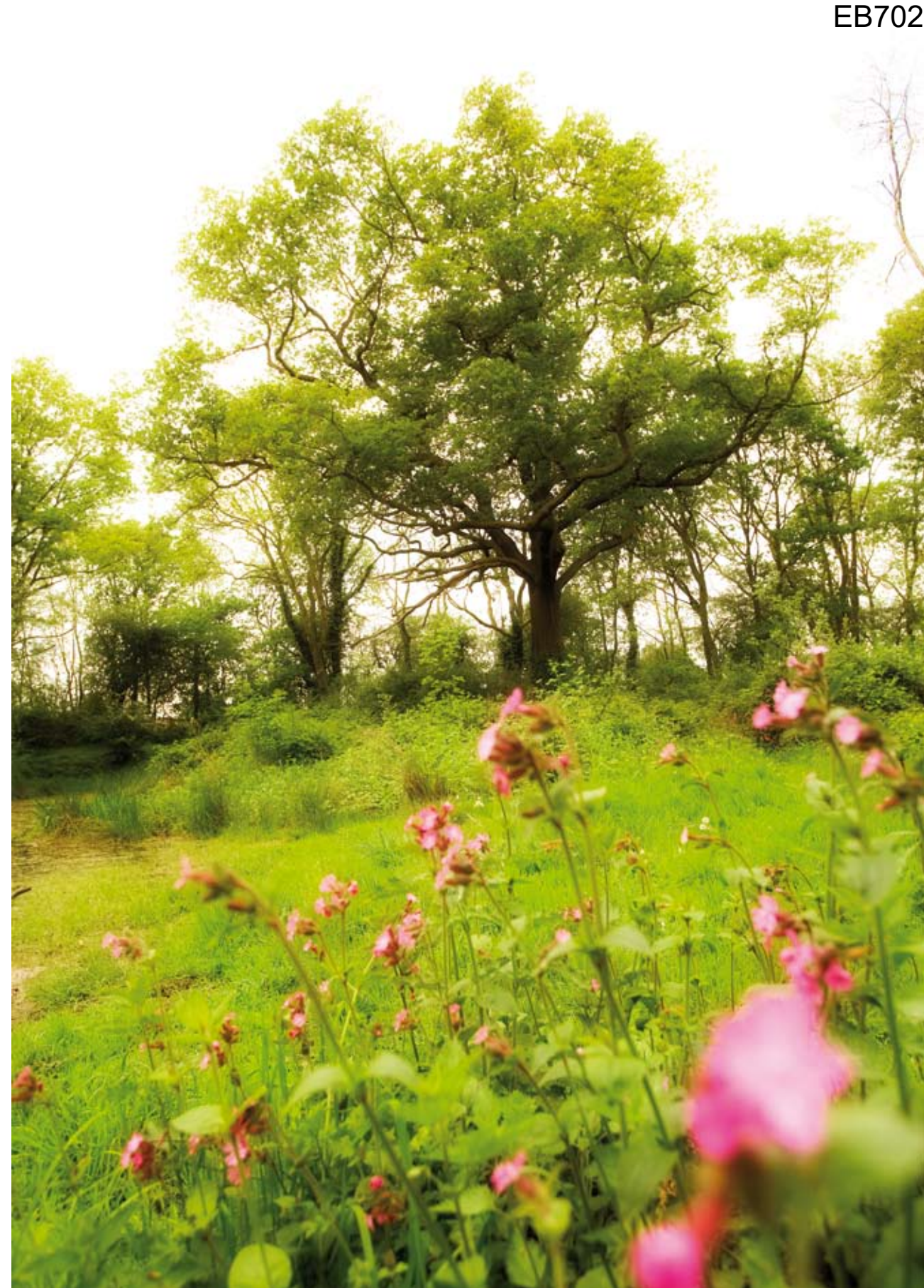
This tree has been nominated by two people. Devon Scott mentioned how this tree is special: "I see this very tall oak tree every time I walk our dogs with mummy. It is reflected in the water and it is very restful when you are on the seat opposite, even in the winter. It is taller than other trees around and is my favourite tree."

Peter Comber, the local Tree Warden, explained how the tree got its name: "During the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century several gypsies, tramps and vagabonds lived in Hainault Forest. The most famous of these was the herbalist Dido, who came to Chigwell Row in 1880. Many of his remedies included 'cures' for whooping cough, measles, burns and liver complaints. He would visit the sick, even those with contagious diseases such as diphtheria and scarlet fever, when others would stay away. Rare ferns collected from Loughton were made into a 'green ointment' that he used for cuts and bruises, sprains, rheumatism and chilblains. The story goes that one winter's day the driver of the horse-drawn bus that went from Lambourne to Woodford had chilblains so bad that he could not hold his reins. Dido's green ointment allegedly cured him in two days! He was a bit of a rogue: he collected the leaves of hawthorn and blackthorn and dried and sold them as tea in Bunhill Row market in the East End. He also caught wild birds and sold them. In 1905 he had to leave the Forest, along with the gypsies and travellers and lived in a field in Vicarage Lane. After his death his real name was revealed as William Bell, a London docker and part-time fishmonger."



The Dido oak stands on the edge of a pond in a clearing in Hainault Forest. Red campion flowers in the foreground add a splash of colour.

Dido in his characteristic fez. He lived in a rough shelter under this oak in a corner of Hainault Forest.





## Dickens' Oak

*Quercus robur*

This fine maiden tree stands in the verge of Vicarage Lane in Chigwell Village, where it is passed each day by all those who use this busy road. Known locally as the Dickens' Oak after Charles Dickens who used The King's Head public house nearby as the model for the Maypole in *Barnaby Rudge*. The grid reference is TQ 44288 93917.

Treasured by many others it was specifically nominated by five people including Tracy Clarke and local Tree Warden David Wixley with these comments: "Its majestic appearance represents a triumph of nature against the incursions. This is such a prominent and large old tree, it makes us think of an old mother hen (a really fat one with a bonnet on her head!) and it is reassuring to see it there every time you turn into the lane. Our reason for picking this tree is simply the enormous girth of its trunk. There may be bigger oak trees but we can't recall seeing one. Despite some damage it looks in good health still, even though it is on a verge sandwiched between a busy road on one side and a tarmac footpath lapping its base on the other. It is a good example of the fierce determination of nature to survive!"

Mrs M. Cowling, Sue de Luca and R. Wiskin were inspired by its great age and all re-affirmed that it must be preserved for posterity.

At 5.90 metres in girth this is one of the older street trees in the area and must be at least 500 years old.



The horses in the adjacent field appreciate the shade cast by the spreading branches of this old oak.

## Grandfather's Oak

*Quercus robur*

This well-grown maiden tree with a girth of 4.07 metres stands in an area of developing woodland in Forties Field, part of Swaines Green, on the edge of Epping. This tree is a symbol of the achievements of a local group, The Friends of Swaines Green, who campaigned to save this site from development. The grid reference is TL 45405 02538.

For many years, the residents of Epping had enjoyed access to Swaines Green under a lease between the previous owner and Epping Town Council. The Friends of Swaines Green collected £25,000 from a variety of sources including Epping Town Council. In 2005, additional funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the City of London became available and the purchase of the 5.6 hectares (14 acres) was completed in June of that year. In addition, the adjacent 1.8 hectare (4.5 acres) meadow is owned by Epping Town Council and is also a public open space.

Swaines Green is made up of three fields bordered by an old trackway, Bolt Cellar Lane. The area has been covered by a Tree Preservation Order since 1992 and was designated as a Wildlife Site in 1998.

This mosaic of ancient fields and hedgerows clearly reminds us of the time when our ancestors cleared the original wild wood to begin farming in Epping. The management of the land is carried out by Epping Forest District Council's Countrycare team in association with the Friends of Swaines Green, Epping Town Council and the City of London.



Martin McCleary nominated this tree: "Because it is the favourite tree of Gilbert Grady. Gilbert was one of the first to realise the potential of Swaines Green as a place of outstanding quality for wildlife and people to enjoy. He, along with Bill Booth, put the wheels in motion which eventually led to the area being purchased for the people of Epping to enjoy."

Martin McCleary and Paul Flack beneath the nominated tree at Swaines Green. For further information about the area and an update on planned events visit [www.swainesgreen.org.uk](http://www.swainesgreen.org.uk).



## Cutler's Forge Horse Chestnut

*Aesculus hippocastanum*



This photograph of Cutler's Forge was taken in 1955 by Mrs M. Tomlinson. The horse chestnut tree is on the left. Copyright Oxford University Press.

This tree 'lies' at the south end of Tawney Lane, Stapleford Tawney, outside Cutler's Forge on private land. It is located at grid reference TQ 50585 97790.

The Padfield family nominated this tree as it shows a special resilience: "It appears in a 1950s photo of the last Tawney blacksmith, Horace Parker, outside Cutler's Forge. Horses waiting to be shod used to shelter under it from rain or sun. The 1987 gale blew it sideways. The residents of the house in the background covered the exposed roots with topsoil and it has continued to grow, flower and produce conkers ever since."

Most species of tree will continue to live if blown over in a storm provided that there are some roots still within the ground. New trunks grow from the prostrate trunk, which in time may well decay leaving several young trees all in a row!

A view along the trunk of this massive horse chestnut which has continued to grow after it fell in 1987.



## North Weald Memorial Oak

*Quercus robur*



This pollarded oak tree stands on a piece of open ground beside the Second World War Memorial at North Weald Airfield Museum. With a girth of 4.2 metres it is a well-proportioned tree. It is located at grid reference TL 49021 03802.

Brenda Perridge of the North Weald Bassett and District Rural Preservation Society commented that: "This is a handsome

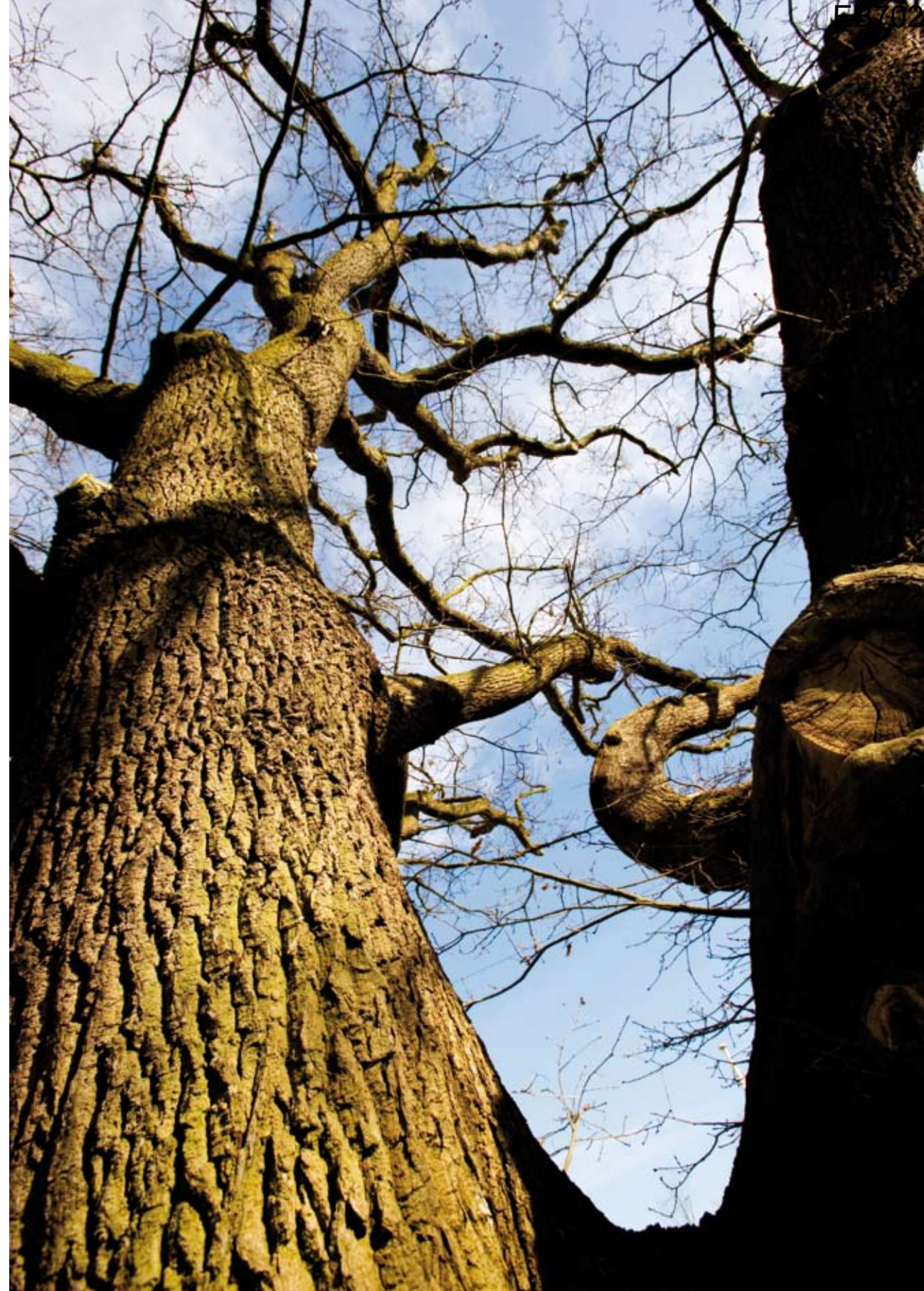
landmark tree adding dignity to the scene. Grouped beside it is the War Memorial and North Weald Airfield Museum, so we are reminded of wartime users of the Airfield who would have known it. For centuries it would have been seen by travellers on foot - agricultural workers, road-menders, vagrants and others on horseback or with horse-drawn vehicles carrying passengers and deliveries. Was it planted deliberately or did an acorn fall by chance at the perfect spot on fertile ground? We shall never know. Did children climb it? Did adults appreciate a rest in its shade?

This tree is very much a part of North Weald Bassett and may it flourish to be part of the parish's history for many more generations."

A graceful silver birch has been planted to the side of the War Memorial and its white bark contrasts with the sombre bark of the favourite oak.

This dramatic angle shows the architectural features of this tree in early spring.

This oak is a fitting backdrop to the War Memorial and its form enhances the symbolism of this special place.



## The Three Graces

*Quercus robur*



The overhead tracery of twigs against the winter sky reveals how each tree occupies its own space.

The Three Graces surrounding the War Memorial on the Green.



These three oaks stand on the Green beside the Epping War Memorial on Palmers Hill, Epping. All are maiden trees and the largest has a girth of 2.17 metres. The Green is part of Epping Forest and is managed by the City of London. The grid reference is TL 46365 02622.

Monica Ricketts reminded us: “These trees protect our War Memorial and keep those we remember company. I call them ‘The Three Graces’. The larger two trees and their sibling tree shoulder the War Memorial on the Green from the northwest winds. They are magnificent and give so much to those we remember in each and every season. Not least in the silence before dawn and then with the help of bird song at dawn, we remember them. The squirrels, too, love the acorns.”

Jane Gregory stated: “I have been lucky to live in Spriggs Court for 12 years, in a flat overlooking the Green and I have admired the oak trees day and night through all the seasons. They have become part of the daily life of myself and my husband. For me, they represent the quintessential English tree.”



## Otes Manor Lime

*Tilia platyphyllos*

This lime tree stands to the northeast of Faggotters Farm within a private meadow on the former grounds of Otes Manor, an old moated site in the parish of High Laver. It is visible from the nearby public bridleway. The grid reference is TL 52277 10247.

It may well have been planted in about 1691 by John Locke as he was living at Otes Manor as a paying guest of Sir Francis Masham and his wife Damaris, who had been Locke's friend for some years. John Locke the philosopher (1632-1704) was one of the most influential writers in history and profoundly affected the principles upon which the Government of the United States was founded.

Margaret Morgan's reasons for nominating this tree were unusual. She wrote: "I was doing some research and found an article by Peter Laslett, who was a reader in politics and history of social structure at Cambridge University. In the article *'The History of Today: The rise and fall of an English Family'* (1953), he wrote: 'In 1690 it was the ageing John Locke who sunned himself in that vanished garden sloping down to what is now a dismal marsh. It was he who watched these two fine lime trees in their early years, or even he who planted them, since he sent seeds to Holland for a lime avenue to another friend. Beneath their slowly growing shade he read to the Masham children.'"

Peter Laslett visited the site in about 1992 and he took several cuttings of the remaining lime tree back to Cambridge, where they still flourish.



The twisted hollow trunks of this worthy winner still manage to support a large amount of foliage and blossom.

This illustration of Otes Manor in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century shows some newly-planted trees. Perhaps one of them is this surviving lime? Copyright Essex Record Office.



## Alderton Hill Oak

*Quercus robur*

This maiden tree with a girth of 4.07 metres stands in a prominent position on a piece of green space beside Borders Lane and Alderton Hill in Loughton. It is located at grid reference TQ 43116 96365.

Wendy Webb, who nominated this tree in 2006 as a tribute to her father, mentioned that: "I sit most days with my father under this huge, spreading oak tree. My father, who is 96 years of age, lives in a residential home in Alderton Hill and I take him in his wheelchair to this spot to watch the world go by."

Many parts of Loughton and Buckhurst Hill have fine oaks like this one. They have been incorporated into gardens or survive as street trees. Their locations mark former field boundaries when the area was farmland and show how urban development has taken over the open countryside.

Urban trees are important as they help to screen buildings, provide oxygen and give wildlife a chance to flourish. Daily contact with trees improves our wellbeing. We should all wake up to see one from the bedroom window!



This tall oak provides some welcome shade at this busy junction.

Dangling male oak catkins release pollen, which is blown by the wind to the tiny female flowers so they can be fertilised and develop into acorns.



## Bushes Farm Oak

*Quercus robur*

This maiden tree stands at the top of a hill between Moreton and Bushes Farm, in the parish of Magdalen Laver. With a girth of 3.13 metres it started growing some 150 years ago. It stands on private farmland so there is no direct access but it can be seen from the public footpath that runs close by. It is typical of the many magnificent trees which still survive in the field boundaries in this largely agricultural part of the district. The grid reference is TL 52725 07482.

Charmaine Alexander said in her nomination that: "I pass this tree at least three times a week on my dog walks, so I see it in every light, weather condition and season. It never fails to inspire me and I have been known to talk to this tree. I mentioned this to another dog walker one day who also uses the same route and guess what? ...She also talks to the tree. So I have liberated tree talking if nothing else. This tree is a symbol of human endeavour. It stands alone high on a stony hill top. Every time the roots hit a stone it is reflected in the canopy of gnarled and fused branches. It has stood for centuries, now a sentinel, a tribute to the Essex agricultural landscape and a symbol of our English heritage."



This favourite oak is a lone tree in the agricultural landscape and reminds us of the many lost hedges.





## Gilwell Oak

*Quercus robur*

This is one of many veteran pollarded oak trees that stand within the private grounds of the Scout Association's Headquarters at Gilwell Park. The Park was given to Baden Powell in 1919 by Scout Commissioner, William DeBois Maclaren, as a training centre for his fledgling youth movement. This magnificent tree is part of an ancient hedgerow bordering fields. This tree is located at grid reference TQ 38510 96510.

Access to the tree is by appointment only, as this site is a training complex for the Scouting Movement.

Peter Evans remarks in nominating this tree that: "The Gilwell Oak is a 500 year old fine specimen of its species standing on the western edge of Epping Forest. It has a girth of 4.80 metres and a height of at least 14 metres. Its imposing presence, at the end of an area known as the Training Ground, is appreciated by Scouts from all over the UK and the world, who gather each year in the park for the annual Gilwell Reunion."

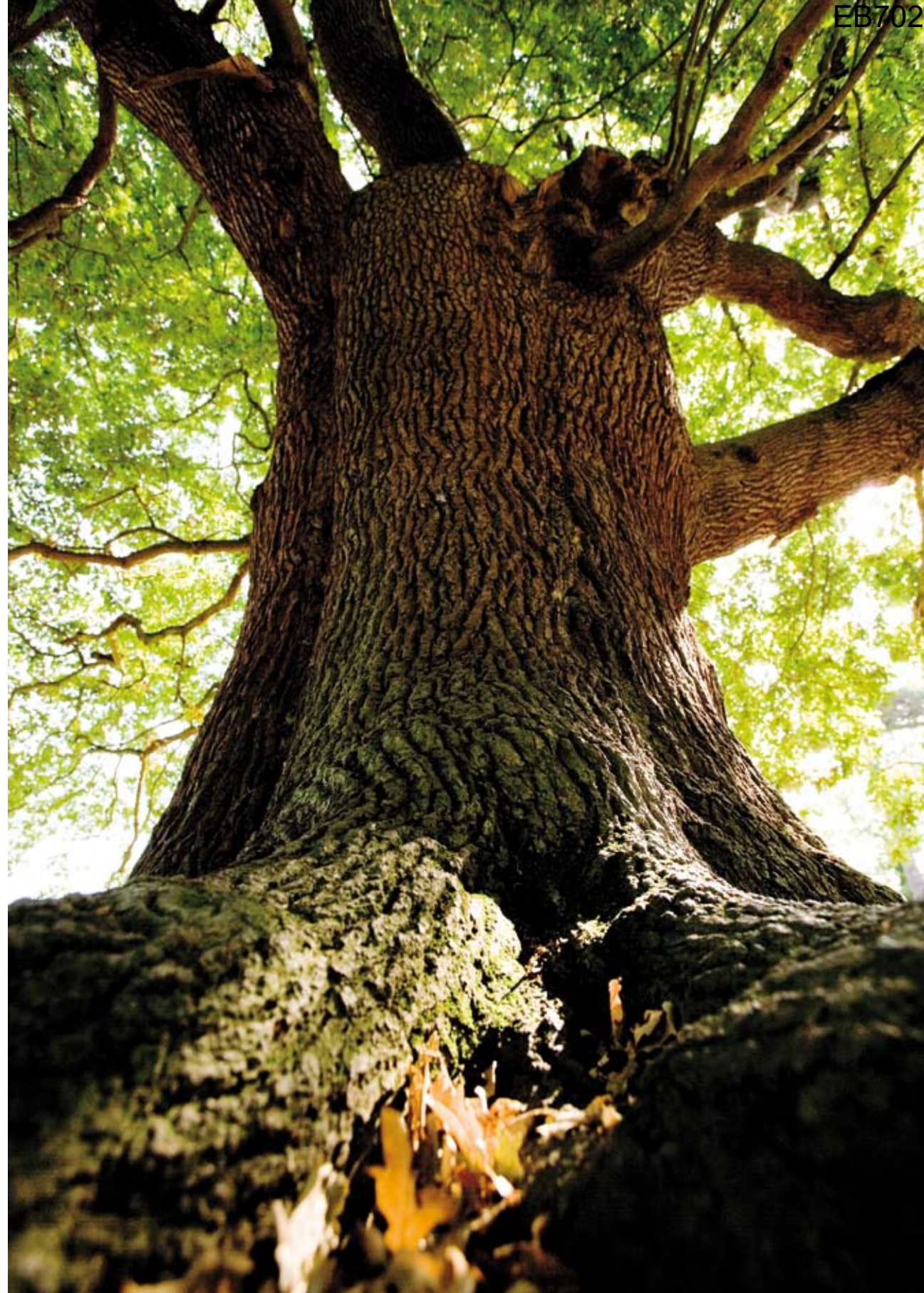
In 2007, the Scouting Movement celebrated its centenary and 40,000 Scouts from many different countries visited the Park.

For more information, read Rogers, Peter (1998): *Gilwell Park: A Brief History and Guided Tour*. The Scout Association.



Henry VIII may have ridden beneath this tree when he hunted deer in the Forest.

This tree is a popular meeting point for Scouts from all over the world.



## Old Age Trees

This final section of the Favourite Trees contains seven oaks, an ash and one hornbeam. These were chosen as they represent all the old trees within the district.

Certain tree species live for many centuries, growing fatter year by year. This is especially true of oaks which grow for 300 years, spend the next 300 years living and then decline into old age for the next 300 or so years! In recent years, enthusiasts in many countries have been searching for the oldest examples of oaks. The Major Oak in Sherwood Forest is 10 metres in girth and thought to be about 800 years old. There is one in Essex in a private estate with similar dimensions but the Fredville Oak in Kent is two metres larger! Old oaks can be found in Europe: the Chapel Oak at Rouen in France is outclassed by a famous hollow oak in Runskukkaeken in Småland, Sweden, which was described by Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) when it was being used as a tool shed. Today this tree is still alive, with a girth of 14 metres and it is thought to be about 1,000 years old! To date, the largest oak recorded for the Epping Forest district is 6.6 metres. This and others of similar dimensions are much younger than these really ancient trees so the hunt is on for any bigger ones out there! Naturally, such venerable trees are impossible to replace and the Veteran Tree project aims to locate, record and monitor them.

The larger and older the tree, the more nooks, crannies and other holes it develops. It will provide perching and nesting sites for birds such as kestrels, owls, tree creepers and great tits. In addition, oaks are able to support many species of fungi, over 300 species of lichen and at least 40 species of gall. (These are unusual growth forms on the leaves and twigs produced by midges, mites and wasps.) Oak leaves are food for many species of moth larvae, as well as the caterpillars of the purple hairstreak butterfly. Numerous beetles, including the oak bark beetle and the stag beetle, feed on rotting wood. Old ash and hornbeams also support a variety of other organisms but are less well studied. Future projects will help to redress the balance.

## The following trees are in this final section:

**Hither Six Acre Oak** in Chigwell nominated by Patrick Bailly.

**St John's Pond Oak** in Buckhurst Hill nominated by Miss K. Gilmore.

**Chigwell Row Hornbeam** in Chigwell nominated by Peter Comber.

**Upshire Ash** in Waltham Abbey nominated by the Ellis Family.

**The High Oak** in Ongar nominated by Tricia Moxey.

**Boundary Oak** in Roydon nominated by Madeleine Paine.

**Domesday Oak** in Sheering nominated by Sheering Parish Council.

**Albyn's Oak** in Stapleford Abbots nominated by Kirsten Gray.

**Coleman's Farm Oak** in Stanford Rivers nominated by Rob Brooks.

Fungi are vital to the health of all trees. They are particularly important in sustaining veteran trees and perform a crucial rôle in breaking down dead wood. Heartwood-rotting fungi such as the chicken of the woods (*Laetiporus sulphureus*) do not kill trees but create hollows in trunks and heavy branches. This reduces the weight and makes hollow trees more stable aiding their longevity. Photograph by Paul Hewitt.



## Hither Six Acre Oak

*Quercus robur*

This impressive veteran oak tree with a girth of 4.10 metres stands on the eastern boundary of Hither Six Acres on the Roding Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve (LNR). The Reserve is owned by EFDC and the Grange Farm Centre Trust and is managed by the Essex Wildlife Trust. There is public access over the Reserve, with parking available next to the David Lloyd Centre off Roding Lane, Chigwell. This Favourite Tree is located at grid reference TQ 43833 95159.

Patrick Bailly, Warden, Essex Wildlife Trust, Roding Valley Meadows LNR commented in his nomination of this tree: “There are many veteran oaks present in this Reserve. They are mostly found growing within the network of mature hedgerows which follow the ancient parish boundaries and along the ancient Green Lane. This mediæval trackway was used as a packhorse and drovers’ route from Epping Forest to Romford Market.

“The ecological importance of these old hedgerows cannot be undervalued. They provide a network of corridors for many woodland species of birds, mammals and invertebrates within a mosaic of flower rich meadows, which extends into a very urban setting. The mature oak above all tree species plays the most important rôle, providing habitats for more organisms, especially invertebrates, than any other tree. This veteran oak on Roding Valley Meadows Nature Reserve is my favourite for many reasons, including the green woodpeckers which are frequently seen and heard along this ancient hedgerow in winter months drumming on hollow limbs.”



Patrick Bailly standing beside the gnarled trunk of this boundary tree.

A field of blue flowered devil's bit scabious is a stunning sight in late summer in this reserve.



## St John's Pond Oak

*Quercus robur*

This veteran pollarded tree with a girth of 3.80 metres stands beside the pond next to St John's Church, Buckhurst Hill. It is located within Epping Forest, which is managed by the City of London. Its massive spreading roots, which anchor the tree in the gravelly soil, spread as far from the trunk as the branches spread overhead and they draw sufficient water from the ground to keep it supplied throughout the warm summer months. The grid reference is TQ 40808 94073.

High winds can tear whole branches from a tree like this one. Within Epping Forest they are left to decay, a process which will take many years. Damage such as this alters the appearance of the tree but as it matures it often responds with fresh growth from the trunk closer to the ground.

Miss K. Gilmore reminds us how trees like this can be used to fire the imagination of those who view it by describing it as: "A castle, a pirate ship and a meeting place for generations of children."

Trees have a calming influence on our stressful lives and reflections in water double the impact and soothe the soul!



The oak leaves are eaten by wood pigeons as well as many moth caterpillars. The caterpillars in turn are eaten by blue tits, great tits and starlings. Any caterpillars which escape being eaten become moths but they may get eaten by bats!

The pond is a former gravel pit which has filled with water. Ducks and other water fowl are found here and some nest on the floating islands.



## Chigwell Row Hornbeam

*Carpinus betulus*



This veteran pollarded tree with a girth of 2.4 metres grows in Chigwell Row Wood Local Nature Reserve. The 15.6 hectares (38.5 acres) of the reserve can be found between the A1112 Romford Road and the B173 Lambourne Road at Chigwell Row.

There is car parking at Lodge Close off Manor Road or alternatively, the nearest stations are Grange Hill or Hainault. It is located at grid reference TQ 46280 92937.

Peter Comber in his nomination of this tree states that it is: "A beautifully-formed pollarded hornbeam that has survived for many centuries. Along with many others around it, this tree was regularly pollarded up until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century."

Although this is one of the only two hornbeams listed in the 50 Favourite Trees, many other pollarded hornbeams and pollarded oaks can be found in this ancient woodland reserve. Many of these old pollards have become top heavy and are falling apart but the dead wood within them is an ideal habitat for at least 500 different species of insect, some of which are only found in trees of this antiquity.

Since 1986, there has been some careful management of the site by Epping Forest Countrycare, to open up the area by removing some young saplings to encourage a range of wild flowers and grasses to flourish beneath the older trees adding to the biodiversity of this site.



These tender young hornbeam leaves show the toothed edge typical of this species. The main veins of the leaf are quite distinctive. Many moth caterpillars feed on leaves such as these.

Sunlight filters through the canopy of delicate leaves and branches soaring some 15 metres overhead on this ancient tree.

Peter Comber, a local Tree Warden and keen photographer nominated three of the winning 50 Favourite Trees.



## Upshire Ash

*Fraxinus excelsior*



Ash keys often remain on the tree until late in the spring. Bullfinches may feast on them.

This ash tree stands opposite the site of the village school which was demolished in 1953. It stands on the Epping Forest verge opposite Ash Tree Cottage, Horseshoe Hill, Upshire Village. It is owned and managed by the City of London, Conservators of Epping Forest. It is located at grid reference TL 41602 01028.

In nominating this tree siblings Harold, Roland, Myrtle and Jane Ellis stated that: “We can remember a time when this village had a school, a shop, a post office and a thriving working and social community. The church and the village hall struggle to maintain the community spirit but it becomes harder all the time. This tree is a living link with the old Upshire.”

Sue McKinley, Upshire Tree Warden, added these comments about the Ellis family brothers and sisters. “Their ages ranging from 80-90, they are the second generation of this farming family who attended the old Upshire School. They tell wonderful stories of walking to school, each carrying a potato with their names inscribed into the skin to put on the school range for lunch and the girls being given the favoured job of brushing down the schoolmistress’s long, navy serge skirt at the end of a chalky day.

“The school was the centre of village life, acting as a village hall, meeting place and Sunday school. In the 1930s, cattle grazed the Green which was white with clover and had two trees, a hawthorn (long gone) and this ash. On May Day, the girls from the school, in dresses decorated with big bows, danced around the ash tree.”

The traditional rhyme runs:

*Oak before the ash  
and we shall have a splash.*

*Ash before the oak  
and we shall have a soak.*

Bud burst in ash is linked to increasing day length. Oaks respond to warmer temperatures.



## The High Oak

*Quercus robur*



This veteran pollarded tree stands in the front garden of Oaktrees, High Ongar Road, High Ongar. It is located at grid reference TL 55843 04095.

Even in an urban setting hollow trees like this one provide roosts for bats and other wildlife. Photograph by Tricia Moxey.

In nominating this tree, Tricia Moxey commented: “This tree, a pollarded oak, is one of seven which once stood alongside the road linking Epping to Chelmsford. Five have disappeared. An ivy-covered stump

of another survives on a neighbour’s lawn. This section of the High Ongar Road to the east of Chipping Ongar was bypassed when the A414 was straightened some years ago. A former owner of the tree once told me that this line of trees gave shelter to cattle as they were driven to market.

“Another story tells of how a couple of years ago a lady turned up to check that the tree was still there. She had been evacuated to live at Oaktrees as a young girl in the 1940s and although she now lives in Canada this tree had left such a lasting impression on her that she had to make the pilgrimage to visit it when she came over to England.

“The tree has a hollow centre but the outer part of the trunk is very much alive. It has been pollarded many times in its history and was pruned heavily in 2007. Since then it has put on some good growth. I feel that it is an excellent example of careful crown reduction/pruning and it shows that this technique rejuvenates a tree of this size.

Trimmed again in 2007, this tree has responded well by putting on new fresh growth.

“A tree of this girth (4.50 metres) which has been pollarded several times in its long life is at least 320 years old. Although the countryside of Essex does contain many healthy and vigorous trees of this size, they all need to be recorded and monitored to ensure their continued protection.”

Trees have roots which spread outwards in a similar radius beneath the ground as the branches grow out from the trunk. Roots anchor the tree and absorb water from the soil. When buildings encroach into the root space of an established tree, consideration must be given to the type of foundations needed to minimise the problem of possible subsidence in dry conditions. Regular crown reduction of the canopy, as in this case, can reduce the likelihood of soil heave which would occur if the tree is felled.



## Boundary Oak

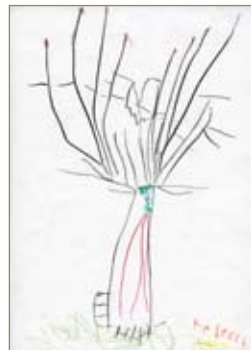
*Quercus robur*



This maiden tree stands in a hedgerow on private land separating Redricks Nursery from neighbouring farmland at Roydon on the edge of Harlow. With a girth of 3.8 metres it has been here for over 150 years. It is located at grid reference TL 42250 07900.

Madeleine Paine mentioned that: “My nomination is an oak in a hedgerow next to an agricultural field in my Tree Warden patch in

Roydon. I live close to the boundary of Harlow and Roydon on a ridge of land that acts as a green buffer around urban Harlow. This could change if housing development in the sensitive countryside to the south and west of Harlow is approved. I chose my tree several years ago whilst out walking with my daughter. As a then three year old, she commented on how its roots looked like a hand holding onto the ground. It made me think how right she was when this tree and all around it had become so vulnerable. Two years on the situation looks worse than ever. This tree, like many others around the district and throughout the whole of the country, is under threat from development. I would like to nominate this tree as a martyr to our cause in Roydon. Since trees cannot speak for themselves it is up to us, the people who care about trees and the environment in which we live, to protect it now and for future generations.”



This large oak growing within an old hedge in a field on the outskirts of Roydon is an essential part of these green corridors which give character to the countryside.

This drawing by Rebecca Paine age four captures the spirit of this Favourite Tree.





# Domesday Oak

*Quercus robur*

This veteran oak stands in the grounds of the Lawrence Moorings Development off Sheering Mill Lane in Lower Sheering. The River Stort flows to the west alongside this narrow strip of private land but the tree is visible from the road. With a girth of 6.40 metres, it is one of the largest oaks recorded so far outside of Epping Forest. It is located at grid reference TL 48848 14432.

Sheering Parish Council Members gave their reasons for nominating it as: "It is said this massive oak tree is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, which would make it nearly a thousand years old. Certainly it is now known locally as the Domesday Oak."

This is a large oak but not sufficiently large to be 1,000 years old. Though there is sadly no note of a specific oak in Sheering in the Domesday Record of 1086, there was woodland for 100 swine within the area and this fine ancient oak is certainly a descendant of an oak growing at the time of the Conquest in 1066.

As an oak ages it becomes hollow as the wood within it rots. This is a natural process as various fungi start to decompose the heartwood which was formed 100 or more years ago. The rot starts at the base of the trunk and spreads upwards.

The debris provides food for many wood-boring beetles and the hollows which form become ideal habitats for foxes, bats and owls. The brackets of edible beef steak fungus are commonly found on these veteran oaks in September.



Hollow trunks like this are characteristic of veteran trees. The wood-rotting fungi release nutrients for re-use by the tree, a form of natural recycling.

As the ridges on the bark of this ancient oak deepen, spiders and other small creatures can live in the crevices. Nuthatches probe the bark as they climb down the trunk and tree creepers, with their smaller bills, feed as they make their way up the trunk.



## Albyn's Oak

*Quercus robur*

This magnificent old pollarded oak stands on private land within the grounds of Albyn's Farm, Stapleford Abbots. It is easily visible from a public footpath which passes close by. This tree is one of the largest so far recorded outside of Epping Forest with a girth of 6.05 metres recorded at 1.5 metres from the ground. It is located at grid reference TQ 50612 06808.

Nominated by Kirsten Gray: "This tree is one of the few remaining giants that once stood in the grounds of Albyn's Hall. This tree stands alone and is a constant reminder of how our landscape once was. It is in our interest that we look after these trees in a sustainable fashion, to preserve our 'heritage' for future generations." Kirsten was really delighted that this fabulous oak was selected to be one of the 50 Favourite Trees of the district.

In 1570 estate records of the Manor of Albyn's list that there were 240 acres arable, 40 acres meadow, 140 acres pasture and 50 acres wood. This pattern of fields had probably existed for several previous centuries and remained largely unchanged until the removal of hedgerows in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, leaving isolated trees like this one.



Some pollarded oaks seem to have been cut well above head height. Perhaps the landowner, who owned the trunk, wanted a useful length of timber when the tree was ready to be felled. It certainly meant that the new growth was well out of reach of any browsing cattle! Such high cut pollards have been nicknamed 'giraffe' pollards and this Favourite Tree is an example of one.

Fortunately many of these pollarded trees have survived as they are an outstanding feature of the landscape. They were once a source of firewood and fodder for the tenants of the farmland.



## The Coleman's Farm Oak

*Quercus robur*



This veteran oak stands in a hedgerow to the east of Coleman's Farm, Clatterford End, in the parish of Stanford Rivers. With a girth of 5.64 metres it is one of the biggest pollards recorded on the tree hunt outside of Epping Forest. It is on private land but is visible from the public footpath. It is located at grid reference TL 52995 02034.

Rob Brooks commented that: "This ancient hedgerow oak has a large,

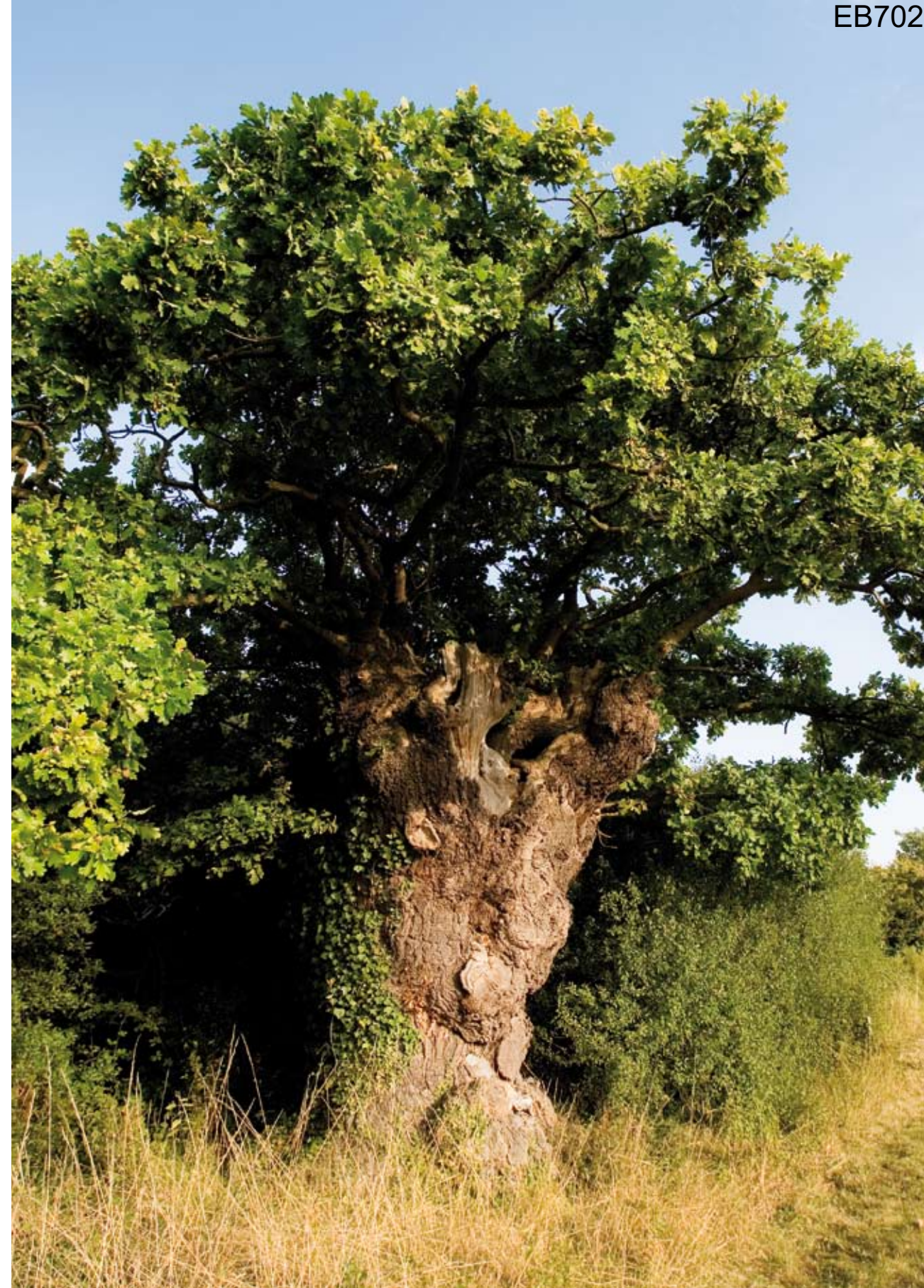
gnarled and knobby bole. Pollarding of the tree was resumed 20 years ago but only after similar success had been achieved on a nearby, lesser oak. Its continuing value as a wildlife habitat has been safeguarded and future generations of country lovers can appreciate the aesthetic nature of this notable tree. Such considerate management is widely evident in the neighbouring farmland where a careful regard for the conservation of trees and hedges is clearly apparent.

"The appreciation of the importance of the farm to the landscape was recognised through the presentation to the farmer of the award for conservation from the Essex Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group in their annual competition in 1986."

In a good mast year, oaks like this produce a superabundance of acorns which provide a feast for jays, magpies and squirrels. In the past, farmers fattened their swine on acorns in the autumn, before slaughtering them for the Christmas feast.

Mature trees like this still produce vast numbers of acorns ensuring that their genes will be passed on.

This ancient oak is riddled with beetle holes. Woodpeckers feast on the beetle larvae and other insects found in the decaying wood.



## Education



A key theme to the Favourite Tree project is to encourage youngsters to value and respect our natural heritage. With the support of GreenArc four local schools were chosen to participate in a Key Stage 2 Art and Design programme.

One special feature about the four selected

schools was that the pupils had access to trees within the grounds or nearby open space. This provides many opportunities for cross curriculum activities involving Maths, Science, English, Art, Technology and IT.

Whilst outside in the fresh air the children had every opportunity to explore the trees by measuring their height and girth and were able to plot locations using Global Positioning System equipment. They also identified the species.



Learning is fun! Pupils at Roydon Primary School express their enthusiasm as they discover the trees in their school grounds. Photograph taken by a Roydon pupil.

Pupils from Thomas Willingale School pose for a class photograph as part of the record of their tree survey work in the local allotments.

Jordan Thomas, a Conservation Officer of Epping Forest Countrycare, is recorded by pupils of Thomas Willingale School talking about the ecology of the school hedge.



In each group a sound crew was elected to record and document the survey. Other children were given the task of making notes or using digital cameras to photograph the project in a creative and documentary way.

The next stage of the project was to head back to the classroom with a collection of leaves and twigs. There the children made observational drawings using magnifying glasses to look at the fine detail of the veins and textures of the leaves. By closely studying

Lambourne Primary School pupils conducting interviews in their school grounds. Photograph taken by a Lambourne pupil.





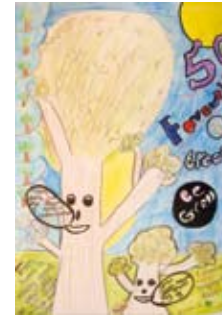
these details the children were encouraged to observe aspects of the natural world which they would not normally appreciate. In addition, the pupils were challenged to design eye catching posters with the theme: Protect our Trees.

A further aspect of the project involved creative writing about trees, either by writing poems, stories or by short dramatic presentations.

Digital pictures and sound recordings provide extra support material for future work.

This project continued by discussing environmental issues and the importance of trees. By learning about the balance of nature at this early stage in their lives there is the hope that this will remain with them as they grow into adulthood. The enthusiasm of the children involved certainly made this part of the programme very worthwhile.

A Lambourne pupil with her scaled drawing of a leaf.



Tree posters were produced using the pupils own specially-designed GreenArc drawing pads.

The information gathered about each tree was uploaded onto the specific sections of the Favourite Tree website [www.favouritetrees.com](http://www.favouritetrees.com). This includes a selection of the drawings and some short sound clips as well.

Three hundred pupils were able to participate in this part of the project and their new-found enthusiasm for trees is infectious, rubbing off on family and friends. Future plans include the formation of a Epping Forest district Junior Tree Warden scheme and greater school participation with tree planting schemes across the district.

Without a doubt the various aspects of this project have been a great success. Our Veteran Tree Hunt has located far more veteran trees than expected including some being actively managed. Those who nominated Favourite Trees feel proud of their 'special' tree. The poster exhibition of the winners was well received and the creative output from the schools project speaks for itself.

We hope that this photographic record of the various aspects of the Favourite Tree project has enthused you sufficiently to visit at least some of these fantastic trees and to join in and encourage others around you to care for and protect our natural heritage for future generations to enjoy.



Home page of the Favourite Tree website: [www.favouritetrees.com](http://www.favouritetrees.com).

Pupils at Dr Walkers Primary School have their own piece of private woodland to study and enjoy. Photograph taken by a Dr Walkers School pupil.



## Acknowledgements

Special thanks are due to Jon Stokes, Director of Rural Programmes for The Tree Council, who first gave Chris Neilan and me the idea and inspiration for the Favourite Trees project. I would also like to thank the Local Heritage Initiative who grant aided the Favourite Trees project in the first place and made it all possible. To the following people who helped with the Favourite Trees project along the way: Mark Berry, Tracy Clarke, Antony O'Connor, Ken Crowther, Sue Doody, Tim Green, Andy Hall, Jon Hammerton, Mark Iley, David Jackman, Tony Kirkham, Chris Neilan, John Price and Paul Want. All of the people who took the time to nominate their tree: their thoughts make up the bulk of this book, as without them this project would have been meaningless. Grateful thanks to all the landowners, the guardians of the trees, who allowed us to photograph and record them. Thanks to the schools, teachers and pupils who took part in this project: Dr Walkers, Lambourne, Roydon and Thomas Willingale Primary Schools.

With specific reference to this book thanks are due to John Price (photography and design), Tricia Moxey (research, editing and co-author), Chris Neilan (co-author), Paul Hewitt (project manager), Jane Boreham and Abigail Oldham for their proofreading and Councillor Caroline Pond for the foreword to the book.

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Lastly, but by no means least, a big thank you to GreenArc who has sponsored this book and paid for its production and publication.

*Paul Hewitt, Countryside Manager, Epping Forest District Council.*



## About the Authors



Tricia Moxey moved with her family to the district in 1970, becoming involved with the running of the Epping Forest Conservation Centre with her husband, Paul. In 1992 she was appointed Information Officer for the public open space of Epping Forest. Tricia has considerable knowledge of the local countryside and although she officially retired in 2005 she is still actively engaged in environmental education and interpretation. She helped prepare the Ongar Tree Strategy for the District Council, which was published in 2008 and is enthusiastic about sharing her passion for trees with a wider audience.



John Price is a professional photographer with a degree in Fine Art. He has been a resident of Epping for 25 years. His enthusiasm for photography and the concept of developing a database for recording favourite trees was instrumental in persuading Epping Forest District Council to become involved in developing the Favourite Trees website. John's photographs of the 50 Favourite Trees were used in an exhibition at the Epping Forest District Museum in Waltham Abbey. These photographs have been used to form the basis of this book.



Chris Neilan has been a teacher, a tree surgeon and for the last 18 years the tree and landscape expert for Epping Forest District Council. As well as using conventional methods to protect trees, he initiated the Council's tree warden scheme and has pioneered working with the community on local tree strategies and projects such as Landmark Trees and Favourite Trees. His system for managing trees as financial assets of the community was recently featured in the Government's publication, *Trees in Towns II*.



Paul Hewitt has 20 years' experience in countryside management and has headed up Epping Forest District Council's Countryside Service, Epping Forest Countrycare, since 1994. His passion for conservation, and in particular the preservation of old trees, led to the formation of the Favourite Trees project and subsequent Veteran Tree Hunt. He has co-ordinated both these projects since their commencement in early 2006.

This book has been produced by Epping Forest District Council, with the support of The Local Heritage Initiative and GreenArc.

The featured trees are the winning entries in an open competition to find the Favourite Trees of Epping Forest district and to celebrate their importance in the life of the community.

It is the culmination of the Favourite Trees project but it is also part of a new initiative, to record and publish via the web the network of veteran trees across the whole district.

To learn more about both projects, to see all the entries in the competition and to find the record of veteran trees please visit the dedicated website:

[www.favouritetrees.com](http://www.favouritetrees.com)

Produced by Epping Forest District Council supported by GreenArc



[www.greenarc.org](http://www.greenarc.org)  
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