

The Billericay Tree Warden's Bi-monthly News-sheet for
March 2023

Our News-sheets are available to view on the Billericay Town Council's website including back issues and are listed under the header "The Town". There are also tree-related Fact Sheets included to advise residents. The Factsheets can also be viewed on Facebook at <https://tinyurl.com/k8bzd772> <https://tinyurl.com/3hxdy5m9>



Conserving Our Tree Heritage
In association with Billericay Town Council

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1] The Rising – Illegal Tree Work at East Ward in Sunnymede

At the end of January this year we had several very concerned enquiries about a mature oak tree that was in the process of being felled at the north end of The Rising; East Ward Sunnymede. What was the reason for such a characterful tree to be removed was the call? It formed a valuable "Street Scene" amenity tree for the road with its summer canopy of green leaves. We quickly contacted the Basildon Borough Council (BBC) and checked if the oak was designated with a TPO and the answer was in the negative.

Further enquiries revealed that it was the property owner of the adjacent house immediately north of the tree that had wanted the tree removed without any sensible or rational reason to justify it. In English law, to undertake work on a tree or to fell a tree one needs the property owner's permission that the tree resides on. This had not been obtained as the tree lay on a sliver of land that is unregistered and no one knows who the owner is – A fact that has been lost in the mists of time.



Furthermore, in England, there is no such thing as **No Man's Land** – All land is owned by someone, an individual, a Development company, a Local Authority, the Church, a Utility company or the Crown. The tree lay next to a culverted stream but the Environmental Agency does not own land and the tree is outside the boundary of the adjacent electricity substation. The Basildon Borough Council do not as a rule investigate the time consuming detective work of researching land ownership outside of using the usual channels.

The tree was half removed before the BBC Tree Officer arrived and forbade any more work on the tree. The Tree Surgeon (Hockley based) and he who ordered the felling were told that a **criminal act had been perpetrated** and any further work on the tree would involve the police being involved. The tree is now but half the height as per illustrated. A decision was made by BBC Planning that what was left of the tree would not qualify for a TPO designation.

Oak trees can be very resilient to such damage as they are a coppiced species and will regrow even if cut down to ground level but it will take many many years to recover its former self. This incident is a case of vandalism, ignorance and complete disrespect for the other residents who live nearby and had valued the oak as adding greenness to their lives. Also, there are professional Tree Surgeons out there who will see this act of vandalism as a blight on their integrity.

With thanks to our lady colleague (anonymity respected) who took it upon herself to sound the alarm and to tenaciously pursue the matter in great detail. We have not credited the photograph as we also respect their anonymity.

2] The Norsey Road Monkey Puzzle Tree

Norsey Road is known for its tree-line of mainly mature oaks that add a “Street Scene” amenity quality; for the road is a prestigious address for house ownership. However, over the years when gap-site Developers acquire a property they invariably extend or replace the existing dwelling with something far larger that requires the removal of one or two of the front garden oaks. This usually refers to that side of the road whose properties back onto Norsey Wood.

In October of 2022 one of our BTW members noticed that a For Sale sign was outside a property on the opposite side of Norsey Wood. In the front garden is a splendid mature and healthy Monkey Puzzle tree. Over the years we have realized that when properties change hands, that is usually the time when trees come under a “*perceived threat*”, that is the new owner may want a tree removed. In this case, the Monkey Puzzle represents not only a “Street Scene” amenity tree but also as a landmark as one drives or walks past it. We have reason to believe that the tree was planted in the early fifties.



On inspecting the Planning Application we realized that not only was the tree not illustrated on the architectural drawing but there was a note saying that the tree in the front garden was to be removed.

So we checked with BBC Planning whether or not the tree had a TPO designation but were quickly informed not. We then immediately applied for a TPO and a BBC Tree Officer attended site and assessed that it met the necessary and quite strict criteria for protection. As we understand it, the necessary legal paperwork for a TPO is being completed. Photo by David.

3] Pleasant Drive Work Parties

Since the native tree planting in early December and inauguration of the Pleasant Drive Community Area (off the Mountnessing Road), there have been two work parties carried out. The first was to dismantle a den in thick scrub that had been used for nefarious means and a litter pick of the general area followed by a second work party that concentrated on the pond area and the marsh in the depression adjacent to it.



Our BTW member Nathan led both work parties and on the second occasion felled much overgrowth that the team then used to fashion a simple form of dead hedging around the depression and its pond. In time, brambles and other wild plants will bind it together providing homes for nesting birds and insects. The idea is to let light in to further promote wildlife biodiversity. The area already attracts dragonflies, damselflies, butterflies and birds plus many unidentifiable insect species forming an intricate part of the local ecology. Bats are also known to feed over the pond, the recreational area and within the wood. Two stands of mature willow have been left standing in the depression area for wildlife reasons. Pictured 3rd in from the left is BTW member Dr Nigel Meadows who is running the PD Community area along with BTW member Nathan Hume in the yellow Hi Viz along with friends and local volunteers. The right photo shows Nathan in full H&S gear clearing vegetation from the pond area behind a screen of dead hedging! Note the line of native tree planting with their tree guards in the background – 400 in total! Left photo by John and right photo by Nigel.

4] The Beauchamps Meadow Community Orchard - Completion of the Recreational and Tree Planting Wildlife Project at the Wickford Memorial Park Extension -



Photo by John



Photo by Nathan



Right photo by John

As reported in our February 2022 News-sheet, this 26 acre project undertaken by the Basildon Borough Council (BBC) involved the planting of c.3,400 native trees, with pond creation, a Community Orchard and a Wildflower Meadow. Only recently was the Community Orchard planted by contractors and helped by volunteers from the Friends of Wickford Memorial Park, involving 200 fruit trees. BTW member Nathan had co-designed the overall project with the BBC's Rob Baker, the Parks & Countryside Operations Manager one and a half years ago. The BBC's Josh Childs, the Parks and Countryside Biodiversity Officer, pictured on the far right of the group is now continuing the project.

The BTW attended the site to see the completion of the Orchard planting and to discuss the progress to date with Josh. On the left is BTW member Dr Nigel, Nigel's Sea Captain pal Jaren and BTW member Fiona. John is seen as a shadow posing with the camera on the right! Josh had chosen a range of cultivar fruit trees that included Apple, Pear on Quince rootstock, Plum and Cherry. So in a year or two hence, there will be humans and wildlife snacking the fruit with the winter thrushes taking advantage of the windfalls! Later, Josh described the science, practicalities and local knowledge of creating the Wildflower Meadow. The photograph indicates the would-be extent (1.23 acres!) of Meadow as ploughing prepares the ground. The last photograph illustrates a tree with its stake, tree guard and tie plus the mulch about the base to the counter moisture evaporation so essential now since we experience regular droughts.

5] Back to Brightside School!

On the 23rd March 2022 we had attended Brightside School and carried out a tree planting project that involved the participation of c.375 school children! A seamless event that was logistically organized between the teaching staff and BTW member Fiona! The children clearly enjoyed the event judging by the enthusiasm shown and the many questions it evoked! Unfortunately, the long drought that occurred a few months later killed off about a third of the 20 trees that were initially planted. So on the 23rd of February of this year we went back to Brightside to engage with their Eco-class of 18 pupils and jointly planted replacements. The enthusiasm and keenness to help was as strong as ever! As we know, there are sensible restrictions on photographing children as it requires the permission from every parent for a picture of their child in a group photograph to be published. The lone figure in the photograph is of Fiona standing between the two lines of trees. In the background is a crescent shaped planting area recently created by the Essex & Suffolk Water authority to soak up the periodic flash flooding that locally occurs.



Photo by John.

6] South Green Vandalized Cherry Trees Replanted!

A twelve cherry tree “Blossom Circle” planted by the BBC at South Green in early 2022 in Memoriam of those who died during the worst of the Covid-19 pandemic has been vandalized again. So the BBC has replanted those trees that survived in a straight-line close to the Green’s border. In our experience, planting trees in public places can be prone to vandalism and the BTW has on more than one occasion been a victim.

In this particular reprehensible act of vandalism, it is an insult to those who passed away from the pandemic and the families that have been left behind. We are aware that there are Community Police and Park Rangers in the town who regularly check for antisocial behaviour in public places but they cannot be everywhere at once. Photo by Nathan.



We would like to say thank you to various the BBC and BTC Councillors who support our goals along with those local experts with specialist knowledge that have advised the BTW on various technical matters

A thank you must go to the Billericay Town Council for providing the BTW with advice, a meeting room at the BTC’s Chantry Centre, moral support and Personal Liability and Personal Accident insurance, for BTW members and their volunteers, whilst out in the field with no geographic restriction

The Billericay Tree Wardens are a voluntary group and all information contained therein is not legally binding and is provided as a source of advice and information only

**The BTW’s next members’ Committee Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday April 5th 2023 at 6pm
Unless otherwise stated, we are to opt for a Zoom meeting**



Prepared by the Billericay Tree Wardens [Editor JHS – March 2023]

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