

We hope that everyone is safe and well in these continuing dangerous times. Our Committee Meetings are cancelled until further notice and our fixtures remain postponed.

The Pilgrim Fathers

A statue of the “Pilgrim Fathers” was installed in the “Jim Shields Garden” at the top of the High Street last November. It celebrated the 400 years since they left Plymouth in 1620 and sailed in the Mayflower to found a colony in what was to become America. The sculptor is John Doubleday who sculpted the “**Child in the Park**” at Lake Meadows. During his researches for the project, John has only recently been made aware that he is distantly related to the Fathers!

Investigations

The past two months have been very busy pursuing the following:-

The **Minstead–Deerbank** saga continues! On recognizing that the boundary had been locally extended by encompassing a small portion of Norsey Wood land, we alerted the BBC. But as it was such a small infringement, they did not consider it necessary to intervene. Had it been a significant encroachment, the BBC would have taken issue. Minor border disputes are notoriously difficult to resolve and can involve an expensive and prolonged process by mediation or by lawyers.

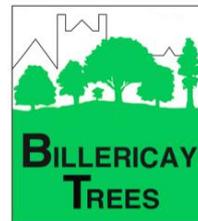
However, the extended border enclosed three trees that were on Norsey Wood land. Seeing that trees without TPO protection in private gardens can be felled without Local Authority permission, we have applied for ALL the trees contained within the Minstead property to be receive a Group TPO. However, we have been informed that the BBC is to review each tree on its merits with respect applying a TPO. We were also informed by the BBC that the Horbeam on site, that we thought had TPO status, was never officially legally signed off. This is the tree that we had requested of the contractor that it should be protected from trunk damage and root compaction. Advice that the groundworks contractor did carry out.

Mill Road –Opposite the Grange Road Turn-off – South Green

A non-TPO but mature oak was felled on Highways land on the 1st November along the Mill Road. By coincidence, it was seen by two of our Tree Wardens independently. When those doing the felling were approached, they said that they had permission from the Council to fell. This turned out to be untrue as when we checked with the ECC and BBC, they had no knowledge of the incident. The tree was on Highways verge land but it has taken the ECC a considerable time to verify this as their staff all work from home and cannot access their IT data base at their Chelmsford Head Office. So the felling has now been established as a criminal act. However, as per wildlife crimes, a prosecution to be successful would require photographs and a witness statement in court. *We have been advised not to approach those who organized the tree felling for safety reasons.* Encouragingly, the ECC have said that it is unusual for trees to be felled on Highways land in Essex.

Corner of Chapel Street & Hillside Road

This site is within our town’s Conservation Area. There had been a tall Sycamore felled on the corner many months ago whilst the corner building has been under comprehensive refurbishment. Tracing the owner to request a replacement tree had proved difficult, even after a couple of visits to the site. Eventually we were successful and the owner has hired a professional landscape gardener. And that is to include some quality specimen tree and shrub planting across the site. The corner location is to be planted with a group of Pheasant’s Tail Grass (*Anemanthhele lessoniana*) and several Irish Yew (*Taxus baccata* – “Fastigiata”). Given time to get established and get on their way to maturity, they should go some way to provide the “Street Scene” amenity aspect that the corner deserves. The Sycamore’s bulky tree roots had to



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be left in place as to remove them would have caused major damage to the adjacent pavement and possibly the road. So the grasses have been opted for.

Bluebell Wood (Road) – West Billericay

A static mobile home has been permitted by BBC Planning to be sited under an oak with a TPO. The property owners then submitted a Planning Application requesting an excessive amount of tree work to be carried out. A 4 metre crown reduction and 4 metres off the sides! There is a large branch directly above the “temporary” home that could pose a H&S risk. As the property has a very long garden it seemed logical to suggest that the “temporary” home be moved further back towards the house rather than requesting the tree work. So we have submitted a “Comment” on the PA to that effect. The line of TPO mature oaks at the end of the gardens are rich in wildlife.

97 Chapel Street

We have known for a while now that a gap-site Developer intended to demolish an imposing red brick structure on the site and maximize the house building on the plot of land. At the time of writing there has been not been a PA submitted. Normally, once someone owns a property there is nothing to stop them clear felling the site; and that is exactly what had been happening on Sunday 17th January. However, the property is in our town’s Conservation Area (CA) so we alerted BBC Enforcement to ask their advice as to the legality of the situation. Trees in a CA need permission to be felled from the Local Authority if their trunk exceeds a certain diameter. There are badgers in the area and it is known that the Developer is anti-tree and anti-wildlife. Enforcement instructed the immediate cessation of tree felling and instructed the Developer to go through the proper channels should he want to fell any more trees on the site. Although some of the trees are mature, the BBC did not consider that any warranted a TPO status. We have not been informed whether or not the Developer will face prosecution. BBC Planning have required a professional “*soft landscape*” design to be submitted with the Planning Application that hopefully will address the “Street Scene” amenity aspect. We will be submitting a “Comment” with regards a forthcoming Planning Application.

The Local Plan

There has been an Outline PA submitted on the BBC’s Planning Portal for Kennel Lane; H18 of the Local Plan. This is a premature PA, as the Government’s Inspectorate has yet to study the overall Local Plan for Billericay and pass judgement. The BTC has asked the BTW to present a case for the Trees and Wildlife so it can be included in the Council’s response. This we have responded to. The Great Burstead and South Green Village Council have also asked for this advice and we have similarly responded. Basically, the proposed development site at it is open farmland but surrounded by a continuous tree and hedge line that performs a “wildlife corridor” into the Mill Meadows Local Nature Reserve. The outline PA illustrates 170 quality native tree planting that includes an orchard. Also contained within our “Comment” is the recommendation for a wildlife area to be installed in the green central area. The BTW remains neutral with respect the Local Plan development but campaigns for the retention of existing trees and that the development’s streets be tree-lined plus other wildlife “*net gain*” enhancement issues.

Tree Protection Orders

We have 13 trees plus several on the Minstead the Deerbank property now being considered for legal protection by the BBC. Our helpful BBC Councillor has requested if BBC Planning can please review them. As mentioned before, we only apply for a TPO when we consider that a tree is or likely to be under a “*Perceived Threat*”.

BTW Projects

We are still receiving one metre high “Refutree” oaks from the controversial HS2 project via one of our BTW members so another 30 have been planted by Nathan in suitable areas. **And a further 100 oaks have just arrived!** Thanks to Trudi for organizing this initiative. We would arrange for members to help with the planting had it not been the continuing Covid-19 lockdown rules.

The Woodland Trust

The Woodland Trust has done wonders in having supplied us with a considerable number of free native “whips”, with canes and tree guards, for our planting projects. But we have recently learnt that problems brought about by the pandemic

has interrupted further supplies. However, they have acknowledged that our request for significant number of more “whips” will be honoured at a later date. All credit to the “Woodland Trust” for their dedication to community tree planting projects across the UK. Please consider becoming a member if not already as the WT is very much for action and not talk. Their Broadleaf publication is very informative.

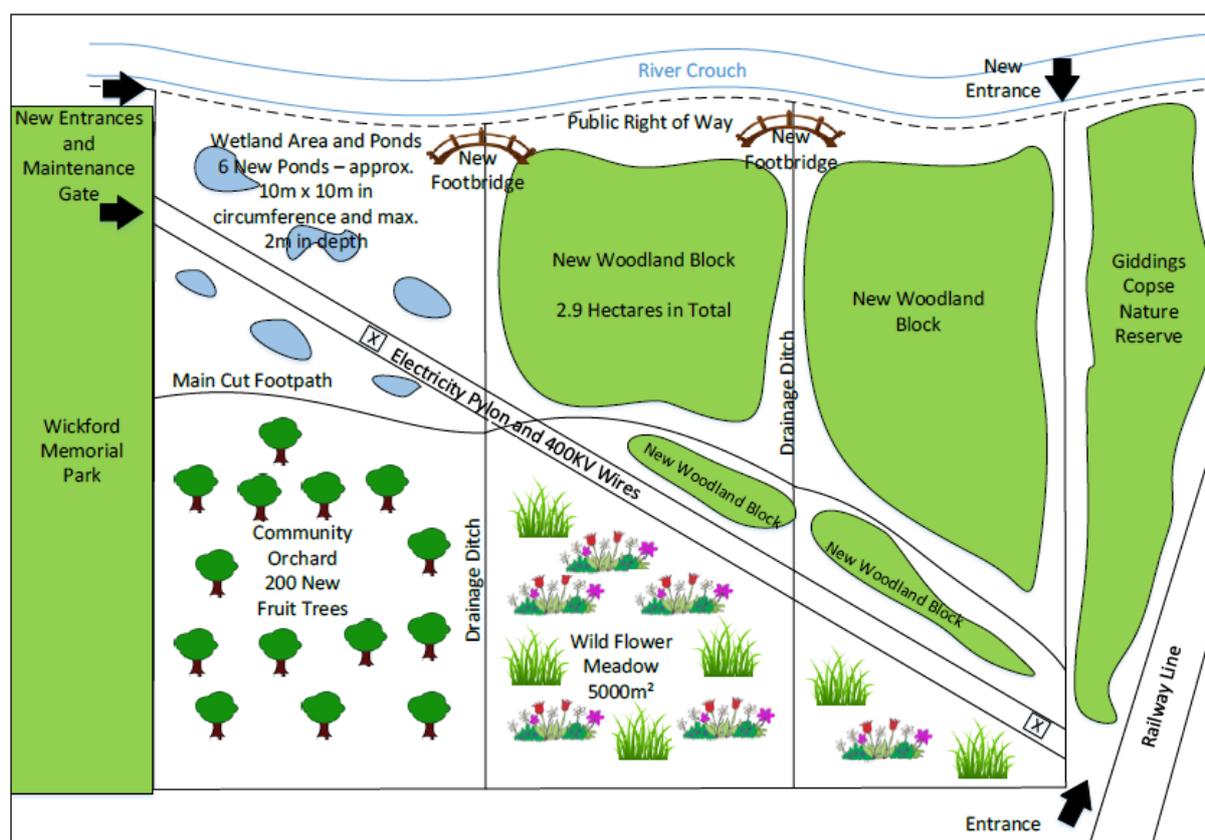
Parish Tree Wardens

The BTC has asked the BTW to prepare comprehensive advice should another Parish request help in setting-up their own Tree Warden group. We have now prepared such. The Great Burstead & South Green Village Council have requested the information and are currently advertising for Tree Warden volunteers for thier area.

26 Acre Extension to the Wickford Memorial Park – Beauchamp Drive

Not a BTW Project – But Nevertheless Highly Reportable!

But as Nathan is working in association with the Basildon Borough Council on an exciting mega-communitiy native tree / wildlife and recreational project, we describe what it entails. It is a 26 acre portion of land on the north side of the Wickford. Land that is unsuitable for residential development as it has infrastructure services above and below ground; and once a school playing field that is not now required. There is an EWT Local nature reserve to the east, Giddings Copse, and is bordered by the River Crouch on the north side. The site is large enough to incorporate a mosaic of wildlife habitats. From four blocks of native woodland incorporating 3400 trees (three thousand four hundred!), a community 200 tree orchard, a wildflower meadow to six ponds of varying size. Ponds are biodiversity hotspots and even more so when they come in various sizes and depths! A wildlife-friendly mowing regime will also delineate the public footpaths. Nearer the time, the public will be able to sponsor an orchard tree.



Plan Showing the Extension to the Wickford Memorial Park

Thank you to the Billericay Town Council for providing the BTW with help and moral support.

**Prepared by the Billericay Tree Wardens [Editor JS – 03/02/2021]
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