

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.



Conserving Our Tree Heritage  
In association with Billericay Town Council

## **Stop Press – HS2 Refugee Trees!**

**One of our Tree Warden members was informed that there were a number of one metre high oak tree “whips” now available that had been destined for a planting project adjacent the controversial HS2 site. They now required a safe haven! So a batch of 20 vigorous oak saplings has been brought back to Billericay. Nathan has now planted them locally in several areas where we have already planted and thus they will be away from the madness of chainsaws and bulldozers! Excuse the pun but these are “Refutrees”!**

Below is a line of four veteran oaks along Fairfield Rise in southwest Billericay - Bottom left is a Hornbeam. Probably signifying an original border between land ownership a century or two ago. It is often the case that ageing trees impart a sense of time. Sometimes in “their cloak of green” and sometimes in “the altogether”! Most of the trees are on ECC land and are thus owned by them but are maintained by the BBC. Trees on ECC land automatically have a degree of legal protection.



We understand that the ivy-clad veteran oak pictured top right, situated at a pedestrian entrance to Sun Corner, the Queen Elizabeth II Field, may be the subject of a “*Perceived Threat*” so we remain vigilant in that respect. However, BBC Planning do not normally TPO a tree that is on ECC land.



A 112metre long planting project at Barleylands was carried out on the 5<sup>th</sup> December – A joint project between the BTW and the EWT. They consisted of a c.400 native tree and hedge mix of “whips” courtesy of the Woodland Trust. Planted in two staggered rows to provide thick cover for wildlife and acting as a windbreak. Luckily a fine day occurred between several days of persistent rain! Pictured are Susannah, Martin, John, Nathan & Neil. Nathan’s colleague Casey had to leave just prior to the line-up! All credit due to those who successfully avoided the mudbath!

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### **Planting Project Adjacent Norsey Wood LNR**

And it’s thanks to the Norsey Wood Society that had c.250 native hedging “whips” left over from their Meadow Project. These have now been all planted by Nathan between the 10 “standard” trees planted earlier by the BTW along the Outwood Common Road adjacent to the Wood. Effectively it will provide a green border to a broad and feature-less expanse of arable farmland.

### **Further Planting**

Having lost a proportion of the planting due to dry weather on “The Hill” at the Mountnessing Hall Farm, Nathan supplied the farm with c.100 Rowan and Silver Birch “whips” as replacements. Farmer Sam Iddison will be planting them on behalf of the BTW. Nathan informs me that a small number of oak, hazel and dog rose are to be planted on the A176 Noak Hill roundabout.

### **A Threat Averted to Cowbridge Woods – West Billericay**

The land where the BTW had carried out a native tree planting project in early 2019 had recently been released for sale by the National Grid. It’s within a floodplain area and has energy infrastructure running underground so infrastructure development above ground is not permitted. The three hectares (approx) went to auction and there was the risk that it would fall into the hands of those who would not respect the wildness of the area. However, at the eleventh hour, a nearby landowner purchased the land and intends to give it over to nature. Nathan then planted some surplus Rowan and Silver Birch on site to complement the previous planting exercise. The new owners, who live adjacent to the site, are very much nature orientated people and there are already plans as to how nature will be further enhanced. The area is bordered by the River Wid.

### **Greenways - Southeast Billericay**

We received a call from a local resident who informed us that there were groundwork investigations being carried out in the derelict garage areas that are scheduled for redevelopment. We attended site and spoke to the engineer in charge of the borehole investigations. Only one of the boreholes was near to the several mature oaks nearby. We had already alerted the BBC to this development area and recommended that they assess whether or not any of the mature oaks would benefit from a TPO status. After visiting the site, a BBC Tree Officer has confirmed that 8 of the oak trees in the immediate area do have TPO status. At this point in time, a Planning Application has not been submitted.

### **Our Front Gardens – An article prepared for wider distribution:-**

Since our housing estates have been built, car ownership has risen per household to sometimes three cars. So it makes sense, should it be needed, to utilize the front garden space for car parking and thus keep the streets less cluttered. Page 63 of the “**Billericay Design Statement**” advises a balanced approach with providing hard-standing for car parking and an area for planting. Perhaps a practical and an aesthetically acceptable approach is the “*one third / two thirds*” recommendation. Whereby a third of the area of a front garden is given over to “*soft landscaping*” (including a generous combination of wall climbers, a flower-bed, shrubs, lawn and a native/ornamental tree) and the remaining two thirds is given over to the hard-standing. A regulation with regards the hard-standing area stipulates that it should be permeable. Any departure from that would need a Planning Application. Another approach is to use a proprietary free-draining grass paving system whereby a lawn and cars can co-exist. Alternatively, if gravel filled, the gravel grid system will

resist the gravel from migrating. The overall benefit from the “*one third / two thirds*” recommendation is that it also presents a pleasant front aspect and a visual amenity for fellow street users plus a habitat for wildlife. For more detailed information, there is online advice from the RHS’s “**Front Garden Guide**”. Quality garden landscape companies will suggest a design to satisfy the visual amenity aspect and the practical needs of car parking. Government advice is that weedkiller should not be used as this will decimate life-forms in the soil and pollute storm drains that are connected to our streams and rivers. With reference to the Local Plan, it will be interesting to note how residential new build developments will approach the design of front gardens and resident car parking. And tree-lined streets need to be part of their design remit as recommended in the government’s recent “**English Tree Strategy**”.

~ **In Their Cloak of Green** ~

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| <p>1] Trees –They cling to Earth<br/>Consuming light and carbon<br/>Time is laid down in silent rings!<br/>In their cloak of green<br/>And ship’s bows made from boughs!<br/>An oak-forest transformed into<br/>Nordic longboats and armadas!</p>  | <p>2] An insectarium of the living World<br/>Harbours an endless variety<br/>Of what most of us cannot name!<br/>Fashioned over the anvil of millennia<br/>Those creepy-crawly things!<br/>Provisions for the food chain<br/>Top-down hunted by the hungry!</p> |
| <p>3] Stag-headed oaks and their unwritten history<br/>Of birdlife that’s graced their limbs<br/>Fluttery things of yesterday and today<br/>The busy gleaners of leaf and bark<br/>Prising grubs out from the deadwood galleries<br/>A perch for hawks, a perch for crows<br/>Whilst leaves in unison worship the sun!</p> |   |

[John Smart 10/09/2020]



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

**A recently received message from the ex-Chairman of the BTC:-  
“Thank you and your colleagues for your Christmas message, we do appreciate  
all the care and futuristic work you do. Enjoy your Christmas  
and continue with your valuable work in the New Year.”  
Best Wishes, Peter Bowditch.**

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