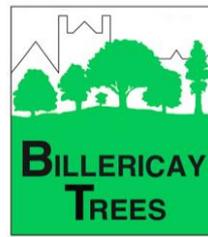


The Billericay Tree Warden's Bi-monthly News-sheet  
March 2022



Conserving Our Tree Heritage  
In association with Billericay Town Council

Our News-sheets are now available to view on the Billericay Town Council's website and back issues 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/3hxxy5m9>

The mature trees in our gardens, parklands and countryside and those that line our streets are our town's 'green lung' exchanging air pollution for oxygen.

Contents:-

- 1] Care for our Tallest Street Tree
  - 2] Fruit Tree Grafting by Peter Croot of the Mill Meadows Society
  - 3] Pond Reclamation at Pleasant Drive
  - 4] Hedge Planting at Barleylands
  - 5] Replacement Elm tree at Lake Meadows
  - 6] Tree Issues Within our Town
  - 7] The Basildon Borough Council – On Replacement Trees
- 1] Gas Engineers and a Local Resident look after a Classic Hybrid Black Poplar



One of our members alerted us to a potential problem with a tall hybrid Black Poplar in South Green a little north of the Anisha Grange Care Home along the Outwood Common Road. Gas engineers had been working in the area. The next day we made a site visit. According to Nathan, it is highly likely that the poplar is our town's tallest street tree. A TPO had been successfully applied to it several years ago. The gas engineers had been very careful throughout and avoided undertaking ground works close to the trunk. The trench had been carefully opened up about the tree

roots and was later carefully backfilled after the engineering works had been completed according to a local resident who thankfully took it upon himself to be the tree's **Natural Guardian**. On-site protection is something that we are very keen to encourage. The poplar is estimated to be at least c.130 years of age as the resident's

family has been in the area for several generations and had kept a watchful eye on the poplar ever since. This tree is something of a local landmark. Mature poplar trees benefit the environment in several ways. They are fast growing and exchange air pollution for oxygen in a significant way whilst filtering impurities from the water drawn via their roots prior to releasing it as evaporation from their leaves. Thus providing a natural service that is difficult to put a price on.

## 2] Fruit Tree Grafting – By Peter Croot

If you sow a pip of an apple that you like the taste of, and it germinates, you may find that once the resulting tree is mature enough, the fruit it produces may not be the same as the original apple. Grafting is a method of propagating fruit trees akin to cloning that ensures that the new tree has the same genetics as the tree that it came from.

This was demonstrated recently in a television feature where a Cornish dairy farmer wanted to diversify into cider production. He grafted several thousand cider apple trees of specific varieties to plant new orchards and seven years later is in full cider production. These trees were grafted onto a specific rootstock that controls the final height, vigour and in some cases the disease resistance of the tree. Nowadays new fruit trees are grafted onto dwarfing rootstocks that restrict the tree height and make for easier picking.

Grafting is undertaken with “scionwood” from the tree to be propagated. Scions (pronounced “cion”!) are one year old branch tips, preferably no thinner than a pencil and at least 8 inches in length. These have to be collected when the donor tree is dormant, early January to early February.

Rootstocks can be purchased from specialist nurseries. Grafting requires the use of a sharp knife to make oblique cuts on the stems of the rootstock and the scion to expose the cambium tissue layers. These are held together by a rubber band and / or specialist grafting tape. This union is then sealed with a low melting point wax to provide additional strength and to keep out infection. At the right temperature a callus will develop around the join and the buds will develop. You have a maiden tree – A young fruit tree grafted onto a rootstock.

As already touched upon, rootstocks should be chosen based on the orchard site characteristics like soil type, water retention and climate, as well as apple variety, intended tree size, planting system (high density or low density) and disease resistance.

If you want to learn how to graft fruit trees one can attend a day course where you will be taught the skills and pitfalls. An organisation that provides such a training course is the Midshires Orchard Group (MSOG) [www.tapatalk.com/groups/midshiresorchardgroup](http://www.tapatalk.com/groups/midshiresorchardgroup)

MSOG organises an annual scionswap. Check their website for details. Visitors can share, swap and buy scionwood from many rare and local heritage apple, pear, plum and cherry varieties, as well as from other garden tree species and varieties. These can be grafted on the day onto rootstocks of choice, or be taken home for grafting, to make brand new fruit trees.



**Peter is the Secretary to the Mill Meadows Society and EWT orchard volunteer at the Langdon Nature Reserve**

### 3] Pond Reclamation Work at Pleasant Drive Billericay

There is a small man-made depression in the recreation area that serves the housing estate that acts as a catchment area for when there is the likelihood of the adjacent River Wid to overflow. Some years back Nathan Hume created a pond by the outfall but since then the scrub has encroached and the pond has been used as a dumping ground. The pond holds newts and water snails plus a range of other aquatic mini-beasties. And it is a breeding location for several species of damselfly and dragonfly. In the summer, pipistrelle bats feed on the insects that rise over the scrub and the pond but the time had come for reclamation.



So a few of us spent a Saturday morning cutting back some of the tangled undergrowth to allow light into the pond. BTW members Nigel, Saskia, Trudi and John with Nathan in charge of operations! Saskia in waterproofs had volunteered to brave the cold and murky waters to remove the unwanted items from the pond! The rest of us were armed with loppers and a bowsaw. **Photo by Nigel – BTW.**

The emergent scrub around the pond was felled by Nathan's chainsaw and then laid horizontally around the pond for its protection. Wild plants will grow through and over the horizontal "hedge" locking it together and providing a thriving wildlife habitat.

Pleasant Drive, its pond area, its little woodland and the immediate farmland beyond have amassed a wildlife list of 55 bird species. The scrub and pond itself attracting 17 butterfly species, 9 dragonfly and damselfly species and 2 bat species. While we were there that morning a Common Buzzard was mobbed and "shown off the premises" by a mixed flock of Carrion Crows and Jackdaws as many Woodpigeons scattered randomly in panic across the sky.

The Basildon Borough Council had arranged for the rubbish extracted (a TV set and various household appliances!) to be collected on the Monday morning.

### 4] Native Hedge Planting Event at Barleylands - 08/01/22

The BTW and its eager volunteers returned to Barleylands to reinstate a previously planted hedge that had suffered from the spring drought of 2021. The covid-19 situation had prevented the watering of the "whips". Thanks to the Norsey Wood Society for providing the c.400 "whips" that had become surplus to their requirements after the planting project along the Outwood Common Road roadside edge adjacent



the Wood after permission had been withdrawn by the farmer. To illustrate the phrase that “many hands make light work” the twin-hedge line was completed in less than two hours!

**Photo by John – BTW**

### **5] Replacement Elm Tree Planting at Lake Meadows - 31/12/2021**

One of the Elm trees from a previous planting project funded by the Lions Club of Billericay (LCB) at Lake Meadows had perished. So they were keen for a replacement to make up the circular grove. So we all watched on as Nathan and Saskia efficiently carried out the operation with encouraging comments from the bystanders! Various horticulturists have been cultivating disease resistant strains of Elm tree. The technical information for the tree planted:- *Ulmus Columella* variety, a Dutch elm cultivar raised by the Dorschkamp Research Institute for Forestry & Landscape Planning in Wageningen, from a self or



openly pollinated seedling of the hybrid clone ‘Plantyn’ sown in 1967. It was released for sale in 1989 after proving extremely resistant to Dutch elm disease. Nathan and Saskia are on the left.

**Photo by Stefan of the LCB.**

### **6] Tree Issues Within our Town**

**Norsey Wood** - There has been a major tree loss of 0.413 acres within the Wood. And it has caused considerable consternation in terms of its visual “amenity” loss and its biodiversity net loss. Norsey Wood is an important flagship amenity facility in the Borough as well as a Local Nature Reserve. However the BBC’s Enforcement informed us that the trees had been in a private garden that extends down to the Main Ride and their felling was not illegal. Recourse to the **Land Registry** indicates that there are several other gardens, but with their trees still intact, that also extend down to the Main Ride. So we are in the process of discussing with the Basildon Borough Council if a Group TPO designation can be applied to them all. One does not require permission to fell trees on private land even when it is on Green Belt and involves Ancient Woodland. The BTW queries such an apparent loophole with regards tree protection.

#### **The Grey Lady Place**

There had been a gross misunderstanding between the Agency (based in Luton) that looks after the tenants’ interests of the Grey Lady Place and the Tree Surgeons that had been engaged to fell two mature trees at the entrance. The BTW was aware that the trees were TPO designated and informed the Agency’s Head Office not to go ahead with the felling as it would lead to a “criminal offence” and attract an enormous fine. Both the Agency and the Tree Surgeons would have been culpable and issued with an enormous fine. The BTW also informed the Council’s Enforcement department and their quick action avoided both tree loss and criminal charges.

#### **Planning Application Checks**

Our PA checking team continues to assess if any trees in our opinion are unnecessarily vulnerable. And the BTW submits a “Comment” on the PA to that effect if we consider it to be so.

## **7] The Basildon Borough Council on Replacement Trees**

One of our members inquired as to the BBC's policy on replacement trees when TPO trees were lost on private land and including those trees on BBC and or ECC land. The trees in the latter two instances having protection but without necessarily being fully TPO designated. One of the BBC's Tree Officers sent us the following as a general approach:-

*"If a tree on ECC land is removed then we can replace that tree on a one for one basis. Generally, this also applies to BBC land. The tree that is replaced will normally be a 'Heavy Standard' 12-14cm girth depending on species and availability. Where possible we would plant more than one tree on BBC land but this will depend on a number of factors such as suitability of site and species.*

*The species choice will often be to replace with similar but it would depend on the site. For example, if we know of subsidence claims in the vicinity we wouldn't choose a high-water demanding tree. We would also try and plant close to the original tree or within the vicinity depending on available land.*

*The BBC's contractor water newly planted trees during periods of dry weather. Unfortunately, as you will be aware, this area has extensive areas of London Clay and during dry periods will impact newly planted trees. Inevitably cost comes into this. The more trees we plant the more watering is required until they are established but we only have a limited budget. This is where the residents can help. I know some do water newly planted trees outside their homes which is great but it will always be a small number in my opinion.*

*For this reason we are starting to choose different species that are known to be more tolerant of water stress. It seems clear to me that extremes of heat (re the Climate Crisis) are becoming more common and we will have to try other species and sometimes non-native ones. Personally I'd rather have one good quality specimen in a sensible planting position than several trees planted somewhere that is going to restrict their growth or where the trees cause issues such as subsidence or other potential problems."*

**We would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to various 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 whilst we pursue tree work out in the field**

**The BTW is not against development but is against the unnecessary loss of trees.**

**The BTW's next members' committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 6th April 2022 at 6pm  
Unless otherwise stated, we are to opt for a Zoom meeting**



**Prepared by the Billericay Tree Wardens [Editor JHS]  
Contact = [billericaytreewardens@gmail.com](mailto:billericaytreewardens@gmail.com)**



*File: TWG-News-March 2022 Rev A ~*