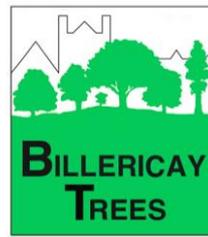


**The Billericay Tree Warden's Bi-monthly News-sheet
May 2022**

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 Fact sheets 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

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.



The Ukrainian national plant is the Guelder Rose (*Viburnum opalus*), a small tree / shrub. The red berries signifying the blood spilt throughout its turbulent history and continues today.

In Ukrainian, the Guelder Rose is known as the Kalyna and used as a female name.

Their national bird is the White Stork

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1] Significant Tree Loss Within Norsey Wood:-

Why Buy a Property with an Ancient Woodland in the Garden and then Chop it Down?

This has recently occurred on a property along the Norsey Road towards the Deerbank end. Just less than half an acre of semi-mature Sweet Chestnut trees were felled in the garden where it extends down to Norsey Wood's Main Ride. These trees will not be growing back as they would be in a coppiced situation. The Billericay Tree Wardens (BTW) has been liaising with the Norsey Wood Society (NWS), the Basildon Borough Council's Enforcement Officers (BBC) and our proactive environmentally aware town Councillor Andrew Schrader to question the legality of the tree loss. Legal searches have shown that the land was sold between two private individuals back in 1943.

Only in June of 1976 was Norsey Wood purchased by the BBC and made into a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) after a campaign led by local natural history enthusiasts "to protect the Wood from further housing development". Now Norsey Wood forms one of our flagship recreational amenities and nature reserves in the Borough and has been declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the NWS has worked ever since in partnership with the BBC to proactively help manage the Wood and monitor its wildlife.

On the 15th November 2021 the BTW attended the Norsey Road garden to discuss a tree issue with a professional arboriculture company hired by the property's owner and were assured that the Ancient woodland in the extended garden down to the Main Ride would remain. But the reality proved to be very different.

There are several other gardens close by that also have their gardens extending down to the Main Ride in Norsey Wood but with their trees presently intact; representing some 1.5 acres of Ancient woodland in all. We have requested of the BBC that they be designated a Group Woodland Preservation Order to guarantee their future existence.

Under "Permitted Development Rights" for property owners, they are allowed to install various amenity items in their gardens without Planning Permission. These can be in the form of a swimming pool, a summer house, a garden shed, a hot tub and now proving to be popular is the "Outdoor Kitchen", a not insignificant structure. Perhaps these luxury items will feature where once Ancient woodland stood.

In the last five years the front gardens along Norsey Road have already lost at least eleven characterful mature and healthy trees (mainly oaks) due to gap-site Developers legally converting smaller and older properties into larger homes for the well-to-do in society with some being gated for security / status. As a consequence some landmark trees have been felled. Thus the amenity "Street Scene" value of Norsey Road is gradually being degraded. The BTW has requested of the BBC that all quality mature trees in the front gardens along Norsey Road receive a TPO designation. A few have already been protected but others remain vulnerable.

The legal aspects of this tree loss incident are still being researched but the ethics of the situation is in no doubt.

**From the BTW – billericaytreewardens@gmail.com
A subgroup of the Billericay Town Council**

The photograph of "Woodchips and Sky" was taken from Norsey Wood's Main Ride looking northwest up the garden towards the Norsey Road. Some of the wooded private gardens either side also extend down to the Main Ride. The definition of Ancient woodland is that it has been in continuous existence since 1600.



2] Brightside Primary School – Tree Planting by the Children!

Part of the Billericay Tree Warden's (BTW) remit is to plant the idea of trees and wildlife into the mindset of the young. So we have approached several local schools with a view to undertake a tree planting exercise for the Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) initiative. Although it has been inevitably hampered by the Covid-19 crisis, some headway has been made. With respect Brightside Primary School, we had been in contact with the Head Teacher Mr Luke Bulpett and Teacher Mr Robert Crouchman and discussed the logistics required for 13 classes of 6 to 8 year olds to each plant a small tree within their school grounds. Wednesday 23rd March was the day eventually decided upon. So at approximately 15 minute intervals, each class helped to add slow release fertilizer, then compost, plant the tree, carefully tamp about the base, attach the tree guard and stake before taking the Tree Wardens to task with various tree related questions! We then discussed the aftercare required that involves a watering regime as our recent springs have been drought prone. Labels are to be attached to each tree to identify the tree species and the class that planted the tree. The native tree species opted for were:- Oak; Silver Birch; Rowan; Hazel and a Scots Pine as a feature tree.

Luckily the weather was perfect for such an event and one could have cut the enthusiasm shown by the children with a knife! Later we are to give a talk about trees and wildlife during the assembly. We have discussed with Luke and Robert that there are other wildlife projects that we could engage the children with. The various tree species were sourced from the Norsey Wood tree nursery that is looked after by one of our BTW members. The QGC event was a project run by the BTW's School team who hope to duplicate the project at other local schools. A big thank you must go to the Brightside Primary School for hospitality shown towards us and arranging the seamless logistics involving approximately 375 children throughout the day!

The BTW can be contacted at billericaytreewardens@gmail.com



3] Blossom Circles – Those Lost by Covid are Remembered – In Memoriam

The BBC has planted at least five “Blossom Circles” across the Borough to mark the loss of loved ones during the worst of the Covid pandemic. The photograph shows twelve such cherry trees planted at South Green in Billericay. Photos by Nathan Hume.



4] Meepshole and Crays Wood up for Sale

The BTC sent the BTW details of two woods that have recently come onto the market. They are on the north side of railway track just across the BBC’s boundary and thus in the borough of the Chelmsford City Council (CCC). They all form a cluster of woodlands to the east of Norsey Wood. One of which is Barrenleys Wood that has suffered illegal and irreparable damage in recent years from an entrepreneurial owner who has grossly flouted the remit of private woodland ownership. This has resulted in a lengthy and partially successful lawsuit carried out by the BBC with advice from the Environmental Agency (EA).

So alarms bells rang that it could be possible that such abuse could occur again. So our environmentalist BTC Councillor has alerted the CCC of the sale and that the new woodland owner(s) will need to exercise duty of care. There are strict rules about woodland ownership and their care. Basically the remit is that one should leave woodland in better condition than when taking it over for future generations to enjoy. Many woodland owners practice traditional woodland crafts, nature conservation, coppicing, fence repair and manage the wood in a sustainable manner but there are those who flout the rules. They abuse the wood for business purposes and cause irreparable damage without a care for the wildlife. We are mindful that both Meepshole and Crays Wood should not suffer similar devastation that Barrenleys Wood has suffered.

5] The Craft and Art of Woodturning by Kyle McGill – Part 1

I’m preaching to the converted when I say that trees are fascinating, unique, and can have a personality all of their own. Part of what I enjoy doing is managing trees through different stages of their life, for the benefit of the local ecology as well as for the tree. I do this through a number of mediums, one of which is to join the work party at Mill Meadows Nature Reserve, where I have a keen interest in ensuring that trees are considered and managed effectively on the reserve.



Dead Hedge



The Vista



Freshly Cut

Now, that all sounds great and what everyone should be aspiring to do, right? Well, I must confess to a conflict of interest. I have a hobby which has a need for wood - Woodturning. I try to manage this dichotomy with the best of intentions for the trees that I work with; I want to ensure that if they are to be felled, coppiced, pollarded or any other sort of management, that the by-product is used in a beneficial way. This can be by dead hedging, building hibernacula or ‘bug hotels’, or more pertinent to this article, having resources that I can feed my woodpile stock with. This way, I know that the wood I use is of a wider benefit to the tree or area. I think there is something quite wonderful by knowing where the wood I am working with has come from – A connection with time and place. I use ‘what3words’ to pinpoint the tree - Some people have told me they then visit the area where the wood comes from. For the tree above it is in ‘Hilly Fields’ in Mill Meadows and the three words are ///sleeps.blues.apple should you wish to visit it.

In the instance of this oak tree, we decided to remove a limb from the tree. A number of limbs have been removed over many years, the evidence of which is seen in the trunk. We decided to do this to better the shape of the tree and to avoid any imbalance. A pleasant side effect being that it improved the vista over the meadows. I encourage you to take a moment and sit on the bench situated there. It's a wonderful scene.

Once we took this limb from the tree (probably a cross section of around 150mm at the cut mark), I decided that I'd like some of this oak for my woodturning; the rest of the limb was destined to be part of a dead hedge. I chose a straight section about a meter long which I processed to be able to carry back home for storage over winter. The wood is 'green', which means that it is freshly cut and retains water. This water evaporates over time which changes the shape of the wood. You'll see the effect of not giving the wood time to dry below.

I was asked to write this article and thought that I'd use this piece of oak as it is local, and I wanted to try a new piece as a 'proof of concept' which I regularly do. The first stage of turning wood is to get it round. Naturally, the wood straight from a tree will have various undulations and irregularities and to turn effectively one has to start the lathe slowly and bring the piece into a round state. I typically start with my biggest gouge tool called a spindle roughing gouge to take the bulk of the wood away until it is round.



The Spindle Roughing Gouge



Creating a chucking point



The main shaping



Once the piece is round, I use various tools (a selection can be seen on the left) to carve the shape. Woodturning is a craft which uses different tools and cuts, but they are all based on three main techniques, which make the craft accessible and can be expanded and developed as needed. I could be accused and possibly fairly so, that I have an addiction for acquiring more specialist tools than is necessary; however there are six main tools that will see you through 95% of what you could want to do on the lathe.

I'm usually most busy in the workshop in the lead up to Christmas where I make gifts and have friends who ask for various pieces, such as Christmas trees which are popular. My favourite pieces to make are baby rattles, which are lovely mementos and a heritage gift: however the mind is the limit when it comes to turning and I have made a wide variety of things such as bowls, vases, pens, wine stoppers, bottle openers, a hot air balloon, a lightsaber, wands and much more.



Should anyone want to give woodturning a try, they are free to contact me via the BTW email address shown below to give it a go, or I would encourage you to visit the Thameside Turners at the Fold in Billericay who meet on the 2nd Thursday of the month.

This is a proof of concept piece, a Christmas tree candle stand. I quite like the idea, but I am sure that I could refine it further. The cracking comes from the oak drying too quickly when being indoors. This is not unexpected but alas, the topic of wood drying and warping is a story for another day!

If anyone is in possession of pieces of discarded wood from Ash, along with the fruit and nut producing trees but also including such exotics as Tulip tree, Magnolia and Olive tree, I would be grateful to receive them. The grain and patterning of burrs are particularly prized by woodturners! But only if all are ethically sourced! And I could turn a part of it into a memento for the donor.

Kyle is a member of the MMS and the BTW – We are looking forward to Part 2!

This article was first published in the MMS's Newsletter.

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 out in the field

**The BTW's next members' committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 8th June 2022 at 6pm
Unless otherwise stated, we are to opt for a Zoom meeting**



Prepared by the Billericay Tree Wardens [Editor JHS – May 2022]

Contact = billericaytreewardens@gmail.com



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