

The Billericay Tree Warden's Bi-monthly

News-sheet for July 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 Joliba Trust - Empowering Women and Greening the Malian Desert

Members of the BTW have individually contributed to the **Joliba Trust**, an organization that works across the arid terrain of Mali in Africa to fund sizeable food producing tree and shrub nurseries. These are mostly run and tended by the women who plant them out to sell the produce in local markets and to also source their own food. The initiative provides jobs in a very impoverished part of the world where the men leave their villages to find work in the larger towns and cities. The two websites quoted below illustrate the work of the **Joliba Trust** and how one can contribute – Thank you. <https://www.jolibatrust.org.uk/about-us>

<https://www.jolibatrust.org.uk/> Patrons include Caroline Lucas MP & Jon Snow

2] Developer Spare that Tree!

Our mature trees throughout Billericay are as a "Green Lung" for the town, exchanging air pollution for oxygen and thus reducing respiratory problems and providing shade in hot summers

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are mainly enacted on trees that are considered to be under a "*perceived threat*" and can (surprisingly) cost a Local Authority thousands of pounds in searches and legal fees to implement. So understandably, our Local Authority probably only applies a TPO designation on two or three trees per month across the entire 45 square miles of our Borough

Trees that are on BBC land, ECC Highways Land (verges), in Conservation Areas, Nature Reserves and Parks are also legally protected and are a very good basis for our tree stock to safely go into the future. However, non-TPO trees in a private garden can be felled without Local Authority permission; reflecting the rights of current law of the property owner. However, where a private garden has woodland within its boundary, it would be wise to contact the Forestry Commission and seek their advice. There has been a very controversial incident in the town where this has occurred and the legal echoes of the incident still ring

The rejuvenation and replacement of rundown properties is generally good for the community, business and employment. What the **Billericay Tree Wardens** (BTW) consider needs to be addressed are the actions of those gap-site Developers who once they own a property, more often than not clear-fell all non-TPO trees and replace the existing structure with a more substantial building. Paying little regards for trees that could have been retained and unconcerned about those trees that had added a "Street Scene" amenity value for the local community. In our experience, the neighbouring properties to gap-site developments can lead to border problems and short thrift from the Developer. However, although these actions may be seen as questionable, they are not necessarily unlawful

But where an anomaly occurs is the "*grey area*" whereby trees are felled prior to a Planning Application (PA) being submitted or when submitted is Refused; by which time several c.250 year old oaks could have been unnecessarily felled. In the BTW's view and in particular reference to the Local Plan and its number of large proposed areas for new build residential house building, no trees should be felled until the PA is Approved and only then when a discussion has followed between the Local Authority and the Developer to agree on which trees can be removed and those that should be retained. To achieve this end, it would probably require a local Authority to revise its Planning regulations or for a "Private Members Bill" to be presented in Parliament (the latter is unlikely!). One of our

proactively environmentally aware town Councillor's has endorsed this view for we need to safeguard the greenness about us

This article has been written on behalf of those residents that we have in the town who are the "natural guardians" of their local trees and ring alarm bells should a threat occur. **[This article was first published in the BDRA's Newsletter for December 2022]**

3] The Judean Date Palm – A Biblical Resurrection!

In 1963 a team of archaeologists led by Yigael Yadin working on a site in Israel discovered an earthenware jar full of various well preserved tree and plant seeds. The jar was then carefully lodged at the Tel Aviv's Bar-Ilan University for safe keeping. The site was at Masada on the shore of the Dead Sea, an ancient Jewish mountaintop fortress that was the scene of a Roman siege back in the year of 73 AD. Rather than surrender, the occupants of their citadel retreat destroyed what would be of use to the invaders and committed suicide. However, one of the food stores had escaped destruction

The Romans went about laying waste the date palm orchards and its industry as a method of destroying the Israeli's economic survival. This was a ruthless tactical strategy of invading armies as a way to conquer and subordinate an indigenous population into slavery. Similarly, the Israeli's have destroyed Palestinian ancient Olive groves in recent times.

Dr Sarah Sallon, who has a career in medicine, specializing in the potential healing properties of nature, was aware that the date stones were at the university. After talking to her colleague Dr Elaine Soloway, a botanical researcher, they mused over trying to germinate the c.2000 year old date stones. After approaching the university in 2005 several date stones were eventually acquired and then planted and treated with a solution of warm water and a growth hormone and kept under glass. Much to their surprise one of the stones germinated!

And as illustrated, they named the resultant date palm Methuselah after Noah's grandfather. But to produce fruit, date palms need a male and female example so pollination can take place. Further germination of the stones resulted in the arrival of Hannah and Judith! It is planned to create an orchard of these biblical fruit producing date palms. In desert locations the date has been a staple food for millennia and are known for their medicinal properties

The Future Reflected in the Past

The Millennium Seed Bank at Wakehurst Place in West Sussex is run by Kew Gardens and has an extensive collection of UK native plants and food producing seeds from home and abroad that are stored in long-term exacting conditions as a safeguard against their extinction

Additionally, deep inside a mountain on the remote island of Spitsbergen, halfway between mainland Norway and the North Pole, is the Global Seed Vault. It stores examples of seeds from crops from around the world and is an ongoing project to safeguard against the future extinctions of the world's staple foods



4] Drought, Hot Weather and Sudden Branch Drop (SBD)

During the heatwave and drought of August in 2022 we received a few reports of mature trees shedding heavy branches in the Billericay area. Such extreme climatic conditions can put a tree under stress that can lead to Sudden Branch Drop (SBD) resulting in H&S issues

A mature oak at Crays Hill Park had shed a substantial branch. As it was on Council land, BBC Planning advised that it should not be climbed whilst they get their arborist team to make it safe



In arboriculture, there is little known about the science behind what the experts call SBD. Except that it occurs in conditions of drought and sustained hot weather and can occur in heavy, long and drawn out horizontal branches that connect directly to the tree's trunk. The problem is that professional examination of trees does not necessarily reveal that a tree could be susceptible to SBD so predicting such is not an option. Branches suddenly drop without apparent warning with a loud crack. SBD has been noticed to occur after rain on the branch's foliage and fruits have added weight and gusts of winds may have induced stress between branch and trunk. SBD happens to trees not necessarily subject to the damaging effect of bracket fungi

Tree species that are more susceptible to SBD are mature trees of the following species, ash, beech, cedars, oaks, poplars, sweet & horse chestnuts and willows – Veteran trees of these species especially so. The water uptake of these tree species varies considerably so additional factors must be at work to trigger the SBD.

In September of 2012 there was tragic case of a woman at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew when a branch suddenly broke away that caused her death. The following coroner's inquest that looked into the reasons for the failure concluded that the cause was probably SBD but the science of predicting it was unclear. Compared to the thousands of mature trees there are in our Borough, SBD must be considered a rare event although the changing climate may increase its occurrence.

5] Did You Know?

From the Guinness Book of Records - The largest living organism on the planet is the Honey Fungus. A killer of various species of tree. A single connected and gigantic specimen was discovered in the Malheur National Forest in Michigan in the US. Most of it is underground in the form of root-like string and only the fungus fruiting body appears on the side and base of trees. It's estimated to cover 2,835 acres (1350 soccer fields!) and estimated to weigh 21,250 tons! Its bacteria glows at night – Fungi fairy lights!

Did You know?

The tall tree-like and deep rooted Ginkgo biloba tree of China and Japan is technically a fern. It has not changed since prehistoric animals browsed on its branches and leaves many a millennia ago. Six Ginkgo trees near to the epicentre of the Hiroshima atomic bomb explosion on the 6th August of 1945 survived and soon made new shoots. The Japanese built shrines about them as they represent an indestructible life-force in the world and are now a symbol of peace. The name can be spelt either Ginkgo or Gingko!



Did You Know?

Frankincense and Myrrh, the incense that the Three Kings brought to the Bethlehem stable, are from a resin extracted from trees that mainly grow in arid North Africa, Yemen and the island of Socotra and transported for trade across deserts by camel trains. In Christian symbolism, frankincense can represent Christ's sacrifice. Myrrh is also an incense and was used in the embalming process by the ancients

We would like to say thank you to the various BBC and BTC Councillors who support our goals including those "Friends of the BTW" (FoBTW), most of which remain anonymous, who offer their timely professional advice and practical support

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 provided in good faith but 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 9th August 2023 at 6pm
Unless otherwise stated, we are to opt for a Zoom meeting**



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