

Issue 1
Easter 2010



DURHAM BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

Durham Veteran Trees

DURHAM VETERAN TREES PROJECT LAUNCHES

On February the 27th and 28th, Hardwick Park, Sedgfield, Gibside and Burnopfield, hosted the Launch Events of the Durham Veteran Trees Project. The two year project - organised by the Durham Biodiversity Partnership and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund is aimed at raising public awareness towards the importance of veteran and ancient trees in terms of both national heritage and biodiversity. In doing so, the project aims to achieve several targets:

- To create a database of 1,000 veteran and ancient trees in the Durham Biodiversity Partnership area (Durham, Darlington, Gateshead, Sunderland, South Tyneside and the North Pennines AONB).

- To establish a volunteer group of at least 200 members.
- To organise at least six volunteer training and surveying events.
- To visit schools and develop an education pack for teaching children about veteran and ancient trees.
- To visit landowners and provide information about management and maintenance of veteran and ancient trees on their land.

At the Launch Events, groups of volunteers watched a brief introductory presentation from Jesse Meredith (the project officer and Brendan Callahan (North East Re-

gional Director of the Forestry Commission) about the project, before receiving brief demonstrations about methods used in measuring trees and finally planting trees at the sites to commemorate the events.

All in all, both events were a success, drawing in volunteers, from former tree wardens, to Durham University conservation volunteers, to people simply wanting to get involved with the project. Let's hope that the trees planted this



Volunteers at the Gibside event planting a tree with the Durham Veteran Tree Officer Jesse Meredith

BRING ON THE VOLUNTEER DAYS!

Now that the launch events are over, the project is looking to organise volunteer training and surveying events all over the Durham Biodiversity Partnership area.

The first event to be organised will be within Durham itself and will span three weeks at the end of April and beginning of May, giving leaves plenty of time to grow and making identifying trees a lot easier than it has been over the bitterly cold winter!

Flass Vale, Witton Gilbert Dene and Pelaw Wood will be the areas surveyed during these days, and these magical woodlands should provide many veteran and ancient trees to be added to the database.

To attend the events, please meet at Waddington United Reformed Church Hall, Durham at 11am on Saturday the 24th of April, Vane Tempest Hall, Gilesgate, Durham at 11am on Sunday the 9th of May or Witton Gilbert Community Centre, Witton Gilbert, at 11am on Sunday the 16th of May (or

all three if you're particularly keen!). The events are not catered, so volunteers are asked to bring along something to share as we will be eating lunch before going out and surveying. The events should be finished by 3pm on each day. Please confirm attendance or ask any questions that you might have by emailing Jesse Meredith, the Veteran Trees Project Officer on:

**jessemeredith@durham
biodiversity.org.uk**

Or call Rainton Meadows on: **0191 584 3112**

Don't forget!

*You don't have to wait until the project-organized events mentioned above! Feel free to contact each other and organize your own events or tell other people where to go to find your favorite trees. Also, if there's anything you would like to see on the next newsletter, or if you know of where there are lots of trees that need measuring, or if you have any questions at all, you can either email Jesse Meredith, the Veteran Trees Project Officer, at: **jessemeredith@durhambiodiversity.org.uk**, call Rainton Meadows on: **0191 584 3112**, or visit the website: **www.durhamveterantrees.org.uk***

HAVING TROUBLE WITH TREE IDENTIFICATION?

Identifying trees can be testing at the best of times, particularly after a winter like the one we are hopefully now leaving behind. Even experienced tree-huggers can have problems occasionally! Luckily, all data that is submitted is verified before becoming official, so the species of the tree will be confirmed or corrected before the data is used. This means that you can still submit data even if you have no idea what species the tree is!

The Durham Veteran Trees Project is, however, establishing a link with the Durham Botanical Gardens which will hopefully allow us to arrange tree identification events in both the Summer and the Winter (we all know how different a tree can look at opposite ends of the year!) to help brush up on your identification, or even learn from scratch.



A photograph of a maple leaf by Durham Ancient Tree Hunt Verifier, John Durkin.

The Durham Botanic Gardens is host to a wide variety of native and non-native trees, a lot of which can be at least con-

sidered for veteran status as well. The more notable specimens would include a purple beech, several ancient hollies and a monkey puzzle tree that originates from Chile and could well be the county champion. The gardens should be the perfect venue for such an event.

If you are interested in attending an identification event, please contact Jesse Meredith, the Durham Veteran Trees Project Officer, by email (jessemeredith@durhambiodiversity.org.uk), telephone (0191 584 3112) or post (Rainton Meadows, Houghton-le-Spring, Tyne & Wear, DH4 6PU) in order to help work out which dates would be best for you.

TREE PHOTOGRAPHS WANTED!

Do you consider yourself a bit of a nature photographer? Do you find yourself walking through woods wondering how a tree would look in a photo frame or as the wallpaper of your computer?

Do you never head to the woods without your trusty camera in your pocket? The Durham Veteran Trees Project would love to see photo-

"The Durham Veteran Trees Project would love to see photographs of trees of all shapes, sizes and species"

graphs of trees of all shapes, sizes and species to be added to the website or various publications (including newsletter articles and other regional media). If you are interested in having your photographs broadcast as part of the project, feel free to send the images to Jesse Meredith, the Durham Veteran Trees Project Officer either by:

- Emailing digital copies to:
jessemeredith@durhambiodiversity.org.uk
- Posting photographs or discs to:
**Jesse Meredith
Rainton Meadows
Houghton-le-Spring
Tyne & Wear
DH4 6PU**

KNOW ANY VETERAN TREE OWNERS?

Not only is the Durham Veteran Trees Project aimed at creating a fully accessible database of all veteran and ancient trees in Durham and the surrounding areas, but it is also in operation to distribute management techniques and information to ensure that these trees remain protected for years and years to come.

There were plans for a fund to be set up for landowners actively managing their veteran and ancient trees in 2004, which

were eventually scrapped as the global economic climate took a turn for the worst, but hopefully landowners will be able to claim for subsidies in the near future in the same way that they can for managing hedgerows.

If you know of any landowners that have veteran or ancient trees on their land, please ask them if they know about them and—if they do—if there is anything that they are doing to protect these trees from potential threats. Please

ask them to contact the Veteran Trees Project as soon as possible.

Alternatively, if you yourself are a landowner and feel that you may have veteran or ancient trees on your land, please contact the Veteran Trees Project Officer, Jesse Meredith via phone or email and make sure that you are doing what is best for your trees and the wildlife associated with them.