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Latest News for verifiers, recorders and partner organisations

## Tree of the month!

### Ash Pollard in Kent

Ancient ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) quickly disappear from our landscape without a trace. Only a slight depression in the ground is often all that remains of where some of our biggest and oldest ash trees once stood. Without management an ash may last little more than 200 years.

Visible from the road this wonderful example of an ancient ash pollard is on private land of Lacton Manor Farm in Kent. Clearly the landowner has carefully maintained the tree as a pollard, which has without doubt helped ensure it remains in the landscape for years to come. Spotted by Owen Johnson on one of his many tree hunting trips, it is one of only seven ancient ash recorded in Kent. Over 6,000 ash can be searched for on the ATH of which less than 300 are like this one.



A remarkable ancient ash pollard (Photo by Owen Johnson)

[ATH Tree No. 97164](#)

### Discover an ancient ash — things to look for!

**Hollow trunk:** either intact, fragmented or just a remnant of a once bigger tree.

**Pollard:** either managed, lapsed or a natural pollard created by collapsing or storm damage.

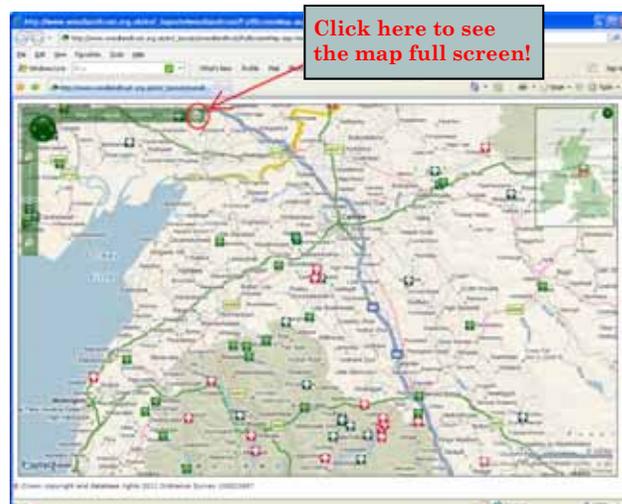
**Girth:** Anything goes if a hollow pollard! Ancient hollow ash pollards in upland areas may only be 1m in girth!



## New Features for ATH website!

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### Map update

Last year many people contributed to the ATH evaluation questionnaire. The website and map was the biggest complaint! The new map embedded on the site will help resolve some of the problems previously encountered. However, we are having to break rather a lot of eggs to make this particular omelette! This work is still ongoing, so please rest assured that the Woodland Trust are committed to updating it so all of the original map and verifying functions are restored.

Thank you for your patience!

# Regional Roundup

## SCOTLAND

### Historic tree becomes storm victim

Niel Gow's Oak ([ATH Tree No.2114](#)) has suffered from the recent storms. Andrew Fairbairn, Policy and Communications Manager for Woodland Trust Scotland, came across the sorry sight whilst on a cycle ride. Andrew reported "It has been badly damaged by the high winds, but is still alive". The tree can be seen on the south bank of the River Tay, accessible by public footpath from the bridge at Dunkeld. We will update the tree record with more details as soon as we can.

Before the storm (Photo by Irena Krasinska-Lobban)



**Fife**  
ATH Verifier Judy Dowling rushed out to see some her favourite local trees once the strong winds had subsided. The recently confirmed Scottish champion Field maple (*Acer campestre*) on the Kemback House estate had shed a few small branches but otherwise still looked amazing in the late afternoon sunshine. The tree is visible from public access ([ATH Tree No.67622](#)) and will be highlighted in an article Judy is compiling for the Tree Register on some of Fife's champion trees.



Scotland's champion Field maple  
(Photo by Judy Dowling)

### Heritage Tree

Judy has also been working with St. Andrew's Botanic Garden, helping to produce a champion tree trail. As well as several small rare champion trees St Andrew's does have an ancient hawthorn at the University in St Mary's Quad; planted in 1563. Now only remnants of the original tree remain but is recognised as a Heritage Tree of Scotland.



Heritage hawthorn, St Mary's Quad (Photo by Judy Dowling)

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Big Oak in Co.Down

Oak over 5m in girth are not frequently seen in Northern Ireland and so it was great to see this fine veteran of 5.62m ([ATH Tree No.96219](#)). Prolific recorder and verifier Peter Lyons recorded this specimen with others in a public park just off the Bangor Road, east from Belfast.



Veteran oak (Photo by Peter Lyons)

## 600 year old yew discovered

Garden historians will have to have a re-think after an ancient yew tree was found at the Wakehurst Place in West Sussex.. Last year, archaeologists discovered that a house dating back to the 14th century once stood on the Wakehurst estate: the current house is a more recent Elizabethan addition. A line of yew trees are believed to have been planted as early as 1391.

Andy Jackson of Wakehurst Place said: "I've walked past this remarkably humble tree almost every day without realising just how old it is."



(Photo by Andy Moir)

## WALES

### Mulberry is best in Wales ([ATH Tree No.96544](#))

Michael Karpaty discovered a truly remarkable tree when he went to verify a mulberry (*Morus nigra*) recorded by Celia Thomas and Tree Wardens in the private walled garden of St Brides Orchard, Pembrokeshire. The site is owned by the National Park and leased to the Scouts. The Tree Wardens originally measured the tree which has a canopy spread of over 50m. More photos on the website!

Inside the ancient mulberry (Photo by Michael Karpaty)



## ENGLAND



### North Yorkshire

Tim Laurie is discovering some amazing trees on the limestone scars of Swaledale and Arkengarthdale. Like this ash tree ([ATH No.97274](#) - photo left) which looks like a petrified carbuncle that has self coppiced over many years as it struggles to hang on to the cliff face.



Tim is the Honorary President of the Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Archaeological Group. Check out their web site and Tim's Woodland Project at [www.swaag.org](http://www.swaag.org)

Regional Lead Verifier Tony Burgoyne is helping Tim verify his records, which includes the highest growing wild gooseberry in Britain!

Ash cliffhanger (Photos by Tim Laurie)



### Cumbria

Vanessa Champion has been looking for crab apple trees in the Lake District and discovered that they often fuse together as seen in this photo. True wild crab are rare, their flowers open pure white from pink buds and their fruit should be small and hard, yellow-green in colour. Any pinkness in the opened flower petals or red in the fruit will indicate a hybrid. So, it is not easy to be certain unless you spot them at the right time of the year.

Many crab apple discovered indicate human activity and may identify the site of a historic settlement.

Cumbrian crab apples  
(Photo by Vanessa Champion)

Keep an eye out for crab apples in your area this Spring!

### Oxfordshire

Field Maple ([ATH Tree No.96912](#))

Verified by Dave Kenny in Crowsley Park



(Photo by Dave Kenny)



## Ancient Tree Hunt partner organisations and projects

### Kent Heritage Trees Project

This latest Heritage Lottery funded project is running for five years from 2011 and will involve hundreds of people of all ages from across the region in an education and activity programme focused on Kent's rich stock of heritage trees. The project will also survey and record over 10,000 heritage trees across the county.

Check out their new [website](#) for further information and planned events.



The launch of the Kent Heritage Trees Project at Canterbury Cathedral - [ATH Tree No.10904](#)  
(Photo from the Kent Heritage Trees Project website)

Champion trees in Kent include 'Majesty' ([ATH Tree No.2251](#))



'Majesty' the Fredville Oak (Photo by Jeroen Pater)

## Ancient Tree Forum - goes to Sicily

Recently posted on the international pages of the ATF web site is a report on some of the ancient trees of [Sicily](#) by Jill Butler. The trip by ATF members included visiting these holly pollards, which are thought to be some of the largest in Europe.

Share your holiday experiences, whether here in the UK or abroad. Send your photos to [ancientreehunt@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:ancientreehunt@woodlandtrust.org.uk)



Ancient holly pollards in Sicily (Photo by Jill Butler)

## Blog of the month!

## ATH Tree No. 23583

### The Marton Oak by Rob McBride

Sometimes things in the 'world of trees' just 'happen'...or sometimes perhaps, we make them happen? Whilst in Manchester, we visited the Harvey Nicks store just to see how the other half lives and I got chatting with the assistant (Madeline) in the drinks area. After some lovely old whisky & cognac samples and chatting she said "Oh my mum and dad have a big tree in their garden". Now as all verifiers will know we get this quite often, sometimes it pays off and other times, well lets just say it can be underwhelming. But, "Oh yes it has a name, it is called the Marton Oak!" "What! You are joking?" I spluttered! But before we left I had the phone number and an invitation to visit.

The Marton Oak is recognised as being one of the biggest oak in Britain. It is now fragmented but photos show it intact in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century when it was considered to be the largest in England. Being on private property it is not visited by many people, but appears on the village sign and became one of the

50 Great British Trees selected by the Tree Council to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee.



Rob and the Marton Oak (Photo by Rob McBride)

I found Oak Lane in Marton and then the house. Driving down the drive the tree comes into view right by the house. Wow! It is a biggie! There were lots of children and adults milling about but the family were very welcoming, even though it was nearly lunch time and food was being prepared. The children also had a play that they were just about to perform.

"Please help yourself to the tree"... Madeline came outside. She told me, "I had a present given to me, by my boyfriend Charles, a few days ago on Christmas day. He hid it in the tree. I found a small box in a hollow and when I opened it, it

was a gold and diamond engagement ring! I burst into tears and he knelt down inside the tree and proposed to me". So romantic, a marriage proposal inside the 1,000 years old Marton Oak! As I took more photos of Madeline, her cousin joined us, who was over from New Zealand, and was over with his family for Christmas and New Year. I asked if I could take a photo of the whole family in the tree. At first they said no. but then, "Well actually we have never had a family photo in the tree



Engaged couple Charles & Madeline (Photo by Rob McBride)

with everyone here, that will be fantastic". Ten minutes later we had 17 family members standing in and about the tree! These will be historic photos in the life of this great old oak'. Chuffed, I certainly was!



The Ancient Tree Hunt is a partnership between the Woodland Trust, Ancient Tree Forum and The Tree Register of the British Isles to map and conserve ancient and other trees of special interest in the UK

The Ancient Tree Hunt includes 100,000 trees recorded with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Esmee Fairbairn Foundation 2006-2011



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