

Tree warden report - October 2022

The 'big issue' to report was the effect of the combined heatwave and drought! Many of the most recently planted saplings went in in the early spring and thus had little chance to establish a flourishing root system. In a normal year the later spring / in early summer would have been a fine time for that to happen. Thanks to phenomenally dry conditions and the heat of July the circumstance created an existential crisis.

In the early morning of the record-breaking height of the heatwave my wife and I visited a neighbour to the Turnpike Lane footpath entrance into the Woods, to encourage a thorough soaking. We were able to use his hose pipe and on account of such emergency action, the good work over the last 2 years to establish a hedge either side of this footpath has largely been preserved.

I was not able to visit all the sites where I had recruited local people to water. Other places: Beresford Drive and Orchard Close didn't get the support they needed and in some places it is less than 50% survival. Barely any of the line of hornbeams made it through, but that was partly due to persistent vandalism. I will try again with a refresh in the late autumn.

The substantial planting at Hall Farm Road Jubilee Green, even though much of that was done in the spring, was valiantly rescued and nurtured through the worst of heatwave and drought by a team – mostly comprising Transition Woodbridge supporters – headed up by a resident. Again, there are substantial casualties - potentially around 45% losses - but it would have been much worse without their consistent efforts.

The area around the Recreation Ground has mostly survived. The trees planted in the woods and around the pond have benefited from the shade and from my irrigation at times when I was not away on summer travels. The trees planted at the top of Fernhill close, at the bottom, and on the footpath down to Leeks Rd have fared well on account of being close enough to home for my wife to be able to reach. At home in front of my garage, since July, I have maintained a large supply of 25 L plastic water barrels for people who are on watering volunteer shifts to collect - this will not be a sustainable arrangement for me in future summers. There have been some good neighbourhood efforts resulting in volunteers who keep barrels of water topped up - particularly in the Hall Farm area, also at Beresford Drive, but I think Melton Parish Council might be advised to consider means of rainwater harvesting and collection from the Pavilion.

The Queen's Jubilee Oak suffered 'leaf scorch' early in the summer (but so did the Woodbridge jubilee tree!). It appears to have made a good recovery!

It is coming up to time for me to consider re-ordering saplings from the tree warden network supplies. I am feeling that next year is best thought of as an opportunity for consolidation of what was done in the way of planting last year. I will order sufficient saplings for replacing the many gaps in the hedging that we have recently done, but I don't advise any more or major projects this coming year. And in anticipation of the ongoing progression of climate change phenomena, we will need to put more effort into planting in an effective way to meet

the 'new normal' and making generous efforts with mulching the new saplings. We have received a steady supply of wood chippings from the Long Shed.

Aside from major planting projects, I'm happy to enable planting of memorial trees. There was that idea of extending a line of trees parallel to the informal footpath from Turnpike lane area to the pavilion.

Again - any efforts we can pursue to encourage a growing team of tree befrienders will be SO helpful, and the Melton Tree Crew could do with a refresh. And I wonder whether we might recruit another tree warden - so that we can cover for each other when we are in the summer holiday season.

Sorry I cannot be with you in person - I run a drop-in group on the first Wednesday of the month. I feel there is a lot to talk about in this.

Martin Wilks
Tree Warden