

# Veteran tree trails

Jim Mullholland, ATF Training and Technical Officer

**A project funded by City of London will see the production of four self-guided trails aimed at those involved in managing veteran trees.**

The City has long been at the forefront of veteran tree conservation. In 1991 it hosted a meeting on 'Pollard and Veteran Tree Management' and subsequently published the proceedings in the seminal publication of the same name. This was followed by a second meeting and sequel publication in 1993. These meetings and proceedings sought to share the experiences of site managers working in nature conservation. The awareness of the importance of the need for appropriate veteran tree management has increased since these publications.

The pioneering work at Burnham Beeches, Epping Forest and Ashted Common all feature in the documents. It is interesting to note that many of the challenges remain

the same now, and in some cases the recommendations for management have not changed much either. For example, in one paper Dr Helen Read talks about retaining stubs on lapsed beech pollards at Burnham Beeches to encourage shooting after cutting, a topic that is still being studied to this day.

With more than 25 years having passed since the meetings, work has continued to help further our understanding of these valuable and fragile trees. The City of London sites represent, therefore, a fantastic educational resource for those who wish to learn about veteran tree management. However, to offer the full benefits to existing and future veteran tree managers it is important for contextual information to be provided. The

*Caged pollard at Burnham Beeches – one of 50 'Great British Trees'.*

site managers have hosted meetings and workshops, encouraging likeminded people to visit and learn from shared experience. However, there are only so many people who can benefit from such events.

Step in the new self-guided trails. To make the most of this education resource, self-guided trails are being set up at four City of London sites: Ashted Common, Burnham Beeches, Epping Forest and Hampstead Heath. An information pack available as an interactive webpage, a downloaded PDF or in hard copy will guide people through the sites, highlighting a number of points of interest. The routes contain examples of best practice and how trees have responded positively to management, but also include



*Hollow oak – an example of proportionate risk management at Hampstead Heath.*



*Keystone oak – one of the 'keystone trees' that are the focus of conservation efforts at Epping Forest.*



lessons learned where the outcome was not as favourable – both are important if we as professionals are to improve our knowledge and use it in our day-to-day work.

## Different sites, different challenges

Whilst the four sites are all owned by the City, the management challenges and opportunities differ significantly between them. I would therefore urge you to visit all four sites if veteran management is of interest.

For example, the management challenges at Ashted Common are tackled using a site-based approach where different areas are managed at one time. This is similar to habitat conservation management, where less focus is provided on the plants and more on the habitats they comprise.

At Burnham Beeches, as the name suggests, the site has a legacy of wonderful veteran beech trees. A large number of these are pollards, the management of which ceased some time ago. Management at this site tackles the challenge of keeping these trees alive for as long as possible whilst planning for future generations.

Epping Forest is an example of nature conservation on a grand scale. With a site that covers 2,400 hectares and an estimated 55,000 veteran trees, management focuses on conserving what are known as 'keystone' trees.

Finally, Hampstead Heath highlights a more common arboricultural challenge: risk management. With 7 million visitors a year, the team has to balance the benefits veteran trees provide against the risk from falling trees or parts of trees.

The self-guided trails will be available by summer 2019. The Ancient Tree Forum and City of London will host launch events at each site to encourage veteran tree managers to visit. Numbers are limited at these events and more details will be available via the Ancient Tree Forum website ([www.ancienttreeforum.co.uk](http://www.ancienttreeforum.co.uk)) in due course. In the meantime, make sure you put these dates in your diaries:

- Hampstead Heath: 22 May
- Epping Forest: 4 July
- Burnham Beeches: 10 July
- Ashted Common: date TBC

If you can't make it along to one of the launch days, the self-guided trails will be available indefinitely, subject to updates to the content. The beauty of the format is that it can be accessed by anyone at any time, whether you fancy visiting during peak time in the summer or disappearing to the woods during a wet winter day. Furthermore, as management is ongoing, the sites and trees will continue to evolve: a visit in 2019 will show you the trees in a particular state but visiting again in five years' time will give a slightly different picture.

◀ *The Wishing Tree – a tree with a strong cultural connection with local people at Ashted Common.*

# New veteran tree management training material

With around six months left before the VETcert project comes to a close, the partners have been busy devising the certification procedure and developing an examination to test professionals' knowledge and skills. During the last week of January, the partner group met in Madarcos, Spain, to test the examination; a full report on this will be provided by the Arboricultural Association in due course.

To help professionals develop their knowledge and skills, Pro Natura (Swedish partner) and the Ancient Tree Forum have been developing new training materials. A review undertaken in early 2018 sought to look at all existing sources of information and training material so gaps could be identified. The new training material will take various forms from signposting

documents (directing people to existing sources of information) and fact sheets (providing summary information) to new veteran tree management videos. The videos will have a similar format to those produced as part of the VETree project (see [www.ancienttreeforum.co.uk/resources/videos/veteran-tree-management/](http://www.ancienttreeforum.co.uk/resources/videos/veteran-tree-management/)).



*Working on one of the new VETcert training videos.*

A total of six videos are currently in production and will tackle a range of topics relating to veteran tree management.

The VETcert is an Erasmus+ funded project which seeks to raise standards in veteran tree care across Europe. The project will conclude in August 2019, after which the accreditation scheme will be available for professionals to apply to. For more information contact Jim Mullholland, [training@ancienttreeforum.co.uk](mailto:training@ancienttreeforum.co.uk).

## News update



### ATF Summer Forum

On Thursday 27 and Friday 28 June 2019 the Ancient Tree Forum's Summer Forum will be held at Sherwood Forest. The Summer Forum brings together the largest group of individuals involved in ancient and veteran tree management. Make sure you're there! This year guest speakers from the Back from the Brink 'Ancient of the Future' project will provide a particular focus on species conservation. For more information or to book your place please visit our website: [www.ancienttreeforum.co.uk](http://www.ancienttreeforum.co.uk) or contact Kate Crook – [admin@ancienttreeforum.co.uk](mailto:admin@ancienttreeforum.co.uk).

### ATF seeks first ever CEO

The Ancient Tree Forum is seeking someone with the right blend of skills, experience and enthusiasm to become our first Chief Executive Officer. The post is based on a flexible three-day week working from home but the role does involve some travelling. Our first Chief Executive will: have a demonstrable interest in the environment and/or the natural world that will make them a credible spokesperson for the charity; be an influential and persuasive leader with excellent interpersonal skills; have the ability to build an active network of contacts and to influence and engage people and organisations; engage with donors and partner bodies; and be operationally effective and a respected manager, setting the highest standards and empowering the staff team to deliver work of the highest quality. The closing date for applications is 25 February and interviews will be held on 12 and 13 March. If you would like to receive an information pack for this role, please send your CV to [executive@harrishill.co.uk](mailto:executive@harrishill.co.uk) or call Jenny Hills on 0207 820 7323.



*Delegates at 2018's ATF Summer Forum in Herefordshire.*

**The articles on pages 47–49 have been provided by the Ancient Tree Forum, which champions the biological, cultural and heritage value of Britain's ancient and veteran trees.**