

Dear Fellow Tree Warden,

If I say so myself, and many of you have said so too, it was a really excellent event. We started with a practical demonstration of pollarding by Waveney Tree Specialists who did us proud, with an excellent display of tree climbing and tree surgery skills from Cameron, coupled with backup from Alan and splendid explanations from Joan.

We all learnt a lot, including from Joan's answer to a question, as to how to differentiate between professional and 'cowboy' tree surgeons. Joan explained she feeds Alan 6000 calories a day and there is not an ounce of fat on him. "Don't ever employ a fat tree surgeon" was her advice. Secondly, she said that a reputable person will always engage you in conversation, provide free estimates and explain the why's and how's and thirdly, because of legitimate costs, (insurance/training/equipment etc) an estimate from a professional should not be less than circa £500 to £600 per day.

Back at the Community Centre, we had tea and coffee and a lot of networking. There was such a buzz, I was almost reluctant to move on to the formal presentations.

Helen Baczkowska from Norfolk Wildlife Trust spoke knowledgeable and passionately about the wildlife benefits of pollarding trees. They provide far more cracks, crevices and hidey holes for wildlife than any other form of tree management. As the practice of harvesting timber from pollards had been going on for many hundreds of years, wildlife and fauna has adapted to the micro climate provided, so that some species lived on pollards and nowhere else. The problem was that these ancient trees are now starting to fall apart, through the ending of active pollarding and harvesting timber, or are being taken down because of misconceptions that they may pose a danger.

Norfolk Wildlife Trust have therefore asked SN Tree Wardens to establish new pollards in their parishes to provide new habitat for the species associated with this form of tree management, otherwise we will not only lose the aesthetic presence of these stately pollarded trees, but the wildlife associated with them.

The pollarding that took place in the nearby woodland, is a two pronged effort. The Ash were pollarded as an experiment (the first in the U.K.) to establish if Ash will recover from Ash-Dieback if pollarded, as indicated by research in Sweden, whilst the Oaks were pollarded to kickstart the NWT initiative to generate new pollards across our district. This too is a UK first. There is a theme here, as Norfolk Wildlife Trust was itself a U.K. first.

Jon Stokes of The Tree Council provided verbal and photographic evidence that our most ancient trees are almost invariably pollards. This is because, when a tree is pollarded or coppiced, it resets its age to zero and puts on a growth spurt. The UK has the largest number of ancient trees throughout Europe, whilst conversely having the least amount of tree cover. SN Tree Wardens are doing their bit to rectify the lack of tree cover and can now do our bit for pollards too. Jon also illustrated the most appalling cases of poor management and lack of understanding, which has led to the demise of some fine and ancient trees. Jon is an engaging, enthusiastic and opinionated speaker and he has done a great deal to support the formation of SNTWN.

I spoke about our First Year and the progress that had been made as well as the tree planting schemes that have taken place. All these schemes can be found on our website.

I also told the gathering that I had first met Helen and Jon when engaged in volunteer projects in the late 1980's in Hampshire and it was a delight to still be working with them.

It proved a struggle to keep to timings, such was the enthusiasm and questions for our speakers and so the business of the AGM itself, was somewhat rushed.

The committee was unanimously re-elected and Sarah Barney, our secretary carried out a survey of those present to establish what specialist skills they had. Steve Dowall, our treasurer and webmaster, presented a financial overview (which can be found on our website) and confirmed we are solvent. He also emphasised that to stay in the loop, Wardens must visit our website, which is our primary source of information and news and frequently updated.

I made a plea for new people to join the committee, which was now operating on the bare bones, putting strain upon the committee officers. Without support there is a real danger that our Tree Warden Network could fail. We have had a very successful first year and we are providing a first rate service to our members but your committee lacks the resilience to enable us to be confident about the long term future, unless we have new members soon. I ask that anyone who would be willing to act as Secretary, or Treasurer, or Membership Secretary, or simply as a committee member contacts me as soon as possible. Duties are not arduous and we meet in a friendly pub every couple of months.

I thank everybody who worked to make the event a success, including those who helped by making the tea and washing up and shifting chairs etc.

The date of our next meeting will be arranged and publicised shortly.

With kind regards,

Henry Gowman
Chair SNTWN