

KMOTT Trees in the Village Competition – Borough Green

The first thing you notice on arriving is the urban forces that have created high-density of development across the whole of this small parish that was called into existence in 1934 and is more densely developed than Tonbridge. One of the greatest assets they have is the presence of mature trees as a backdrop – in particular, on the southern margin of the parish where important mature broadleaf woodland dominates. This area may benefit from a visit in its own right – on first sight there may be elements of ancient woodland incorporated.

My thanks go to Cllr Mike Taylor, Parish Council Chairman, who drove me around the diverse plots spread around the village that are either owned or managed/advised by the PC. The PC distinguishes itself in its practical response to further urban pressures that include the future of exhausted sand pits/quarries and spoil heaps. Trade-offs are sought when further brown- and green-field developments are in the pipeline with the intention of clawing-back parcels of land for their amenity value. The PC also manages larger amenity spaces. They work in partnership with the more rural neighbouring parishes to leverage Borough Green's financial resources to the common good.

Recreation Ground and Walk 1

The Grounds are surrounded by a variety of mature deciduous trees, many of which stand in abutting gardens along the west edge. Here, as elsewhere in the Parish there are good examples of Scots Pines. Private felling has created a thinning of the western margin to increase light in gardens. Perhaps there is scope to plant within the boundary of the recreation ground to restore the tapestry of trees surrounding the area.

The PC maintains a woodland walk along the east edge. Sweet chestnuts and limes in particular are of notable girth and health – some limb removal over the years. Lime epicormic growth is controlled and rougher areas of undergrowth have been left to nature. There may come a time when additional succession planting could take place on the western edge of this copse abutting the amenity land – perhaps displacing some of the underbrush.

Parish Council planting of trees along the southern edge of a playground area intended to provide shade has been spoiled by vandalism. I suggested that, based on experience of other Parishes, the PC allows the ground immediately around new saplings to 'go wild' with longer grass and wild plants, perhaps

some companion planting with hawthorn as vandals seem to avoid getting wet trainers and scratched! Worth a try?



Crow Hill

Private Gardens in the main with some good trees. As commented in the 2016 Competition, a substantial eucalypt and the cherry with its strange 'top knot' of sucker growth are thriving. The Green around which Crow Hill homes sit could benefit from some modest planting with trees of visual attraction – maple varieties; West Himalayan Birch; Tibetan Cherry? Honey Locust (*Gleditsia triacanthus* 'Sunburst'), etc. Crow Hill Copse, sports a WW2 observation post and one of the Coronation benches – created from the "Coronation Oak". This patch of ground is an isolated remnant and is being colonised by Birch, young oak and scrub (gorse and broom). Nevertheless, there are opportunities here under direction of the PC to invest in new tree planting to offer a substantial asset for future generations to enjoy.

Junction of Rock Road/Quarry Hill Road. Site of the fallen Coronation Oak.

Councillor Taylor asked advice on replacing the Red Maple that has probably died from lack of water/nutrition.

My own and another Tree Judge reading around options suggest:-

(a) The Red Maple is a good choice for dry conditions – so it may be worth persisting with the species (and keeping the community on-side as they voted for it!);

(b) The pit into which it is planted needs inclusion of water-retaining, compost well mixed into the native sandy soil and a 2-3" deep mulch to help retain moisture. There is mulch on the current bed;

(c) If reliable watering is proving problematic, the pit could include three root-ball tree-irrigation tubes in a triangle. Commonly, these are simple perforated tubes (e.g. 60mm diameter) placed close enough to the sapli

levels around the root ball as it grows. The natural root system of Red Maples is shallow – it follows that to encourage deeper rooting, regular watering that is deep (and slower) is better than frequent surface watering.

Watering tubes may also help deliver diluted general purpose fertilisers in the Spring (not every year).

With these watering points being fairly easy to spot, I wonder if there is scope for encouraging residents to maintain regular watering – especially in the earlier years? It would be difficult to over-water on sandy soil. The tendency to drying out is made more acute because the tree is in a raised bed – above the level of the road-drain feeding into the right side base of the bed.

The drain appeared blocked to me and should be regularly clean if run-off from the road is to benefit the tree.

This approach is preferable to clay-puddling the bottom of the raised bed while roots become established.

New GP Surgery on Quarry Hill Road – Reynolds Retreat – Spent Quarry and spoil heaps

Along the edge of the Medical Centre carpark stand a number of mature Scots Pines that have been protected by TPOs, lending continuity to the mature avenue of Limes (epicormic shoots kept under control) receding on private land towards Reynolds Retreat. Some ivy needs attention but, for the most part, it is worth noting measures have been taken across the village envelope to tackle ivy (raised in the earlier Report).

We then turned to the extensive site of an old quarry and spoil heaps that are being colonised by silver birch and diverse scrub and which the PC hopes to gain for amenity space that can be further managed. Already, in the eastern edge of the open area (surrounded by raised banks of spoil heaps) there is evidence of recent deciduous planting (e.g oak, beech, mountain ash). This is a large space with enormous opportunities/challenges to benefit the village. It should be noted that the stand of mature mixed deciduous trees along the western edge of the quarry is classified as ancient and semi-natural broadleaf woodland – as such its management presents further opportunities for pathway development and imaginative succession planting.

Basted Lane (Basted Mill)

Having driven around the western edge of the old quarry, along Quarry Hill Road/Thong Lane, we parked on Basted Lane by a picnic ground that is surrounded on all sides by mature woodland. The woodland backdrop



to the extensive amenity space is a further extension of the ancient and semi-natural woodland identified above. There are some ash trees that will need watching for disease. The ground is wet as it sits alongside the River Bourne and springs – I was told the grassed area sits very thinly atop paper-mill waste and bricks. Borough Green has partnered with neighbouring rural parishes [Platt and Plaxtol] to maintain and develop this ground – the PC making available its resources for the common good. Arguably, it might be possible to plant water-tolerant trees as standards for shade and interest in the picnic ground – e.g. additional willow varieties, river birch, red alder? The background of mature trees invites further exploration.



Potters Mede – Sports Grounds

The energy, resources and commitment of the PC is confirmed in their contribution to Potters Mede. It is a pity that PC overtures for cooperation/collaboration with the school opposite Potters Mede have not led anywhere. This ground is a real asset for sports and, consistent with other amenity spaces managed by the PC, the place of trees is recognised and celebrated.



The car park has willow, copper beech and young elders. Around the field there are several oaks of different ages.

The PC has continued its planting programme in the SW corner that will add interest and may, in time, become incorporated into the adjacent woodland walk. Of particular symbolic importance are the oak saplings that were grown in pots from acorns collected by residents from of the original Coronation oak. Hearing of the PC plans for this corner, the residents offered their saplings for inclusion. The KMOTT contributions are also in the ground.

The PC's **second walk** is dominated by oaks that were remarked by the judge in 2016. There is some ivy that needs attention/removal. Their height arising from their close proximity to each other; felling to thin them out may be an option subject to the recommended advice from specialists. This would allow succession planting, which is unlikely within the dense mature stand of trees. Perhaps, as the PC is already doing, expanding the woodland margins with varied broadleaf trees will set the scene for the enjoyment of future generations.

There is a young tree (?crab apple) behind the hall. I wonder if there is scope to add individual specimens around the hall, chosen for aesthetic value (bark, shape, foliage, blossom, fruit)?

We passed the new War Memorial with its Coronation Oak bench. Nearby is a horse chestnut that is very distressed and should probably be felled.

Conclusion

Faced with so many urbanising influences and patterns of development, Borough Green PC has sought every opportunity to retain areas for amenity value. They recognise the importance of trees (mature and new planting) as important parts of their wider strategies to influence developments and old quarry sites.

Judged: 17th August 2018

Nigel Heriz-Smith