



ANCIENT
TREE
FORUM

Working for
the future of
our ancient trees





Living Monuments

Britain is thought to have more ancient trees than any country in northern Europe.

These trees are our living heritage, linking us to the lives of our ancestors. Some are connected with important historic events that have shaped our country. Others are visible reminders of historic landscapes.



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The Ankerwycke Yew (above) in Middlesex is incredibly significant in Britain's history, as according to some accounts, the Magna Carta was sealed at the tree by King John in 1215.

The Birnam oak in Perthshire is thought to be a living remnant of the medieval forest which inspired Shakespeare to write about Birnam in his play, Macbeth.

This old oak (left) in Shorne Woods Country Park, Kent, used to regularly have its upper branches cut for fodder and wood, encouraging new growth. This traditional practice is known as pollarding.



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The Ancient Tree Forum lobbies for better protection of our ancient and veteran trees, and increased recognition of their historic and cultural value. Britain has a global responsibility to care for these living monuments in the way it cares for our historic buildings.



Ancient trees and Biodiversity

Ancient trees are incredibly important for wildlife.

With their gnarled and flaking bark, hollowing trunks, decaying and fallen branches, and water-filled holes, they provide homes for fungi, mammals, birds, invertebrates, lichens and other epiphytes.

The hollowing of ancient trees by fungal decay is a natural part of the ageing process which can even prolong their lives. Fungi keep trees supplied with the nutrients that are essential for survival and growth.

There are more than 2000 different invertebrate species in Britain, which, like the Noble Chafer beetle (pictured below left), are dependent on decaying wood.

Ancient trees are full of nooks and crannies that provide roosting and nesting sites, shelter and food sources for mammals, bats and birds.



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The Ancient Tree Forum has influenced and changed approaches to the sustainable management of trees, and championed the need for specialist care of ancient trees. To promote this knowledge we produce guidance for arborists and tree owners.



Get involved

The Ancient Tree Forum raises awareness of the value of ancient and other veteran trees, and lobbies for their care and protection. We also provide advice on their management, and opportunities for people to enjoy and learn about them.

Sign up for our digital newsletter

Come along to one of our field visits

Attend a training course

Join one of our local or regional groups

Come to our summer forum

Read our book on the management of veteran trees

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