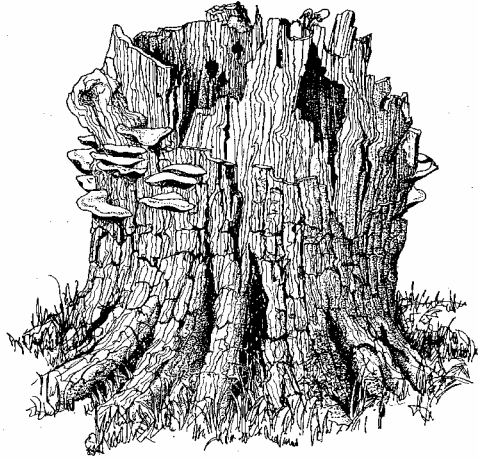


Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan



Lowland Wood Pasture, Parkland & Veteran Trees



Parklands are significant elements in the Shropshire landscape. Wood pasture is a form of Parkland and true wood pasture is scarce in the county. Within such habitat Veteran Trees feature strongly and Shropshire has a relative abundance of these trees. Parklands have great historical and cultural value and are particularly valuable ecologically when found in association with other habitats such as unimproved grassland and wetland areas. They support a wide range of species, including invertebrates, fungi, bats and birds that depend on them for all or part of their lifecycles.

Some Parklands are the product of a distinctive, historic land-use system and include characteristic habitats. Typically they incorporate veteran trees in a matrix of grazed grassland. Veteran trees are large old trees and often found in wood-pasture and parkland. They are frequently old pollards. They may also occur in a number of other locations, such as: ancient yews in churchyards, mature oaks in hedgerows, black poplars along stream-sides, and noble trees in ancient woodlands. . Also many fine in-field trees, often 'ghosts' of former hedgerows. These are particularly threatened by cultivation and other agricultural activities.

Veteran trees cannot be defined by age or stature alone as each tree species can show considerable variation. Most trees over 3 metres in girth are of interest, but some species such as hawthorn are unlikely to reach this size even if very old. Any tree that is very large or just 'looks old' can be considered a veteran. Some have become tourist attractions: for example the large lime with tree house at Pitchford, the beech avenue at Linley, or the Arbor Tree at Aston-on-Clun.

1. Objectives and Targets

1.1 Objectives

- A. Prevent any further loss or degradation of lowland wood pasture, parkland & veteran trees.
- B. Increase the extent of lowland wood pasture and parkland through restoration of degraded areas and expansion of existing areas.
- C. Maintain and enhance all areas of lowland wood pasture, parkland & veteran trees through appropriate management.

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- D. Improve knowledge of veteran trees, lowland wood pasture, and parkland through survey, research and monitoring.
- E. Increase awareness of the value of veteran trees, lowland wood pasture, and parkland.

1.2 Targets

Veteran Trees

- 1.2.1 Produce an inventory of all veteran trees in Shropshire by 2010
- 1.2.2 Ensure protection for the most important examples of veteran trees by 2010.
- 1.2.3 Survey selected veteran trees for specific entomological and lower plant interest by 2010.
- 1.2.4 Ensure long-term sustainable management plans for all key veteran trees by 2010.

Parkland

- 1.2.5 Produce an inventory of all areas of parkland by 2007 as a desktop survey.
- 1.2.6 Ensure protection for the most important parkland sites by 2008.
- 1.2.7 Survey selected parkland for specific entomological and lower plant interest by 2008
- 1.2.8 Ensure long-term sustainable management plans for all key sites by 2010.

Wood-pasture

- 1.2.9 Produce an inventory of all areas of wood pasture by 2007 as a desktop survey.
- 1.2.10 Ensure protection for the most important wood pasture sites by 2008.
- 1.2.11 Survey selected wood pasture for specific entomological and lower plant interest by 2008
- 1.2.12 Ensure long-term sustainable management plans for all key sites by 2010.

2. Current Status

2.1. Importance

Lowland wood-pasture and parkland is a priority habitat in the UK Biodiversity Programme. Veteran trees, and the parkland landscape in which they are often found, are valuable for a wide range of species including some that are very specialised. Their significance for certain groups is only just beginning to be appreciated and understood. Specialist invertebrates that feed on dead wood (saproxylic invertebrates) are one of the most threatened groups of species in Europe.

Of equal importance to the dead wood habitat are other habitats in close proximity such as scrub and hedgerows with nectar producing flowers and shrubs, wetlands, and unimproved grasslands. These habitats provide an opportunity for the specialist invertebrates to complete their lifecycles.

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Old trees are prone to fungal rotting of the heartwood – a natural part of the aging process. This can provide a niche not only for rare and unusual fungi, but also for invertebrates and plants such as mosses, ferns and lichens. Old trees are also valuable for many species of tree-hole nesting birds and bats.

2.2. Trends

There are no figures for historical or current rates of loss or degradation. However it is generally assumed that numbers of veteran trees are declining because of removal of dead trees and a gap in the recruitment of future veteran trees. Parklands are likely to be in general decline through agricultural use of formerly grazed landscapes, neglect of landscape features, a lack of new planting, and the division of large estates into multiple ownership or management units. The removal of dead and dying trees or of fallen timber (for firewood etc.) destroys some of the most important habitats and may eliminate rare species.

2.3 Area/Extent

The 'best estimate' for the amount of wood-pasture and parkland in the UK is 10-20,000 hectares (UK BAP web site). In Shropshire there are over 180 recognised parklands including Llanforda Estate near Oswestry, Shavington Park near Market Drayton, Attingham Park near Shrewsbury, Walcot Park near Bishop's Castle, and Dudmaston near Bridgnorth. There is a Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, maintained by English Heritage which lists the most important examples as Grade I, II or II*, but there is no figure for the total extent of parkland habitat or a full inventory of veteran trees.

2.4 Distribution

Veteran trees and parkland habitats are widely distributed throughout the county, but genuine wood pasture is scarce.

3 Current Factors Affecting the Habitat

- Felling of old trees to obtain wood for timber, for safety reasons, to increase 'tidiness', or to enable changes in land use such as development, agriculture, road building etc.
- Clearance of fallen wood resulting in the removal of dead wood habitat.
- Cessation of traditional management such as pollarding.
- Inappropriate past management such as filling tree cavities with concrete, or girdling with chains or iron bands.
- Unskilled tree surgery resulting in shortened lifespan of trees.
- Inappropriate management of surrounding land (e.g. ploughing too close to trees, use of agricultural sprays and fertilizers, damage to roots by development, trenching and cable installations).
- Inappropriate grazing levels resulting in lack of natural regeneration or damage to tree bark.

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- Livestock congregation around base of trees causing poaching, ground hollowing, compaction, flooding, pollution and bark damage.
- Changes in groundwater levels resulting in drought or water logging.
- Compaction of the soil around tree roots by structures, surfaces, people or vehicles.
- Loss due to diseases such as Dutch elm disease or oak dieback.
- Lack of younger trees leading to a break in continuity of dead wood habitat.
- Neglect due to a lack of financial support for management

4 Current Action

4.1 Policy and Protection

- Attingham Park was designated as an SSSI for the invertebrate fauna associated with veteran trees.
- Some parklands are protected through ownership by the National Trust and other conservation organisations
- Veteran trees and parklands are often protected through the local planning system.
- Local authorities can protect trees or groups of trees through Tree Preservation Orders.
- Veteran trees can be protected in association with certain protected species such as tree-hole nesting fauna.
- Veteran trees have recently received some level of recognition through the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, *Planning Policy Statement 9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation*. Within this statement the following text can be found in paragraph 10: “Aged or ‘veteran’ trees found outside ancient woodland are also particularly valuable for biodiversity and their loss should be avoided. Planning authorities should encourage the conservation of such trees as part of development proposals.”
- The Tree Council’s Green Monuments Campaign is a concerted effort by the UK’s lead tree campaigning partnership to gain special protected status for heritage trees — trees of great historical, cultural or ecological significance.
- The Ancient Tree Forum has published an advisory leaflet for farmers setting out best practice for conserving trees on farmland
- The Environmental Stewardship Entry Level Scheme includes options for protection of in-field trees.

4.2 Management, Research and Survey

- The interest in Veteran Trees has recently been promoted nationally via the Woodland Trust’s campaign, the Ancient Tree Hunt. This is being reflected regionally with projects to identify and survey the Veteran trees of Shropshire.
- Active management of important trees and parkland sites is carried out by several conservation organisations such as the National Trust, Woodland Trust, Severn Gorge Countryside Trust, Shropshire Hills AONB and BRH Project.
- Specialist advice and guidance is available from Natural England, Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust, Ancient Tree Forum and Shropshire Hills AONB.

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- Environmental Stewardship (together with Countryside Stewardship and Environmentally Sensitive Area Schemes until they expire) provides support for the management of existing parklands and the reinstatement of grazing on commons.
- In some Joint Character Areas veteran trees in their own right, is a priority habitat target under the Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme.
- The Forestry Commissions Woodland Grant Scheme can offer grant-aid for woodland management.
- Parish Planning is encouraging communities to investigate and care for their local landscape, including Veteran Trees and Parkland.
- An upcoming 2-year project (2006/07) for the north of Shropshire will be co-ordinated by Shropshire County Council's Countryside Service to raise the profile and encourage the protection of veteran trees.
- The AONB's BRH Veteran Tree Project (ends 2007) has already recorded >800 trees, completed management plans for 40 veteran trees and undertaken practical work on six veteran trees.
- Trees for a Living Landscape in the north of the county has recorded >200 veteran trees
- The National Trust is carrying out a survey of farmland trees on the Attingham Estate (due for completion 2006) to investigate the extent and condition of the veteran trees resource beyond the parkland. A similar survey is planned for the Dudmaston estate in 2006/07.

5 Benefits of Conserving Veteran Trees and Parkland

- Provision of habitat for specialist animals, lichens & fungi including both rare and common species.
- Veteran trees and parklands have great aesthetic appeal and are linked to tourism through special events or through associations with 'grand houses'.
- Veteran trees and parklands often have historic associations with people and events.
- They provide a good source of timber if managed in a traditional and appropriate way.
- Veteran trees contain genetic material dating back many hundreds of years and as such are good repositories for material of local provenance.
- Some Parklands are associated with famous landscapes such as 'Capability' Brown and reflect a trend introduced by William the Conqueror, subsequently becoming fashionable amongst the aristocracy.

6 Key Species

Mammals	pipistrelle, brown long-eared and noctule bats
Birds	tawny owl, spotted flycatcher, green woodpecker, redstart, tree sparrows and song thrushes may be associated with this habitat.
Beetles	<i>Agrilus sinatus</i> (a Jewel beetle), <i>Notolaemus unifasciatus</i> , <i>Rhizophagus picipes</i>
Fungi	a range of bracket fungi, boletus and waxcap species

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Other Invertebrates Oak Bush-cricket, Hornets, Hoverflies, Wood White and Pearl Bordered Fritillary butterflies

7 Complementary Plans

UK Lowland Wood-Pasture and Parkland HAP
UK Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland Habitat Statement
Shropshire Hedgerow HAP
Shropshire Semi-Natural Broadleaved Woodland HAP
Shropshire Dormouse SAP
Shropshire Lesser Horseshoe Bat SAP
Shropshire Pipistrelle Bat SAP

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8 Actions

Habitat / Species	Action code	Action text	Location of action	Start date	End date	Lead	Assisting
Lowland Wood Pasture, Parkland & Veteran Trees	SHR WPV AP 01	Include specimen and veteran trees in the woodland management plan for Ironbridge Power Station by 2015.	Ironbridge Gorge Power Station	2008	2015	E.ON	
Lowland Wood Pasture, Parkland & Veteran Trees	SHR WPV CP 01	Organise 5 BAP related awareness raising activities for local communities by 2012.	Shropshire	2006	2012	CFGA	SC-ORS, SWT
Lowland Wood Pasture, Parkland & Veteran Trees	SHR WPV CP 02	Raise awareness of the importance of veteran trees, wood pasture, and parkland amongst the public	Shropshire	2006	ongoing	SC-ORS, AONB	FC, NT, NE, SC, FWAG, T&W
Lowland Wood Pasture, Parkland & Veteran Trees	SHR WPV CP 03	Ensure that landowners are aware of the nature conservation importance of their veteran trees, wood pasture, and parkland	Shropshire	2006	ongoing	ALL	FC, SWT, SC,FWAG, CFGA
Lowland Wood Pasture, Parkland & Veteran Trees	SHR WPV FR 02	Consider applying for national heritage lottery funds to offer funding to landowners for management and interpretation of veteran trees by 2010.	Shropshire	2006	2010	SBP	SC, NT, SWT, SC-ORS
Lowland Wood Pasture, Parkland & Veteran Trees	SHR WPV FR 03	Ensure that landowners are aware of any grants available for the management of veteran trees, wood pasture, and parklands	Shropshire	2006	ongoing	FWAG	SWT, AONB, CFGA, SC
Lowland Wood Pasture, Parkland & Veteran Trees	SHR WPV HS 01	Encourage the appropriate management of veteran trees, wood pasture, and parkland (including no intervention if appropriate).	Shropshire	2006	ongoing	FWAG, AONB	SC
Lowland Wood Pasture, Parkland & Veteran Trees	SHR WPV HS 03	Produce advisory notes/management plans for churchyards to include both grassland and tree management by 2012.	Shropshire	2006	2012	CFGA	
Lowland Wood Pasture, Parkland & Veteran Trees	SHR WPV HS 04	Ensure that all veteran tree and parkland sites designated County Wildlife Sites or Local Nature Reserves have management plans or are well managed by 2010.	Shropshire	2006	2010	SWT	FC, SC, SC-ORS

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Lowland Wood Pasture, Parkland & Veteran Trees	SHR WPV ID 01	Produce an inventory of all areas of parkland & wood pasture as a desktop survey by 2010.	Shropshire	2009	2010	SC-ORS	NT, SC, T&W
Lowland Wood Pasture, Parkland & Veteran Trees	SHR WPV PL 02	Ensure that all veteran trees are protected by Tree Preservation Orders by 2008.	Shropshire	2006	2008	SC	T&W, SC-ORS
Lowland Wood Pasture, Parkland & Veteran Trees	SHR WPV RE 01	Investigate the history and folklore of key veteran trees, determining their place in history and the links with local communities and people by 2012.	Shropshire	2006	2012	SC-ORS	SWT, CFGA
Lowland Wood Pasture, Parkland & Veteran Trees	SHR WPV SM 01	Use natural regeneration, seed stock from the site or local provenance seed wherever possible to produce on-site replacement tree stock.	Shropshire	2006	ongoing	SC-ORS	
Lowland Wood Pasture, Parkland & Veteran Trees	SHR WPV SP 03	Ensure that all appropriate veteran trees, wood pasture, and parklands are designated as Wildlife Sites until 2015.	Shropshire	2008	2015	SWT	SC-ORS, AONB
Lowland Wood Pasture, Parkland & Veteran Trees	SHR WPV SU 01	Survey all veteran trees to establish the extent and distribution in Shropshire by 2010.	Shropshire	2006	2010	SC-ORS	SWT, NT, SC, AONB, CFGA
Lowland Wood Pasture, Parkland & Veteran Trees	SHR WPV SU 03	Implement a programme of resurvey of veteran trees, wood pasture, and parklands in nature reserves and Wildlife Sites by 2007.	Shropshire	2006	2007	SWT	NT, SC, T&W
Lowland Wood Pasture, Parkland & Veteran Trees	SHR WPV SU 05	Caring for Gods Acre will survey veteran trees in churchyards by 2012.	Shropshire	2006	2012	CFGA	SC-ORS, SWT
Lowland Wood Pasture, Parkland & Veteran Trees	SHR WPV SU 06	Over the five year period (2007 – 12) select 3 sites and carry out sample monitoring for change	Shropshire	2007	2012	CFGA	

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KEY TO ORGANISATIONS

FC	Forestry Commission
FWAG	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
NE	Natural England
NT	National Trust
SC	Shropshire Council
SC-ORS	Shropshire Council Outdoor Recreation Service
SWT	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
AONB	Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership
CFGA	Caring For Gods Acre
T&W	Telford & Wrekin Council

Plan last reviewed 2006

Pdf correct on 23.03.2008

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