

Special Trees and Woods of the Chilterns

The project

As many of you will have read in the last edition of *News of the Woods*, the Chiltern Woodlands Project has a new element the Special Trees and Woods project.

Managed by Coordinator Liz Manley, and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the project aims to record special trees and woods throughout the Chilterns Natural Area. Liz is recruiting a team of volunteers to support the project in a number of ways, including collecting information such as old photographs, estate records and oral histories. In time these efforts will create a social history of the special trees and woods in the Chilterns.

Meet Liz

Staff numbers in the Chiltern Woodlands Project office doubled with the arrival of Liz Manley, who is coordinating the work of the Special Trees and Woods project. Liz is no stranger to working for a small charity after working for *Flora locale*, a national conservation charity.



Liz is enjoying exploring the Chilterns and the challenges which a new post brings.

Liz said 'This is an exciting project to work on it is really individual, with the environment and local history both featuring. I am looking forward to finding out all the stories behind the trees and woods, and hope that everyone is as inspired by the project as I am! It is also great to be back in the Chilterns where I started my career with the Forestry Commission.'



Record something special

Can you think of a special tree? Maybe it has a name, is a local landmark because of its size or shape, or features in a painting or local story.



Even young trees can be special. This one was planted to celebrate 40 years of the Chilterns AONB. Do you know of another commemorative tree, maybe planted to celebrate the golden jubilee, or even the Coronation? (Photo by Tracy Adams)

A special wood might contain a particular species, be a local landscape feature or contain archaeological features such as sawpits, boundary banks and hollow ways. Can you think of a true story that makes a wood special?

If you know of a special tree or wood then record it on our forms so we can celebrate our local history and ensure they are managed sensitively and sustainably.

Call Liz to receive a recording form

We need you

We anticipate making hundreds of records of trees and woods throughout the life of the project and we hope to research many of these.

To do this Liz hopes to recruit up to 50 registered volunteers to help with this diverse project. Tasks available for volunteers are wide ranging; under supervision, volunteers will research the history of special trees and woods in records, photos, paintings, maps, books and direct from local people themselves.

If you would like to find out more about volunteering with the Special Trees and Woods project contact Liz.

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Oral histories

You might not have heard of the term 'oral history' before as it is a relatively new method for recording history. The Oral History Society states 'Oral history is the recording of people's memories and experiences on tape to increase our understanding of the recent past.'

It is interactive and exciting - not dependent on the written word, increasing the involvement of normal people with unique experiences to share. The Special Trees and Woods Project hopes to carry out many oral history interviews over the next three and half years.

Interviews will be carried out with willing volunteers that have memories of local woodland management or the timber industry. Ideally, the project hopes to record oral histories with local woodland workers, estate owners and managers, foresters, gamekeepers and craftsmen. So, if you used to work in the woods or can remember your father doing so, Liz would be pleased to hear from you.

If you have any doubts, be assured that recording an oral history is not hard work! The informal, relaxed interview takes place at a venue to suit the interviewee. It does not take longer than an hour and only a small, discrete recorder is used.

The copyright of an interview remains with those recorded. However, oral histories are for the benefit of everyone, so those involved sign a clearance note in order that the material can be preserved as a permanent public reference in a county records office, library or local museum. The oral histories can then be used for research, publications, education, broadcasting and the internet.

You might think that your experiences are not important enough to be part of this project but you are probably wrong! The Special Trees and Woods project is all about recording local stories about local trees and woods. So, if you have experiences to share and want to know more about oral histories contact Liz and together, you can decide whether to go ahead with an oral history.

More information
Oral History Society - www.ohs.org.uk

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Part of the
Chiltern
Woodlands
Project



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Volunteer news

Project volunteers have already started investigating, and learning more about, their local heritage. Some attended the popular woodland archaeology workshop run by the Chiltern Woodlands Project in Pigotts Wood.



Volunteers in Pigotts Wood surveying archaeological features such as ancient track ways and saw pits.

The woodland here is a great demonstration site for those new to woodland archaeology as it contains many interesting features. There are numerous saw pits, boundary banks, track ways, marker stones and trees, quarries and charcoal hearths.

Russell, a new volunteer, attended one of the workshops. He said 'I never realised all the lumps and bumps in a woodland could mean so much. I can't wait to visit my local wood and see if I can spot any features there.'

After attending this introductory workshop, Russell and another volunteer have joined forces to investigate the archaeology of a woodland using their new skills. Read the next News of the Woods to check their progress.

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Chilterns is part of the
Chiltern Woodlands Project



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