



Tree 1. A common oak pollard

No.	Species	Girth (m) 2005	Estimated age (years)
1	Oak	2.75	190
2	Beech	3.4	170
3	Beech Coppice	4.60	400-500
4	Beech	3.68	190
5	Beech	3.84	200
6	Oak	3.07	150
7	Beech coppice	1.5 diameter	c.500
8	Oak	3.45	260
9	Sweet chestnut	4.27	400
10	Sweet chestnut	3.5	300

Veteran Trees are special trees. They are not necessarily extremely ancient, but - like human veterans - they have stories to tell and the scars to prove them!

Veteran Trees can tell us how our ancestors managed their land, how they provided their families with warmth and shelter and how and where they grazed the animals that provided them with food and clothing.

Veteran Trees are a link to past landscapes, not only through human history but also through the colonies of creatures that lived in the historic landscapes and survived in the old trees when the landscape changed. A veteran oak will be home to uncountable numbers of insects, invertebrates, and other animals that can only live in the cavities, rot holes and bark of a veteran tree and have no way of moving to another tree should their home be felled.

Tree Management. Cut a deciduous tree off near ground level and the stump (stool) will grow multiple shoots. These can be harvested when they reach an appropriate size and the stump will shoot again. The process can continue almost indefinitely.

This is Coppicing. Grazing animals love the new shoots and have to be excluded from a coppice.

Cut a deciduous tree at about 2 metres and the animals cannot reach the new shoots. They can be harvested in a similar way to a coppice stool but with more difficulty. This is **Pollarding**. The most ancient trees, like those in Windsor Great Park, are pollards.

To produce long timbers trees are left un-cut but may be pruned. Such trees are called **Maidens or Standards**.

Burnt Hill Common is, like its Veteran Trees, a Special Place. For centuries it was pasture woodland grazed by wild animals and by cattle, horses, pigs and sheep. These ate tree seedlings and kept the woods open and grassy. In the 13th century, together with Ashampstead Common, it was enclosed with a bank and ditch to be a deer park. This ensured that it continued to be

grazed and kept open. The park was abandoned about 1600 and reverted to being common grazing. Quite soon after this the Common was extensively quarried to provide brick making material. The deep pits near Cherry Orchard are the quarries. The fiery glow from the kilns in the night sky gave the area its name – ‘Burnt Hill’. The Common was also the community’s playground and cricket was played opposite the chapel. During World War 2 a large transit camp was built to house troops moving to the south coast ports for D Day and after. This was removed in the 1950s and the area reverted to scrub and woodland but many traces still remain.

Estimating the Age of Trees.

Coppice stools. Take an average diameter. For oak, ash, and hazel allow 0.3m per 100 years. For sweet chestnut allow 0.6m per 100 years.

Pollards. Measure the girth at about 1.5m above the ground. In a wood allow 8 years for every 10cm and then add another third. In the open allow 4 years for every 10cm and then add a third.

Maidens. Measure the girth at about 1.5m above the ground. In a wood allow 8 years for every 10cm. In the open allow 4 years for every 10cm.

But growth slows as trees grow older and so old trees will be older than the calculated age.

Tree 7. Beech coppice. Possibly 500 years old



Access. The Commons are owned by Yattendon Estates. Ashampstead Parish residents have unrestricted access under a legal agreement of 1974. Non-parishioners are technically restricted to the many paths shown on the map.



West Berkshire
Countryside Society

We care for your countryside

**Ashampstead Parish, West Berkshire
Burnt Hill Common**

Veteran Trees for the Future.



Tree 9 Sweet chestnut pollard

Dick Greenaway and Nick Hopton 2013