

Cowdown, Chilland, Nr Martyr Worthy
Ancient Tree Hunt
Sunday 16th December 2007



The aim of today's task was to measure and record several old oak pollards situated in a grazing field at Cowdown, on what used to be common land. Martin Bown had reported many a joyful occasion in his youth clambering amongst these trees with his friends!!

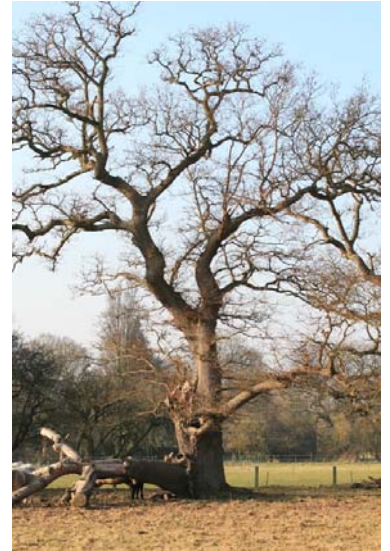
In all six trees were recorded; it is peculiar that five of them stand in a straight line running south-to-north rather than being spread about, our assumption is that this formed an old boundary line. The fifth and an additional tree (and maybe one more) are inaccessible being in a private garden. The sixth and largest tree (by girth) is situated some 50 metres from the others on the bank of the river Itchen, obscured by a holly bush, and the root system of which has become exposed.



Oak Pollard No. 1 – 4.80m



Oak Pollard No. 2 – 5.60m



Oak Pollard No. 3 – 4.56m

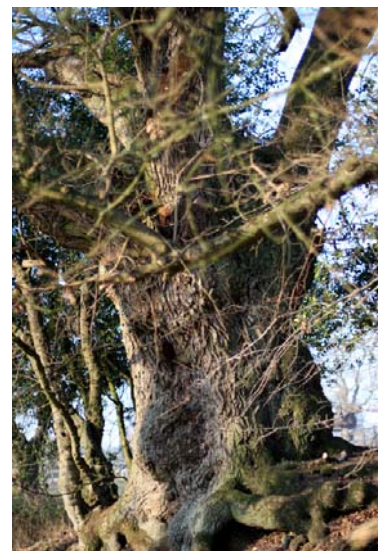
It is not known when the trees were pollarded or even what use the timber would have been put to – maybe for local dwellings, or for ships down on the coast. We estimated the trees at least 400 years old, with the largest having a girth of well over 5 metres. Several have hollowed trunks and branches; recently one (no. 3) has suffered the loss of a major limb, now resting forlorn on the ground where it fell – an owl was later spotted in the hollow remain. All are still actively growing, looking graceful with their many years, except one fragile-looking tree (no. 4) but no doubt still with several more years left in it – we chose to take a group photo under this one. Whilst grazing cattle have done little visible damage, these trees would do well - and deserve - to be protected by a suitable fence.



Oak Pollard No. 4 – 5.40m



Oak Pollard No. 5 - private



Oak Pollard No. 6 – 5.80m



Taking measurements – the lady in red is the official recorder!



Cowdown Pollards in a line

After Christmas lunch at The Trout, Itchen Abbas, a seventh tree, a well known ancient yew at St John the Baptist church, Itchen Abbas, was also measured. We understand this tree might be recorded in a Saxon charter of 939AD, which puts it at over 1,000 years old. In the shadow of the yew is the grave of the last man to be hanged for horse stealing in England! The yew has been pollarded and a major branch has also been removed; otherwise the tree is flourishing. We measured the tree's girth at 7m 75cm.

All the Cowdown Pollards are recorded at www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk, just follow the links on the WCV web site.



“My feet are frozen .. can we go to the pub now?!”

Other notable trees in the area listed on our web site, are: Gospel Oak at Hampage Wood (dating to 597AD but unfortunately now dead - all that remains is part of the hollow shell); Oak in barley field at Gander Down; Oak in pasture at Ovington; yew on Bridgets Lane, Martyr Worthy.

Weather: sunny but cold, just 4°C.

Bruce Graham – Task Leader.