

Plymouth Tree Partnership's contribution to the city's 'Plan for Trees' has continued with its activities coming under the main headings of "Plant", "Care" and "Learn".

We plant – by supporting groups and individuals with their tree projects

The steady trickle of people contacting Plymouth Tree Partnership about trees where they live has continued and requests to fill an empty tree pit or replace a stump are quite common. Such requests always involve our Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest colleagues since they have the necessary resources for action although Tree Wardens have also played an active part, notably at Pathfields and Blockhouse Park. Each involved site meetings beforehand and participation on the planting days.

Platinum Jubilee school projects

During the year of the Queen's platinum jubilee and death, Boringdon Primary School asked to plant a commemorative tulip tree, *Liriodendron tulipifera*, this being one of the late Queen's favourite trees. Plympton Tree Warden, David Frost, answered the call and showed Key Stage 2 pupils how to do it whilst explaining how trees grow and their need for aftercare.



Tree Warden, David Frost, and children with the tree they planted at Boringdon Primary School

Chaddlewood Primary School heard about the planting at Boringdon School and wanted to do the same. Again, David Frost, was pleased to assist.

Pilgrim apple tree – final ceremonial planting

The Mayflower 400 commemorations included ceremonial plantings of the Pilgrim 400 apple tree in Pilgrim Primary Academy (1st November 2019) and the Council House Garden (11th March 2020). Plymouth Argyle had also wanted a tree but could not plant it until their refurbishment works had completed. The opportunity came on 1st November 2022 when Tree Warden, Gloria Dixon, masterminded arrangements. An appreciative group watched as the Lord Mayor, Cllr Sue Dann, applied her well-practised tree planting skills aided by the family of the late Gordon Sparks who was such a champion of the 'Pilgrims' at Home Park. We were joined by the club's Chairman and enjoyed their hospitality afterwards.



Sue Dann on the left with Gordon Sparks's family

Mutley Plain



Impression of Mutley Plain with newly-planted trees.

The project to plant a length of pavement on Mutley Plain which started in June 2021 came to a natural pause during the year having proved its technical feasibility. However, it would be unaffordable as a standalone project so co-ordination with other street works will be necessary if this major street and shopping centre is once again to benefit from tree-lined pavements.

The funds earmarked for Mutley Plain have been reallocated to undertake other street tree projects in collaboration with the Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest.

We care – by tending young trees and reporting problems on established trees

Plymouth's Tree Wardens have continued to be a key force in caring for trees planted before the Urban Tree Challenge Fund and Community Forest programmes in March 2020. Plantings since then have funding for aftercare included and this is delivered by PCC's Street Services, although Tree Wardens stand ready to assist.

There were 34 Tree Wardens at the beginning of the year (1st April 2022) and 39 at the end of the year (31st March). Their areas of work are shown in Annex A.

The tree-care season launched with a meeting of Tree Wardens at the Golf Hut in Central Park on 9th September 2022. Areas needing attention were identified and plans discussed for dealing with them.



Tree Wardens meet at the Golf Hut in Central Park, 9th September 2022

The meeting helped to prioritise the mobile team's work and they have supported these places over the year.

29th April	Family Tree Field, Central Park
20th May	Haddington Road, Stoke
10th June	Honicknowle orchard

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1st July	Glen Road and Canefields Avenue, Plympton
23rd September	Paradise Road Field
14th October	Family Tree Field, Central Park
4th November	Central Park avenue trees
25th November	Trefusis Park orchard
16th December	Patna Park
13th January	Aylesbury Crescent and Playground, Whitleigh
3rd February	Blockhouse Park, Stoke
24th February	Furzeacre Wood, Plympton
17th March	Victoria Park

Furzeacre Wood – plastic shelters removal

Furzeacre Wood is a 4-acre site on the outskirts of Plymouth which had been planted with whips in 2012 as a planning condition for the new road leading to the tungsten mine. The tree shelters were breaking up and damaging trees. Tree Wardens combined forces with Tungsten West staff to remove all the 1,200 shelters. The work completed in one day thanks to the many people who helped and excellent logistical support from Tungsten West.



A few of the Tree Wardens with some of the tree shelters they collected

Examples of individual Tree Wardening

Individual Tree Wardens have been active too and altogether, 1,100 hours have been recorded on practical tasks and at least another 300 hours (probably many more) on other activities, such as researches, meetings and planning.

Most individual activities go unnoticed and may appear trivial like watering or loosening an over-tight tree tie. However, they can make the difference between a tree growing well or failing prematurely, and hundreds of trees around Plymouth have benefitted from such attention. Each case is different, but all require an informed assessment of the problem and the initiative to deal with it. There is not the space to highlight them all so here is just a very small selection.



Tree damaged by dog attack

In September, when one of the young avenue horse chestnuts in Central Park was almost ring-barked in a dog attack, Alice Thompson helped the tree to recover by making a bridge graft over the damaged area.

Its canopy flushed thinner than its neighbours this spring but it now has the means to pull through. The alternative of replacing the damaged tree would have been costly in money and staff time.



With bridge graft to aid recovery

In January, the two mulberry trees in Moor View Park were hard against their wrought-iron guards which were pressing on the bark. Chris Hunt and Andrew Young went there with spanners to remove the guards and take them away for refurbishment and re-use elsewhere.



Tree Warden, Chris Hunt, with one of the newly released trees in Moor View Park

Chris Hunt and several others have also been active in the Family Tree Field, with mulching a priority because the shallow clay soil makes for very difficult growing conditions. This initiative

undoubtedly kept the trees going during the hot dry summer of 2022 and reduced the amount of watering required.



Bordering the Family Tree Field is the avenue of sweet chestnut trees planted for Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee in 2012. It has experienced high rates of mortality for no apparent reason and Tree Wardens have been progressively replacing the failed heavy-standard containerised trees with smaller stock, and they appear to be establishing more successfully.

When one of the original trees showed exfoliating bark, Phytophthora plant disease was suspected and reported to DEFRA who came to test it. Fortunately, none was found and with extra mulching the tree appears to be recovering.

Exfoliating bark on one of the Jubilee Row sweet chestnuts

We learn – by coaching Tree Wardens and explaining tree topics to others

Tree Warden training has typically depended on those with more experience demonstrating practical techniques to others and pointing out features of interest on guided walks, such as the one on the Hoe which followed the AGM on 6th July 2022.

Theory course for Tree Wardens

On job training is no substitute for understanding what makes for a successful tree. We were extremely fortunate therefore to have attracted a professional tree consultant and trainer, Dominic Scanlon, to deliver six evening talks over the winter months which explained the science of arboriculture. They each lasted two hours and were held in the Sustainability Hub thanks to the continuing support of the University of Plymouth. The talks were aimed at new Tree Wardens as well as those with some experience and were subsidised by a funding grant from the Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest. The topics covered were:

13th October	How trees grow
17th November	How to identify and name trees
15th December	Threats to tree health
19th January	Planting and caring for new trees
23rd February	Pruning – whys and wherefores
23rd March	Designing with trees



February's tree talk

Armada Way

Plymouth Tree Partnership's members include several tree specialists who were able to probe the information presented by promoters of the Armada Way scheme in September 2022. It was apparent that the case for such extensive tree removal was for convenience rather than arboricultural reasons. While a new group 'Save the Trees of Armada Way' led a high-profile campaign, PTP Trustees made two representations and, following a Council direction, they met with officers and contractors, who remained unpersuaded and the trees were subsequently felled. An independent enquiry is promised, and one obvious lesson is that constituted groups like Plymouth Tree Partnership must always be treated as stakeholders at every stage of the design process. Another lesson is to establish transparent management processes so that confidence and trust can be restored.

Natural England project

In parallel with Urban Tree Festival planning, we submitted a funding application to Natural England for resources that will increase Plymouth Tree Partnership's capacity. As a blended project designed to increase membership, volunteering and proficiency, it will include making a short film to raise Plymouth Tree Partnership's profile, implementing a Tree Warden development programme, and buying new equipment. Natural England approved the funding in March 2023 and the project will be delivered during 2023-24.

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Urban Tree Festival planning

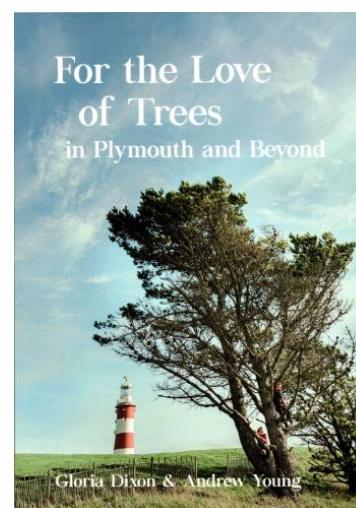


Planning started in January to take part in the Urban Tree Festival, 13th to 21st May 2023. It would be the first time that Plymouth had participated in this national fixture and the organisational work involved provided a useful stimulus for team building with imaginative ideas being turned into appealing events.

Book – For the Love of Trees

In November 2022, Plymouth Tree Partnership members and Tree Wardens, Gloria Dixon and Andrew Young, produced a new book, “For the Love of Trees – in Plymouth and Beyond.” With contributors from all walks of life and vitality in their articles, the book should appeal to tree lovers everywhere.

The book’s editors asked if Plymouth Tree Partnership wished to act as publisher, as with “Plymouth’s Favourite Trees” in 2008, and the uninformed Trustees agreed to this. The book launch took place on 1st December 2022. By the close of the financial year, 31st March 2023, half of the publication costs of £2,400 had been met with sales continuing at a steady rate.



Administration

The launch of the Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest in 2021 caused a fundamental re-examination of Plymouth Tree Partnership’s purpose and its relationships with local government and national charities. It has since become clear that the funding available to them will be insufficient for many street tree projects, which will only be able to proceed if supplemented by charitable donations and other grants. This, and the need to co-ordinate voluntary activities means that Plymouth Tree Partnership’s purpose is largely unchanged although close communications with the Community Forest will be essential.

Trustees

Sandy Borthwick left as a Trustee and Joe Berryman joined during the year. We are grateful to Sandy for bringing his business experience to the charity during the difficult period of the Covid pandemic. Joe Berryman is the tree officer for Plymouth Community Homes and very knowledgeable about tree management. Other Trustees at the end of the financial year were:

Roger Atkin	Treasurer
Dave Curno	
Chris Hunt	
John Stone	
Penny Tarrant	Chair
Andrew Young	Secretary

John Stone retires at the forthcoming AGM having served three terms. He has been a strong advocate for Tree Wardening and assures us that we will continue to see him at all the usual events.

Membership

Trustees have decided not to re-introduce membership fees which were suspended during the Covid pandemic. Instead, self-subscription systems are being investigated and proposals will be presented at the 2023 AGM. Interest in the Armada Way developments has led to more people joining Plymouth Tree Partnership and at 31st March 2023, there were 127 members.

Electronic payments

Plymouth Tree Partnership has a well-used system in place for making electronic bank transfers with two-Trustee authorisation. In March, we invested in a simple-to-use card reader that enables the charity to accept card payments. This has been particularly useful for book sales when fewer people carry cash.

Reserves

Plymouth Tree Partnership's policy of maintaining sufficient unrestricted funds to continue operating for a minimum period of twelve months has been met.

Risks

Risk management features prominently when inducting new Tree Wardens who are instructed only to carry out tasks which they feel confident in undertaking. A competence framework has been proposed and may be implemented once it can be developed further. There were no incidents of a serious nature during the year.

Charity management

Plymouth Tree Partnership has the following policies in place:

- Code of conduct
- Data protection and privacy statement
- Health and Safety
- Safeguarding
- Social media
- Sustainability

They were reviewed and updated in March 2023. A biosecurity policy is planned in 2023-24 as threats to tree health are ever present.

Communications

Every month, news items have been collated into an email for members and volunteers. Statistics from Mailchimp which supports the service show that 'open' and 'clicked link' rates are slightly better than for comparable organisations although the number of emails reportedly going into recipient spam folders continues to be a concern.

Plymouth Tree Partnership's Facebook page and group have continued to be useful channels for posting news items and forthcoming events.

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to so many people who have given their time or money to plant and establish trees where they are most wanted. It would be impossible to acknowledge them individually so this brief paragraph must suffice.

We continue to depend on Richard Cosgrave of Beside the Box (an IT Support business) for generously contributing his firm's professional services. The shared drive he set up in 2018 makes it possible for Trustees to access files remotely and is a valuable store of information.

The University of Plymouth has also remained a generous supporter, not only by providing free use of its Sustainability Hub for meetings but also through its business networks and virtual internships programme.

Finally, the success of Tree Wardening depends on the patient work of The Tree Council who support networks across the country, and it is so encouraging for us to know that their national co-ordinator, Sam Village, is always ready to answer our questions.



The Shirofugen cherry in Adelaide Park – a Plymouth Tree Partnership project

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Annex A – Tree care and surveys

Plymouth Tree Partnership's volunteer Tree Wardens have delivered care to young trees or undertaken tree surveys in the following places during 2022-23.

Location	Tree Warden
Barrack Square Gdns & Stonehouse Wall	Sue Johns
Central Park	Martin Blacher Chris Hunt (Family Tree Field) Nicola Westlake (Alma Road) Alice Thompson (Swarthmore Orchard) Matt Underwood (Swarthmore Orchard)
Cremyll Street	Mick Nightingale
Devonport Park (Ferry Road Field)	Fairfax Luxmoore
Down Horn Park orchard	Nigel Jackson
Freedom Fields Park	Jacques Marchal
Haddington Road	Fairfax Luxmoore
Ham Woods	Dave Curno
Mount Wise towers	Tess Wilmot
Mutley Park	Gloria Dixon
Patna Park	Emily Triplett
Pemros Road	Ken Hamblin
Plympton	David Frost Heidi Lane
Prynn Close	Diane Barrall
Radford Park	Kevin Warley Jenny Floyd
Radford Woods	Andy Anderson Jenny Floyd
Staddiscombe Playing Fields	Alan and Menza Ramage
Thorn Park	Gloria Dixon
Torr Lane	Roy and Liz Harris
Tothill Park	Nick Reid
Victoria Park	Jasper Bradley
Mobile Group	20 Tree Wardens who lend a hand anywhere.