



WOKINGHAM DISTRICT VETERAN TREE ASSOCIATION

USING OLD MAPS AND AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS TO IDENTIFY HISTORIC LOCATIONS OF VETERAN TREES

Veteran tree surveyors often become interested in the history of the old trees they record and what they and their surroundings looked like in the past. Much will depend on how the land was used historically - for example as parkland, avenues, private gardens, woodland, field systems or former settlements. Some information about this can be derived from historic maps and aerial photographs, as well as by sharp observation around the trees for possible archaeological features.

These guidelines have been drawn up by members of the WDVTA to help those interested find out more about the history of the veteran trees they have come to know. They give help to take initial steps in consulting old maps and aerial photographs, but for further advice about this please contact Colin Wells on Telephone 0118 9785504 or c.wells@reading.ac.uk

Maps

1. Ordnance Survey Maps

The best place to start is with The First Edition Ordnance Survey Maps for Berkshire 1881 - 1887 (6 inches to the mile). They are recorded on a CD, which can be obtained from the Berkshire Records Office (BRO), 9 Coley Avenue Reading RG1 6AF. Tel: 0118 901 5132 Fax: 0118 901 5131 Email: arch@reading.gov.uk It costs £10 from the BRO or Berkshire Family History Society - for details see www.berksfhs.org.uk .

Oliver Rackham reckoned that the First Edition 25 inch OS maps were the zenith of map-making in Britain and perhaps the world. They tried to show every non-woodland tree. 6 inch and 25 inch maps show almost the same detail but 25 inch maps show acreage of fields and woods (see New Naturalist "*Woodlands*" by Oliver Rackham, page 178 chapter 7, *Archives of Woodlands and How to study them*).

The very first Ordnance Survey editions were produced in the 1870s. These can be seen at the BRO and sometimes estate agents have original copies. The 1899/1911/12 Ordnance Survey maps can be obtained from the Local Studies Library at Reading Central Library at 20p per A3 sheet.

2. Enclosure Maps of Berkshire 1820/22

These are to be found on www.berkshireenclosure.org.uk under Collections, then New Landscapes. These are more difficult to use, but start by searching on Map and not by Place Name.

3. Old estate maps.

These are maps of old estates such as 1756 Ballard Map for Whiteknights, the 1823 Walter Map of Windsor Forest and the 1823 Jesus College Map of Winnersh and Newland. You would need to visit the BRO and ask their archivists for help in searching in the indexes for any old maps or other material relating to the parish of your interest.
(but see below)

4. Tithe maps

Tithe maps and associated 'terriers' (or details of owners and occupiers etc) were produced around 1840. These can be seen (actual copies or on fiche) at the BRO. An appointment for the Search Room is necessary and proof of identity (e.g. a driving licence) has to be produced for a CARN readers ticket. Phone to book a place as it can be very busy. Some maps can be found on the Web, e.g. Hurst Tithe details for 1839 and 1840 and Arborfield maps and terrier. Arborfield Local History Society has copies of the Newland and Arborfield Tithe maps. The Arborfield Tithe map can be seen on the society's website www.arborfieldhistory.org.uk Other Local History Societies may have copies of their own Tithe maps. 'Tithe papers' are sometimes listed in Parish Collections. These might be the Parish's own record of tithes. It is worth checking to see if these exist but it may not be possible to see them.

5 Other historic maps

These include the 1761 map of Berkshire by John Rocque and the 1790 map of 10 miles round Reading by Thomas Pride. These can be viewed at the BRO and the Local Studies Library at Reading Central Library.

6. Modern maps on the web

These are useful, especially in urban street areas, to make comparisons with the old maps. They can be found on www.magic.gov.uk Click on Interactive map. Select Topic - "Habitat Inventories". Select "Place" and put in e.g. Earley. When the map comes up, the magnifying tool on bottom left hand corner should be red. If not, click on it. Put mouse over your chosen area and click as many times as necessary to enlarge map. (It takes a while for the map to redraw itself). You can also use the scale at the bottom to make it a particular size, e.g. 1:5000. If necessary, use the 'hand' tool to move the map round (again, takes a while to redraw).

Magic Maps also help to find grid references. When you have the area you want large enough to identify where a particular tree is, click on the grid ref tool, top left hand corner, far left 'Where am I?'. Then click over the position where tree is and you should get a grid ref and lat/long. This will be a 12 figure. To convert to a 10 figure reference take off only the first figure e.g. 474556, 170273 (12 grid ref) becomes SU 7455670273

Google Earth and Google Maps on their website show local areas with recent photo imposed, so possible to see where tree areas are. Google Earth will print the imposed aerial photo, but although Google Maps shows the aerial photo, it only prints the road outlines.

Aerial Photographs

Aerial photographs show woodlands, old hedgerows and trees as at the time of photography (possibly before removal). The earliest were taken in the 1940s but from 1948 onwards the RAF have taken extensive classified aerial photographs.

Some photos can be found in Reading Library in the Local History section and others at Reading University at the Museum of English Rural Life and the Map Records Library, Geography Department. Permission to visit and view aerial pictures and other maps at Reading University can be obtained through the Librarian, Mrs Judith Fox on email: j.a.fox@reading.ac.uk

Some Local History Societies have copies of aerial photographs which can be viewed. It would be worth checking with them first.

Many aerial photographs can be found in the English Heritage National Monuments Record. To view them contact Enquiry & Research Services, National Monuments Record, English Heritage, Kemble Drive, Swindon SN2 2GZ. Tel: 01793 414 600 Fax 01793 414 606 Email: nmrinfo@english-heritage.org.uk Website: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.4510> for information and examples.

We hope you enjoy exploring the veteran trees in your local area and that you make some interesting discoveries. WDVTA would be very interested to hear about what you have found out. Please contact the WDVTA Data Manager Elaine Butler 24 Askew Drive, Spencers Wood RG7 1HG Telephone 0118 9882771 vet-trees@memja.plus.com

Archaeological features and historic maps

Veteran trees may well be standing on or close to an archaeological feature. Sometimes these will be obvious, but others will only show on an historic map or aerial photograph.

Obvious archaeological features could include a round, or other barrow; a holloway (or former roadway), a motte, moat or stew pond; former gravel extraction pits or quarries, or banks delineating areas of woodland management.

Less obvious archaeological features which might show on old maps or on aerial photographs could include the site of a farm building now vanished, the line of a former railway (e.g. from Kiln Ride brick kilns to the Southern Railway) or a race track (e.g. at California Country Park).

Some may not be obvious by any of these means (e.g. the site of the former Luckley House only found due to a recent resistivity survey). The advice is "*sharp eyes and a note in the Comments column about 'something' slightly unusual*".

These guidelines were produced with the help of Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association members Sheila Crowson, Janet Firth, Diana Thorne and Colin Wells.

Barbara Stagles, Chair, Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association
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