

The Walter Oak (MRN 5297) and The Sindlesham Oak (MRN 5576)



At our 10th Anniversary Report launch in November 2017, Jill Butler from the Woodland Trust suggested giving names to local trees and we immediately thought of the two magnificent oak trees at Bearwood Recreation Ground. The Winnersh Parish Council members in the audience responded positively, so we just had to choose suitable names and let everyone know what they are.

We have completed the first part of the operation and are looking for the right long lasting, vandal proof signs to do the second part. Then we can unveil them at a naming ceremony.

An article about *Naming Our Trees* went into Winnersh Matters (the parish council's magazine) which was delivered to every home in the area at the beginning of June. We said we would be asking people to vote at the upcoming fete and were looking for names with local connections. We did receive a few suggestions - including a local resident who suggested one tree should be named after his cat as it spent so much time there!

Having spent some time looking into the history of Winnersh I prepared a backup list of names. At first I struggled to find a woman's name at all, but eventually came up with two.

At the last council meeting before the Fete the Councillors selected the 6 possible names to be used.

Anyone attending Winnersh Fete in June could vote. *[The photo shows Barbara Stagles and Kerry Clissold on the WDVTA stand before the opening of the fete.]*

We offered 3 pairs of possible names with local associations to choose from

1. **Sindlesham** - which was rebuilt as a model village by John Walter III in 1860s & 1870s
and
Walter - the family who owned The Times and over 3 generations acquired a huge estate, planted hundreds of trees, built Bearwood mansion, a model village, churches, and schools.
2. **The Commissionaire** - the Corps of Commissionaires was founded by Edward Walter to find work for veterans after the Crimean War, the first organisation of its kind and still at work.
and
The Heiress - Jane Forbes who owned Sindlesham Lodge, now Sindlesham Court, before marrying the ambitious Thomas Rickman Harman.
3. **The Fox** - a pub of this name stood at the end of Mole Road, opposite the Baptist Chapel
and
The Mole - Jasper Blake, aged 15, was a molecatcher living in Winnersh recorded in the 1851 census. By the time of the 1861 census he was working for GWR as a signaller. The Mole Inn was also along Mole Road.



The result of the vote was an overwhelming majority for The Sindlesham Oak and The Walter Oak which received 68% of the votes cast. The Commissionaire and The Heiress came second with 20%. Whilst the Fox and the Mole got just 12%.

Linda Martin - August 2018