

The Walter Oak – MRN 5297

Nomination for the Woodland Trust's "Tree of the Year" 2018

[Description limited to 350 words]



The Walter Oak is a veteran oak growing on Bearwood Recreation Ground in Winnersh, Berkshire, near the local primary school. It is a splendid example of an English oak tree and with a girth of 5.5 metres it is estimated to be about 350 years old. It is well known and admired by everyone in the area.

Winnersh Parish Council published an article in their *Winnersh Matters* magazine earlier this year asking for suggestions for names for two old oaks on the recreation ground. A shortlist of ideas was created and attendees at the parish fete in June were invited to vote for their preferred names and *The Walter Oak* was chosen for this tree.

The name commemorates the Walter family who were the major landowners in the area for 3 generations. They owned 'The Times' newspaper from 1788, when it was first printed, until 1908. They bought the Bearwood estate from the Crown in about 1830. The area had been part of Windsor Forest and in the middle ages was a hunting ground for the Bishops of Salisbury. They built a large Victorian mansion and planted literally hundreds of trees in their new estate including an arboretum and an avenue of Wellingtonia trees. The area by the entrance to the mansion became a green with the model village of Sindlesham around it. The green became the Recreation Ground which was bought by Winnersh Parish Council from the Walter family in the 1920s.

The recreation ground is a triangular piece of land hidden from the surrounding roads by a band of trees and is the hub of the local community. It is a green space, less than a quarter of a mile away from the M4, where you feel in the middle of the countryside. *The Walter Oak* stands near the climbing wall and basketball court. There are also well used play areas, an outdoor gym and the popular Community Centre.

The Walter Oak was the 5000th tree recorded by the Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association. Details can be found on their website (wdvta.org.uk/WDVTS/record.php?mrn=5297)