

Notes from arboricultural report December 2014 (Fulford-Dobson & Associates)

The inspection involved visual observation from ground level¹ and sounding the lower trunk a rubber hammer.

Described as a late-mature Cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*) most likely planted when the church was built in the 1860s, it is now showing signs of aging characteristic of a veteran tree². It is a stately and visually prominent tree and compliments the architecture of the church.

A fruiting bracket fungus was found on the ground 0.4m to the south of the trunk base and was strongly suspected to be that of the brown velvet-top fungus (*Phaeolus schweinitzii*), which can cause a brown cubical rot of the heartwood and a loss of tensile strength in the roots and lower stem. Another fungal bracket (suspected to be the same species) was seen on the main stem at about 5-6m just below the main fork.

The manual sound tests did not indicate any obvious decay or hollowing of the lower trunk or base. There are a number of historical pruning and branch tear-out wounds on the trunk between 3 and 4m. They are of varying age and stages of occlusion with no obvious decay and show no significant loss of structural integrity to the tree.

A significant area of included bark occurs on one side and over the last six months this has gradually opened and split. Two large branches form a fork and this may split apart resulting in a branch falling, damaging the tree and the surrounding headstones. The rest of the crown and branch framework appears to be in relatively sound and healthy condition for the species and age of the tree. Vitality is understandably declining in the upper extremities of the crown.

The main conclusion from the inspections is that the main defect is the weak fork at 7-8m, which is likely to split apart causing catastrophic damage to the tree and surrounding headstones. Another possible threat is the presence of the bracket fungi. The overall health and vitality of the tree is fair for its age and species.

The risk evaluation³ quoted was in a THREAT 2 category of 4 "moderate".

Felling or sophisticated diagnostic internal decay testing is not warranted at this time.

Whole tree removal is unnecessary and premature at this time.

The detailed pruning specified combined with cable bracing will extend the safe useful life expectancy of the tree by more than 15 years.

Photos (from website) show the tree before and after pruning (May 2011 and March 2015)

References

1. "Visual Tree Assessment" Mattheck and Breloer, 1994
"Principles of Tree Hazard Assessment and Management" David Lonsdale. HMSO 1999.
2. Ancient Tree Guide No. 4: "What are ancient, veteran and other trees of special interest?" Woodland Trust and Ancient Tree Forum
3. "Tree Hazard: Risk Evaluation and Treatment System" (THREATS) Julian Forbes-Laird 2009

Glossary

Included bark - Growth characteristic usually caused when two or more stems/branches growing in close proximity 'fuse' together entrapping the bark from when the parts were separate in the middle, creating a structural weakness.

Vitality - A general classification, as to the present and future potential growth and development of a tree. A comment regarding the health status of the tree specific to its species.

