

Birmingham TreePeople

Planting, Protecting, & Promoting Trees & The Urban Forest

Monthly Newsletter



We have a new Trustee!
Read the articles to find out who it is!

Issue 08, 20/02/24

Birmingham Roots

Our urban forest volunteers did a fantastic job with this survey, so this tree is also for all of you!



The iTree Eco Survey of 2023 was a raging success, being completed in just two weeks, so we celebrated with Mayor Andy Street and the partners in Loxton Park, by planting a commemorative tree of course!



Birmingham Roots



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Our Chair's featured words on the Midlands Forest Network, and a few words from our two placement students (a first for BTP) who are helping us with the [Street Tree Survey](#).

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Our first memorial tree under the [Treemembrance](#) programme has been planted, to commemorate a special campaign regarding an 11-mile-long human chain around Birmingham over two decades ago.

4 iTree Eco: Planting with The Mayor

Our undertaking of the [iTree Eco](#) survey proved that our volunteers were well-equipped for the job, and now it's time to celebrate the results, alongside our partners and the Mayor of the West Midlands.

5 Eden Project Communities | Midlands Forest Network

Tonia hosted another session with EPC. BTP also attended the launch of the Midlands Forest Network, that we suggested some time ago, and got a mention...

6 Tree Equity Seminar & Tree Walk

BTP were invited by Woodland Trust to give a presentation and tree walk at their Tree Equity seminar.

7 Bromford Training

We held a joint training session in Bromford with Open Door, following our planting last year.

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Features

A Word from The Chair

Tonia Clark,
BTP Chair, BCC
Principal
Finance and
Bids Officer

Three of the BTP Committee attended the launch of the new Midlands Forest Network this month.

This project is a collaboration between the [National Forest](#), [Midlands Engine](#), and the [Woodland Trust](#). The aim is to meet the Government's target of 16.5% canopy coverage in the Midlands by 2050, and they will be working with local groups to identify spaces for tree planting.

Birmingham TreePeople hopes to play a part in this project, after initially suggesting it four years ago, and ensure that trees are planted in areas of Birmingham that need them the most.

We launched the Tree Tales in the last issue of our newsletter, and we have received several submissions, but we would like MORE! Send us your stories, photos, anything creative that represents a time in your life where nature meant something to you, and the stories will go onto the [Tree Tales page](#) on our website.



Placement Students

Birmingham TreePeople, for the first time and hopefully not the last, are hosting placement students, and from two different levels of education. Emily and Naya will be joining us for a while to help us survey street trees and crunch TreePlotter data!

[University of Birmingham](#) Geography student, Emily Kendall, joins us for her third-year BA student placement this month. She will be working with us until next May 2024, and will spend time working on the urban [Street Tree Survey](#).

Emily says, "I chose this placement because I love being outside and getting involved in data collection. I will be participating in the street tree project, examining how tree outcomes, such as survival, growth, and condition, are related to other variables, including environmental and social factors, as well as management efforts. I look forward to analysing some of the TreePlotter data, learning more about trees, and understanding the work involved within BTP."

We also have a PhD student from the same university, Naya Desai, who studies under Emma Ferranti in the Civil Engineering department.

She said, "I'm Naya, Emma's PhD student! I'm currently working with the BTP data whereby I utilise data science approaches to understand patterns in the data. This includes, exploring the data through visualisations, unsupervised machine learning techniques such as k-means and I hope to build some prediction models using linear regression. My aim is to find interesting patterns in the data that can give us a better understanding of what trees are doing well and further see if we can make any useful predictions."

This has propelled us forward with our research agenda concerning the street tree surveys, and makes us unique amongst tree warden and [urban forest volunteer](#) groups. We look forward to having these students learn and grow with BTP, and to the next one we host! If you are a student, or you know students that would like a placement, or you simply want to get involved in the street tree surveying (or volunteer in another area like the tree trails), just [let us know!](#)

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Treemembrance: Debt Justice

The ancient ginkgo biloba is perfect to symbolise the long-lasting determination the Debt Justice have!



A special Ginkgo Biloba tree was planted on 24th January, in the City Centre Gardens, to celebrate the 11-mile-long human chain that circled Birmingham on 16th May 1998, organised by the [Debt Justice Coalition](#). 70,000 people changed the world, as \$130 billion of debt was cancelled because of this mass protest, with buses and coaches bringing campaigners from Europe.

The commemorative plaque reads: “Debt Justice Birmingham group played a significant role in the golden jubilee debt campaign that won \$130 billion debt relief for lower income countries. Here, on 16 May 1998, 70,000 people surrounded a global leaders’ summit to create pressure for change.”

Ruth (original member) and Richard Tetlow, part of the organisation, liaised with Birmingham TreePeople to plant a commemorative tree under the [Treemembrance](#) programme, to honour that day and the greatness that was achieved. Rachel Stevens, a 90-year-old campaigner was

in attendance, along with Matt Gardener of Debt Justice current staff, John Nightingale who raised £2,000 for the campaign and the current Birmingham branch Chair, David Nicholls also of Debt Justice and a Smethwick Labour Councillor, Izzy Knowles local Councillor for Moseley, John Cotton (who participated in 1998) of [Birmingham City Council](#) who planted the tree, Heidi Chow the current Head of the Debt Justice Campaign, and many others up towards 50 people in attendance!

Let’s not forget the crew that helped organise the logistics of the event, Julianne Statham BTP Trustee for Treemembrance, Ian McDermott BTP Trustee and Trainer, Emma McAuliffe of BCC, the digging and planting team Jez and Kam, and everyone behind the scenes who pulled together to make this day a truly fantastic celebration.

Julianne, who provided the images, said this: **“With the Ginkgo’s reputation for long living, it will serve as a lasting memorial to the power of ordinary people, to be able to change the world.”**

A crowd of up towards fifty people were in attendance, and here we see them all celebrating the newly planted tree.



iTree Eco: Planting with The Mayor

Last year saw the completion of the second [iTree Eco Survey](#), this time for Coventry, Solihul and Birmingham, the latter of which BTP and our [urban forest volunteers](#) were responsible. Our dedicated squadrons completed the data collection in a record-breaking two weeks, showing the tree-world what we are made of.

The survey was originally commissioned by [West Midlands Combined Authority](#), and it was undertaken alongside [Treeconomics](#), [Barton Hyett](#), and [Forest Research](#). To celebrate the completion of the 2023 survey, we planted a tree on 26th January with our partners and [Andy Street](#), the West Midlands' Mayor.

Thanks to our fantastic and growing network of urban forest volunteers, like Krish Kumar who came along in the morning to help with the planting, after being a staple volunteer during the surveying, the survey was completed in an unbelievable two weeks! We will be posting more about the results very soon.



Andy Street, West Midlands Mayor, and Majid Mahmood, Cabinet Member for the Environment

Representatives from the Mayor's Office, WMCA, Treeconomics, Amazon, Birmingham City Council (including the Parks Team, who have helped us throughout our planting) were all in attendance for this wonderful event, and the mayor learned how to plant a tree first-hand!

The Cabinet Member for the Environment, Majid Mahmood, arrived after afternoon prayers to show his advocacy for the tree planting and iTree initiatives, but he is already a planting-pro after helping BTP throughout Tree Week 2023.

We have been humbled and truly welcome all the warm support and assistance we have received with these citizen science projects, placing community and its people at the forefront of the programmes, and what we have achieved together as a result is something incredible and worthy of praise. Thank you to everyone involved that day, and every other day, that made the iTree Eco Survey a great experience.

A group photo of the tree planters and attendees, including Ben Coles from Treeconomics, Francesca from Amazon (the funders for this project), WMCA, as well as the BCC Parks Team, Ian & Simon from BTP, and the Mayor's entourage.



What have some of the Trustees been up to?

Eden Project Communities Midlands Forest Network

Tonia Clark, BTP Chair, was delighted to be invited again on 31st January, to talk about organising tree activities, as part of [Eden Project Community's](#) Winter Warmer programme.

She talked about how to organise a winter tree walk, that you don't need to have a park nearby, and you can observe street trees, trees in front gardens, and even hedges. The group shared ideas for activities with native trees, including art like [Andrew Goldsworthy](#), and the [Ogham tree alphabet](#).

There was a lot of sharing in the break-out rooms, and participants agreed to run tree activities which we look forward to hearing all about. Thank you for the invite and we look forward to the next online event!

Four years ago, we submitted a proposal to [West Midlands Combined Authority](#), suggesting a "Midlands Forest" project would be a fantastic idea to rival Northern Forest.

Wednesday 7th February, three BTP [Trustees](#) – Tonia Clark, Simon Needle, and Ian McDermott – were invited to attend the formal launch of the [Midlands Forest Network](#) at The Exchange in Birmingham, where a packed room heard from various VIP's from [National Forest](#), [Woodland Trust](#), [Midlands Engine](#), [DEFRA](#) and others, that the two-year formal scoping phase of this project is now live.

BTP were given a shout-out during the talk, thanks to the pivotal work we've been doing in the city, and we are very pleased and proud to be part of this potentially impactful programme.

Tonia Clark BTP Chair, Simon Needle, and Ian McDermott at the launch for the Midlands Forest Network we helped to pioneer.



The TreePeople are delighted to have been mentioned (see above), after the hard work that has gone into all our projects and suggestions. Seeing this become a reality is awe-inspiring!



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Tree Equity Seminar & Tree Walk



A room full of Woodland Trusters for the Tree Equity seminar. Special guests included Mac and Charley (back right corner, pink) from BTP, Russell Horsey (far left), and Beth Collier of WITC.

After working with [The Woodland Trust](#) previously on their Tree Equity Score, BTP were invited to attend and present at their internal Tree Equity seminar, to display the fantastic work that was done last year for National Tree Week 2023. We gathered at [Nechells POD](#), one of our partners for last year's planting, in one of the very wards we went onto talk about.

Through our Urban Forest Masterplan, and the Urban Forest Accelerator programme, increasing canopy cover in the priority wards has been equity focused. Tree Equity means that everyone has equal access to trees, so that's why we planted in our chosen areas during this planting season, to raise the tree equity in those areas.

[Charlotte McDermott](#), BTP Communications Officer, and [Ian McDermott](#), BTP Trainer and Arboriculturalist, attended the morning seminar, where Charley kicked off the day with an interactive and humorous presentation about the successes and struggles of Tree Week. She also planned an extensive walk around Nechells, to show The Woodland Trust team some of the nearby tree planting locations and talk about them, that was only mildly inconvenienced by the wonderful British weather and Google Maps...

Other presenters included [Russell Horsey](#), Director and Urban Forestry Consultant for [Goetre Villa Ltd](#), who talked about his inspiring and fruitful community engagement work with BristolTrees, and [Beth Collier](#), Founder of [Wild in the City](#), a non-profit that supports people of colour's well-being through connecting with nature. Both delivered absorbing talks about their valuable, in-depth, public work.

We wanted to warmly thank Woodland Trust for being so welcoming, and inviting us to the interesting seminar, highlighting the importance, value, and practicalities of tree equity. Also, Nechells POD for hosting us, and continuing our good relationship from the tree planting last year.

Picture taken by Adam Cormack, Head of Campaigning at WT, on Charley's (right) Tree Walk around Nechells, to show them our on-the-ground tree equity.



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Steve Watson couldn't make it this day, and he said, 'BTP have inherited a BTFL site, planted in the Edgbaston Guinea Gardens in 2008. I have been tending these trees for some years. There are currently 15 trees of various sizes and all different varieties. This year I'll be doing some pruning work on them using knowledge gained through valuable BTP training. Historically, the pruning was done by the School of Horticulture at the Botanics. The apples are delicious.'

We hosted a wonderful and well-attended orchard pruning training session 17th February, alongside [Open Door](#), where we met an Ambridge House in Bromford to talk about the history of the trees in the area, as well as the new community orchard, and the pruning of the growing fruit trees.

Cath Fletcher began the seminar by speaking to the group, of locals and TreePeople alike, about the backdrop the estate and its green space, one half still retaining relatively old trees like Bluebell Woods (where Genny Tunbridge took some members of the group after the session for a tree walk), but many were lost due to redevelopment over the years, and those that survive are over the border into Castle Bromwich. Some trees that were removed for works were replaced, but as the years unravel, the maps dating back to early 1900's revealed the true losses of the trees.

Cath asked for introductions, and this proved that we had volunteers from all over Birmingham arrive today to talk about trees and orchards, showing the wider spread interest in nature.

Ian McDermott followed on from Cath, by giving an Urban TreePeople© presentation about Trees in Our Towns and Cities, focusing on orchard trees in community orchards.

Planning is crucial for your orchard, as the harvesting must be decided – who, what, where,



when, how, why? Who will pick them and who will eat them, what fruit species should be planted, where should the orchard be placed in the community, when does it begin and when does pruning take place, how will it be carried out, and WHY are you doing it? Why is crucial: the right tree, the right place, the right reason. Is it for fruit, juicing, greening, or the carbon 'fruitprint'©? That's a lot of questions to answer.

After the presentation, Mac led the practical pruning workshop on the orchard trees outside the community centre, where everyone split into groups to have a go at pruning.

Our newest BTP Trustee, Lawrence Weston, also assisted the group by giving a Winter pruning demonstration, which was a terrific way to introduce himself and the skills he brings to the TreePeople.

The sense of community that orchards can bring, no matter what purpose, is ever-present and important to remember. We wanted to thank Cath and Open Door for hosting this session with us today, and all those who attended; we look forward to future collaborations!

