

# Birmingham TreePeople

Planting, Protecting, & Promoting Trees & The Urban Forest

## Monthly Newsletter

### Christmas Edition

## National Tree Week & Beyond

Issue 18, 20/12/24

# Birmingham Roots



On the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2024, we planted six trees with Benjamin's family, David, Millicent, Joyce and her husband Frank. It was a true honour!





# Birmingham Roots

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# Features

## Words from The Chair



**Tonia Clark**  
**BTP Chair**

As the year draws to a close, our first tree plantings this year were for the Treemembrance programme, and the last ones were for The Zephaniah Forest, with plenty in between!

With a strong theme of remembrance and commemoration, trees are clearly a force for good, that bring comfort to us in our hardest time. It is proven science that trees and nature improves mental health, so it makes sense why trees are revered this way.

We hope these trees are comforting to the family and friends of those whose trees they are dedicated to, and they grow on with the memories feeding their legacy.

## Tree Planting 2024

This tree planting season has been the most exciting, memorable, and humbling due to the fact we have been working on The Zephaniah Forest with the Benjamin Zephaniah Family Legacy Group.

With 65 trees being planted in Burbury Park, next to Farm Street where Benjamin lived for a time in his youth, with his parents and seven siblings, to commemorate the 65 years of his life, we have been rather busy this year organizing community and volunteer group planting days throughout the winter.

Julianne has also been working hard for the Treemembrance programme, planting trees in Bournville Park in memory of Carl Green, and King's Heath Park in memory of the mother of the Kirby siblings.

On both occasions many family members attended from far and wide, and we'd like to thank the school involvement, as well as the Woodlands Team for their assistance. More are to come.

We will also be planting trees next year in January, further into Newtown as we started last year, but also Alum Rock, to battle the attrition with community engagement - and more trees!

This year we planted Zephaniah Forest trees with Qian Zephaniah & friends, Ebony Hikers, BCU Student Volunteer Network, Burbury Park Community Forum, Legacy Centre of Excellence, Birmingham Empowerment Forum, Anglesey School, Holte School, Nishkam School, and of course... Benjamin Zephaniah Family Legacy Group.



We would like to thank all our urban forest volunteers, old and new, this year for helping us with our many events, workshops, and projects!

The Trees Please, Poetry Please? competition is now closed! Winning poets will be chosen and informed by the end of January 2025.





# Street Tree Survey: Thank You!



Jeevan and Val surveyed 22 trees in Perry Barr with Nina, 30<sup>th</sup> November, for the final street tree group surveying session. Two positive interactions with residents!

Group surveying sessions will now stop for December and January. Planning to resume from February with surveying dates on weekdays (Monday am/pm, Tuesday pm) and weekends (Saturday/Sunday) to be published in the new year. Thank you to everyone for your hard work, we have made a big dent in the number of trees surveyed so far this year - **1,885 trees**. In contrast, from 2020 to 2023 we surveyed 1,427 trees. Only 1,115 trees remaining for the funded project which is due to finish at the end of March 2025. Thank you for your ongoing support!

If you wish to continue surveying during December and January by yourself or with another surveyor, I can provide a list of trees in your chosen area. Let me know if this is something you would like to do. I have been checking the data collected so far. During December and January, I will be sending emails requesting some trees to be surveyed again due to missed variables/errors etc. If you are willing to help with this, it would be appreciated.

Nina Griffiths, Trustee Coordinator for the Street Tree Survey Project



# Zephaniah Forest's First Tree

Qian Zephaniah, wife of the late Benjamin Zephaniah, planted the first tree with friends' help in Burbury Park.



daughter attended with Qian - who also regrettably passed away this year. We hope that these trees can bring a small sense of peace to the family at this difficult time.

We wouldn't have been able to do this without the incredible backers of our fundraising campaign, and our corporate sponsors, [Trees for Cities](#), [Birmingham City Council](#), [Veolia UK](#), [Frank P Matthews Tree Shop](#), and everyone else who has contributed to this wonderful commemorative forest.

Thank you to everyone who has made this happen, the Rangers Penny and Simon, and especially to Qian and her friends for their tenacious spirits and hard work. Next year we are hoping to continue collaborating with Qian on Benjamin Zephaniah Day, and many other celebratory days to come.



Just one of the lovely group photos taken between the twin trees planted first - for Benjamin and his twin Velda.

Qian Zephaniah, her close friends and family planted the first tree (Milky Way tree from China), and subsequent four trees, in The Zephaniah Forest - the 65 strong legacy mini-forest being planted in Burbury Park, in memory of her husband [Benjamin Zephaniah](#), this winter.



Today marks the first day of National Tree Week 2024, that's why this magnificent group of people, with Benjamin's loving wife, joined us during Storm Burt this morning. The rain and wind didn't stop us, with Qian recording the journey of the trees being planted, and the story behind how the forest came to be, as part of an upcoming documentary.

The pair of trees planted at the entrance to Farm Street, where Benjamin grew up with his family, will forever symbolise him and his sister Velda - whose



**< Click here to learn more about tree selection, planting, and aftercare.**



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# Planting with Ebony Hikers

On the weekend that Tree Week began, we started planting The Zephaniah Forest in Burbury Park, with Qian Zephaniah planting the first tree for her husband, and Ebony Hikers joined us on the second day to celebrate the life and legacy of this iconic Brummie.

Despite Storm Burt being forewarned, he once again didn't stop us from getting trees in the ground, and this incredible group of volunteers stuck into tree planting semi-mature trees like they had done it all their lives.

We were also joined by Naya, one of our urban forest volunteers and PhD student at University of Birmingham. Thank you to Penny and Steve from the Park Rangers from Birmingham City Council who helped us, as well as the Ebony Hikers for joining us and having a magnificent afternoon.



Pictures of the group with the last trees planted that day!



A picture of the group with the first tree planted that day!



The Ebony Hikers said on their Instagram post:

“We were honoured to plant trees in The Zephaniah Forest at Burbury Park during National Tree Week! Despite the cold and wet weather, our spirits were high, and the energy was contagious.

A huge thank you to the team at Birmingham TreePeople for this incredible opportunity to honour Benjamin Zephaniah's legacy and support future generations through tree planting.

Let's keep planting for a greener tomorrow!”

Thank you so much for being a part of this, and we all agreed we cannot wait to see The Zephaniah Forest flourish in the years to come.





# Planting with BCU Students

On 3<sup>rd</sup> December, Birmingham City University's Volunteer Network students joined us to celebrate one of their Honorary Doctorates, Benjamin Zephaniah, by planting several of The Zephaniah Forest's trees with us in Burbury Park.

Benjamin Zephaniah was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from BCU, so it was wonderful to plant trees with the student volunteer network. The team were brilliant, carrying trees across the park (thanks Sam!), digging difficult holes with tough ground, and did so with smiles and perseverance.

Caitlin from Trees for Cities came along to help us, as one of our generous sponsors of this fantastic project, and her expertise and company were thoroughly enjoyed.

Steve pictured with some of the BCU Volunteer Network students who planted trees in Burbury Park.



We were only distracted slightly by the local cats and fungi, scroll through the photos to see Steve's accidental thriller, and some rather photogenic mushies! A brilliant day all around with satisfying hard work.

Thank you to everyone who came and got stuck in, especially Matt and Carl for the logistic support. Let's make sure these trees for Benjamin thrive.



Caitlin Hayes (left) from Trees for Cities, one of our sponsors for The Zephaniah Forest, joined us to help us plant trees!

We will be planting trees with Birmingham City University Volunteer Network again next year - in one month's time!

For Go Green Week, we will be teaming up with the student volunteers from BCU to plant trees around Newtown, furthering our Urban Forest Master Plan goals by planting trees where they're most needed, but also upskilling students in the process.

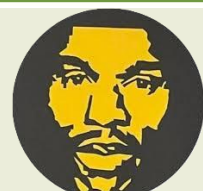
We want to thank Sam from the volunteer network for pursuing what we hope to be a long and fruitful relationship, as BTP are keen on fostering bonds in Birmingham, as well as spreading the word of nature to learners and the younger generation.



BIRMINGHAM CITY University



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# The Zephaniah Orchard



Sonya of Burbury Park Community Forum, The Lord Mayor of Birmingham, and Bishop Dr Desmond Jadoo of Birmingham Empowerment Forum.

Celebrating Benjamin Zephaniah and his love of fruit trees! 19<sup>th</sup> December we planted The Zephaniah Forest's Orchard in Burbury Park.

The Zephaniah Forest saw a momentous planting day take place on 19<sup>th</sup> December, where we teamed up with not only the Benjamin Zephaniah Family Legacy Group, but also Burbury Park Community Forum, Birmingham Empowerment Forum, and three local schools (Anglesey, Nishkam, and Holte), to plant the twelve orchard trees in Burbury Park.

With live performances from incredible African Drummers, poetry readings from Bradley Taylor who has helped BTP throughout the entire poetry competition and beyond, as well as the school children and residents reading too, tree decorating and wreath making, tree-lated drinks and snacks, the day was truly momentous.

The Lord Mayor even graced us with his presence! He took the time out of his day to visit the planting site and activities, to endorse the work and encourage the children. The Lord Mayor had photos with each school group, saying, "It's wonderful to get the local youth involved in this project."

The sun shone through the clouds the entire day, through small spurts of rain, with seagulls singing whilst Newtown resident John recited poetry about a beach, and by the end of the event a rainbow was painted starkly above our heads! Many poetic blessings from Benjamin.

It was an incredible turn out, with not only the schools but many local residents, bringing community spirit to the park in the name of Benjamin Zephaniah. Millicent, one of Benjamin's siblings, also attended the event and had a lovely photo taken with the first two twin trees planted for Benjamin and his twin sister Velda.

A huge thanks goes out to Lawrence (Trustee for Orchards), Katy (Engagement), Penny (BCC Ranger) for helping us dig, Sonya (BBCF), Debra (Legacy), Dr Bishop Desmond Jadoo (BEF), Frank Matthews (sponsors), Lord Mayor of Birmingham, and of course Millicent and Benjamin's loving family and friends from BZFLG.

Nishkam school, Matt & Jim from BTP, and the Lord Mayor of Birmingham at the orchard planting.



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# Family Legacy Group Planting

Frank, Joyce, Millicent, and David proudly posing with one of the trees they planted in memory of their brother.



and his wonderful mother, as well as BCC Woodland Team assisting us in digging the holes ready to plant, and our full BTP team! Thank you to everyone who made the magic happen.

It was such a special occasion, with each of the trees being named after one of the siblings and their mother. BTP would like to thank the Benjamin Zephaniah Family Legacy Group for trusting us with this beautiful commemorative project in the name of Benjamin Zephaniah, and it has been a true pleasure to be able to plant these trees in the community he once lived.

We will be planting more trees next year! Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from everyone at BTP.

The time finally came for David Springer to plant a tree in memory of his brother.

David originally contacted us from Benjamin Zephaniah Family Legacy Group, wanting to plant a tree in memory of Benjamin. We decided it wasn't enough, and thus The Zephaniah Forest was born. 65 trees for the 65 years of Benjamin's life, each paired with 65 poems chosen through a competition named after his famous Trees Please.

This was in January. In July we released the fundraiser and press release, with 106 incredible kind and generous sponsors, whose contributions have directly funded the diverse collection of trees, planting them, and caring for them in the years to come, alongside the community Benjamin grew up in in Newtown.

It was a lovely crisp morning planting six trees with Benjamin's siblings, David, Millicent, Joyce, and her husband Frank. We were also joined by residents Ebony, a 6-year-old published poet called Jayce

David planting his tree for Benjamin in Burbury Park!



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# Treemembrance Plantings

Our first planting of the year was for the Treemembrance programme, 21st November, planting a tree with the friends, family, Friends group, and pupils of the local school, all in memory of Carl Green. It was a lovely morning after the snow had fallen in Bournville Park, where Rachel had organised with our Trustee for Treemembrance Julianne for a sorbus torminalis to be planted in memory of her precious uncle.

Woodland Team members Leon and Steve were fantastic in helping plant the tree, and after Rachel made a speech to commemorate the life of Carl, the Chair of Friends of Bournville Park, and pupils from Bournville Village Primary School, planted bulbs at the base of the newly planted tree. The tree will thrive in the years to come in vivid colours!

Thank you to everyone who made this possible.



Rachel and her parents commemorating her uncle, Carl Green, with their newly planted commemorative tree in Bournville Park.

Julia and Terry Kirby, celebrating the life of their mother, by planting a Magnolia in Kings Heath Park.



On Friday 29th November, a Magnolia x loebneri Leonard Messel Treemembrance tree was planted in Kings Heath Park, in memory of the mother of Julia and Terry Kirby. Kings Heath Rangers Dave and Graeme planted the tree in a flower bed, where it should flourish.

Julia and Terry were accompanied by close family and friends to celebrate their mother's life, and ably assisted by Dave and Graeme from the King's Heath Horticultural Department.

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# Daisy Farm Park Planting

The pupils from Highters Heath Community School running across the field of Daisy Farm Park to the planting site!



Highters Heath Community School children learning from Mac and Matt (don't get them mixed up) on the job!



We had the pleasure of planting trees with pupils from Highters Heath Community School once again this year (they are becoming quite the enthusiastic tree-planting squad), after we had arranged with the Friends of Daisy Farm Park to have six new elms planted, replacing the old lost street colonnade.

Steve (President of FDFP) and Mac (BTP Trustee) met with the BCC Woodlands Team led by Leon, to get the planting holes ready for the children to arrive. Charley (Communications) came with the pupils and teachers, who ran with all their might across the field, to the trees waiting to be planted.

Matt (Operations) taught the children how to use the tools safely (and how not to hit one's own hand

Matt, our new Ops Manager, has been thrown straight into the planting season! Here he is showing the pupils the gator bags.



with a hammer, a plight many have suffered), as well as digging, back-filling, and putting the gator (watering) bags on. These kids are now professional planters who can help the local community in a jiffy!

Seeing as there were six trees, it was fitting that each of the children chose their tree, and thus from this day forward will come back with their name labels and continue to look after the tree they all helped to plant.

A big thanks to the Woodland Team for helping us get the trees to site and plant them, as well as the Friends group and school for continuing to work with us, support our efforts, and plant trees.

Here is Matt showing the children how to make sure you don't 'volcano' the base of the tree, and stading the stakes.



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# Trees Please, Poetry Please!

## TREES PLEASE,



MERRY  
CHRISTMAS!

## POETRY PLEASE?

BTP would like to thank the 122 entrants of the Trees Please, Poetry Please? competition, that will see 65 winning poems paired with the 65 trees in Burbury Park. We have three judges: internal judges Charley (BTP) and David (BZFLG), and external judge Zakariye representing the poetry community. The winners will be chosen and notified by the end of January. Everyone at BTP hope our wonderful urban forest volunteers have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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