

Basildon Tree Survey

Background

At the end of March, the parish council held a Parish Plan refresh meeting at the village hall. We had a really good turnout and lots of positive suggestions to improve the Parish. However, one of the more interesting was around preserving (and appreciating) the natural world around us. This led us to think about the larger Oaks in the village and realise (having spent 10 minutes looking online at preservation orders) that we know very little about these beautiful trees and equally we have done very little to protect them.

The Survey

The internet is awash with suggestions for counting, measuring and categorising trees. We opted to use an established measuring practice whereby the circumference is measured at a height from the ground of approximately 5 feet. The measurement obtained can then be used to calculate the estimated age. Following discussion, it was decided to measure whatever we saw and had time for, however, tree's measuring more than 4 metres in circumference would be classed as the 'Old Oaks' for the survey. We'd also leave out the National Trust trees as they manage their own. It was time to hit the road.....

Over the last 3 months, every footpath, road, available field and open space in the parish has been visited and the largest trees measured. Some were easier to get to than others (nettles, brambles and fences hindered our efforts) but we were soon able to build a picture of what was located where. In each instance, the tree was measured and photographed. Where it was too difficult to measure the circumference the diameter was measured and multiplied by 'pi' to calculate the diameter.

We got rained on, hailed on and sunburnt. But we did get some results.....

The Results

Overall, around 150 trees were measured. Of these, 23 oak trees met the criteria of being over 4 metres in circumference. Most were in good condition.

The largest oak tree was at the top of Hook End Lane and measured over 5 metres in circumference. This would date it to the 17th Century. Another tree in the village was confirmed as dating to 1640.

The largest concentration of these old oaks was between the top of Hook End Lane and the entrance to Maple Lane.

Next Steps

The results have been sent to West Berkshire Council to review and advise on.

Basildon Parish Council have asked West Berks Council for assistance raising Tree Protection Orders on the largest tree with more to follow if its felt that any are at risk (currently they don't appear to be).

A plaque / sign is planned for the biggest Oak tree and a village walk has been discussed for people to follow and enjoy.

If you'd like to know more please email :parishcouncil@basildon-berks.net



Basildon's largest Oaks – the orange dots mark the locations across the parish.