

## **ANCIENT TREES:**

### **Introduction:**

Ancient trees often influence the character of our landscapes. Managing the landscape involves retaining ancient trees and the next generations of mature and young trees as well as planning new planting. It is important to maintain local distinctiveness including carrying on traditional tree management practices. Ancient trees are important because of the range of organisms that rely on them for habitats and niches as well as being of important historical and social importance. Often management means doing as little as possible or undoing damage caused by unsympathetic management practises that have been carried out in ignorance. It is very important to consider how organisms link into the environment surrounding ancient trees. Generally, the UK has a much greater number of ancient trees than the rest of Europe, and Ryedale is particularly blessed with many fine examples. Consequently, great importance is attached to their retention within the District Council's adopted Ryedale Biodiversity Action Plan.

### **What is an Ancient tree**

The term ancient tree is one that is not capable of precise definition but it encompasses trees defined by three guideline principles:

- Trees of interests biologically, aesthetically or culturally because of their age;
- trees in the ancient stage of their life;
- trees that are old relatively to others of the same species.

Although many ancient trees have relatively large girth trunks this is not a reliable criterion as different species and individual trees have very different life spans and grow at different rates. For instance, an ancient birch may be only seventy - one hundred years old, whilst an oak of similar age could conceivably have only completed approximately one-tenth of it lifespan.

### **WHY ARE ANCIENT TREES IMPORTANT?**

Ancient trees are important for the following reasons:

- They have association with rare insects and fungi as well as bats and birds
- They have aesthetic appeal and cause inspiration

- They may have a particular historic link, i.e. be associated with a specific person or event.
- They often illustrate past land use or cultural landscapes, i.e. they are often found on wooded commons, in parkland, or as boundary or field markers and in ancient field markers and in ancient farmland landscapes.

The Woodland Trust, through the Ancient Tree Forum <http://www.woodland-trust.org.uk/ancient-tree-forum/> have undertaken an ambitious five-year programme to record 500,00 ancient trees throughout the UK. The Council have recently entered into a partnership with the Ancient Tree Forum to raise the awareness of ancient trees through education, and events, with the public, contractors and schools. In return the Woodland Trust offer financial assistance for events plus leaflets and other publications.

**Programme of events to date:**

**May 2007 - Manor Vale Wood, Kirkbymoorside** - Training day for members of the public to become volunteer ancient tree surveyors on behalf of the Council.

**September 2007 - Duncombe Park, Helmsley** - Training day for contractors and consultants.

**May 2008 - Duncombe Park, Helmsley** - 2<sup>nd</sup> Training day members of the public to become volunteer ancient tree surveyors on behalf of the Council. Speakers Ted Green and Jill Butler.

**June/July 2008 (10 days) - Ryedale Schools Project** - 7 Primary Schools within Ryedale.

**July 2008** - Follow up meeting with volunteer ancient tree surveyors (15) from May 2008 event.

**Nov 2008/March 2009 - Ancient Trees - 'The Next Generation.'** An initiative with Parish Councils to protect potential individual ancient trees within their parish, or plant and protect new trees that can become the next generation of ancient trees. Some financial assistance offered by the Council, and financial contributions offered to the Council by the Woodland Trust. *For further details contact John Clayton - Tree & Landscape Officer.*

**March 2009 - Update meeting with volunteer surveyors.**

If you have an interest in Ancient trees and their habitat, and would like to help by becoming a volunteer surveyor, please contact John Clayton on ext.459. Training can be arranged and measuring equipment supplied.