



WOODLAND
TRUST

The Ancient Tree Hunt Brief for walks' leaders



Aim: To enable/inspire you as a walk leader to incorporate ancient trees and the Ancient Tree Hunt into your walks. We hope that you will be able to inspire those who go on your walks to continue their involvement with ancient trees and the Hunt.

Important: If you do an ancient tree themed walk please let us know (including how many people attended) as we need to collate facts and figures for our funders, the Heritage Lottery Fund

More details of how to find, measure and record trees, plus an interactive map of trees already recorded can be found at www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk



Why bother?

Ancient trees could be anywhere, and every tree has a story bringing local colour, a focal point, something to aim for, something to wonder at, something people can return to.

The Ancient Tree Hunt (ATH) enables walkers to add their own stories or other trees they find, making a meaningful contribution to the ATH.

What is the Ancient Tree Hunt?

The Ancient Tree Hunt is a five year project led by the Woodland Trust in partnership with the Ancient Tree Forum and the Tree Register of the British Isles, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Scottish Natural Heritage. Our aim is to find and map all the fat, old trees around the UK as a first step towards caring for them. We think a comprehensive database is a vital step on the road towards securing the future of the UK's ancient trees.

All records submitted will be verified by a network of trained volunteers.

What is an ancient tree?

An ancient tree is one that makes you go 'wow, it's huge, fatter than any other tree like that round here'. It will be really fat, but probably not that tall, as they shrink down with age. Like people, trees grow and age at different rates depending on where they are and what happens to them during their lifetime. **But here's a rough guide as to when trees start to be of interest to the Ancient Tree Hunt, based on our hug method of measurement.** A three hug oak is unlikely to be quite ancient yet, but it is heading in that direction and we are concerned to find the next generation of ancient trees as well as those that already qualify!

A hug is based on the finger tip to finger tip measurement of an adult, which we take to be about 1.5m. This distance is usually almost the same as your height, and means you can measure a tree even if you forget your tape measure!



Oak – three adult hugs

Beech – two adult hugs

Scots pine – one adult hug

Rowan – one adult hug

Birch – a wrist hug

Hawthorn – an elbow hug

Why are ancient trees so important?

‘10,000 oaks of 100 years old are not a substitute for one 500 year old oak.’

Oliver Rackham

There are more ancient trees in the UK than anywhere else in Northern Europe. In some countries they put tags on trees we wouldn't even stop to look at. In Sweden just one ancient tree can be the equivalent of a National Nature Reserve. In the UK we don't know where our ancient trees are, or exactly how many there are, and they have no protection. We look after old buildings but ignore our living heritage.

Ancient trees are full of nooks and crannies, holes and dead and rotting wood. As the years go by they can provide the perfect homes for hundreds of species of plants, animals, insects and fungi, including many rare and threatened species. Clusters of ancient trees are even more important because together all the trees will offer a really wide range of nooks and crannies providing homes for lots of different specialist species in just one small area.

How to find an ancient tree to feature

1. Use the ATH interactive web map to search for a tree or trees in your area. Read the stories and the blog.
2. Look for known hot spots of trees not yet recorded (coloured squares in the background).
3. Look at the OS 1:25,000 map for your area and look for parks and historical features

which might be clues to there being old trees there.

4. Ask older people in your community if there are any old trees that they remember.
5. To help with identifying what type of tree you have found, visit www.britishtrees.org.uk or buy yourself a pocket guide to trees.
6. Use this method to use internet resources to find likely trees.

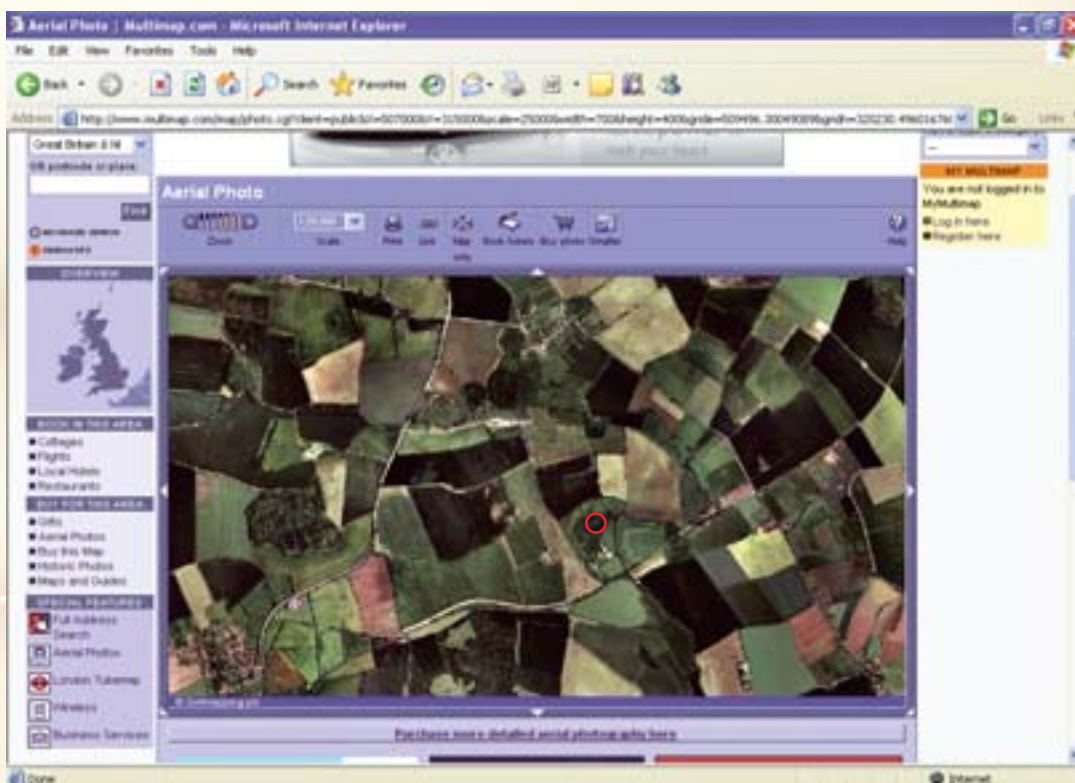
Use Multimap to get a 1:25000 scale map of the location.



The example used here is of the Bowthorpe Oak, Lincolnshire.

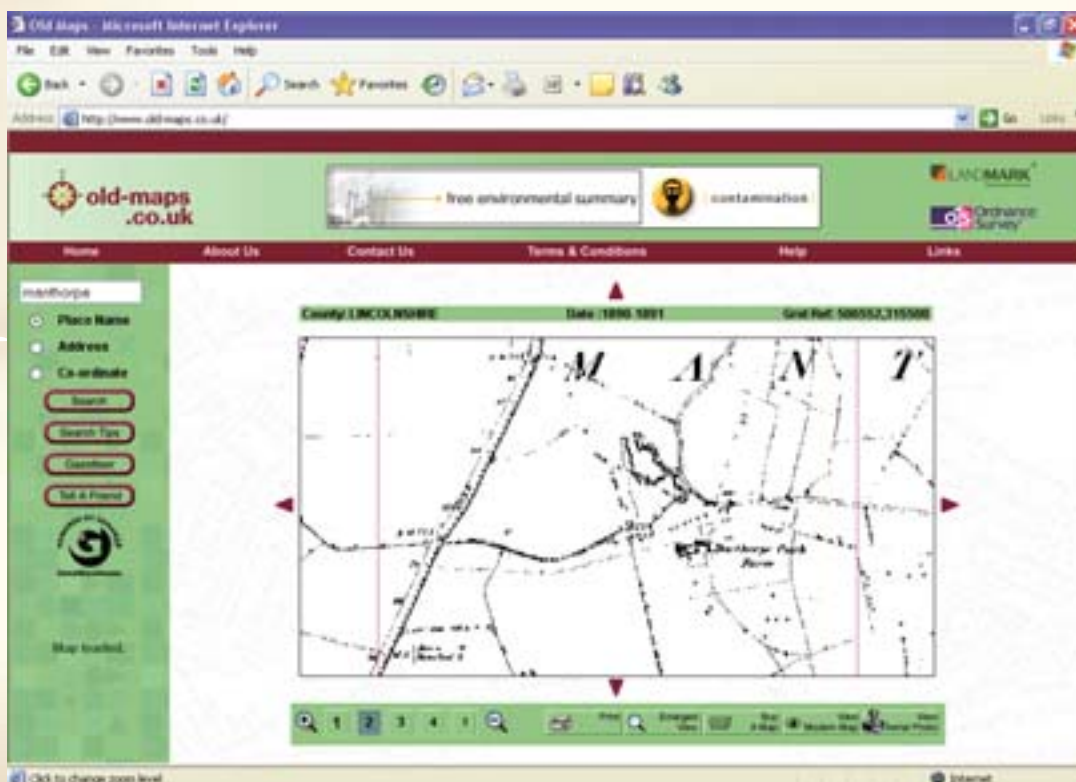
With this mapping system you can then easily convert it to an aerial photo by clicking on one of the icons just above the map which is then at the same scale.

Simply moving your mouse overlays an extract of the OS map at the same scale.

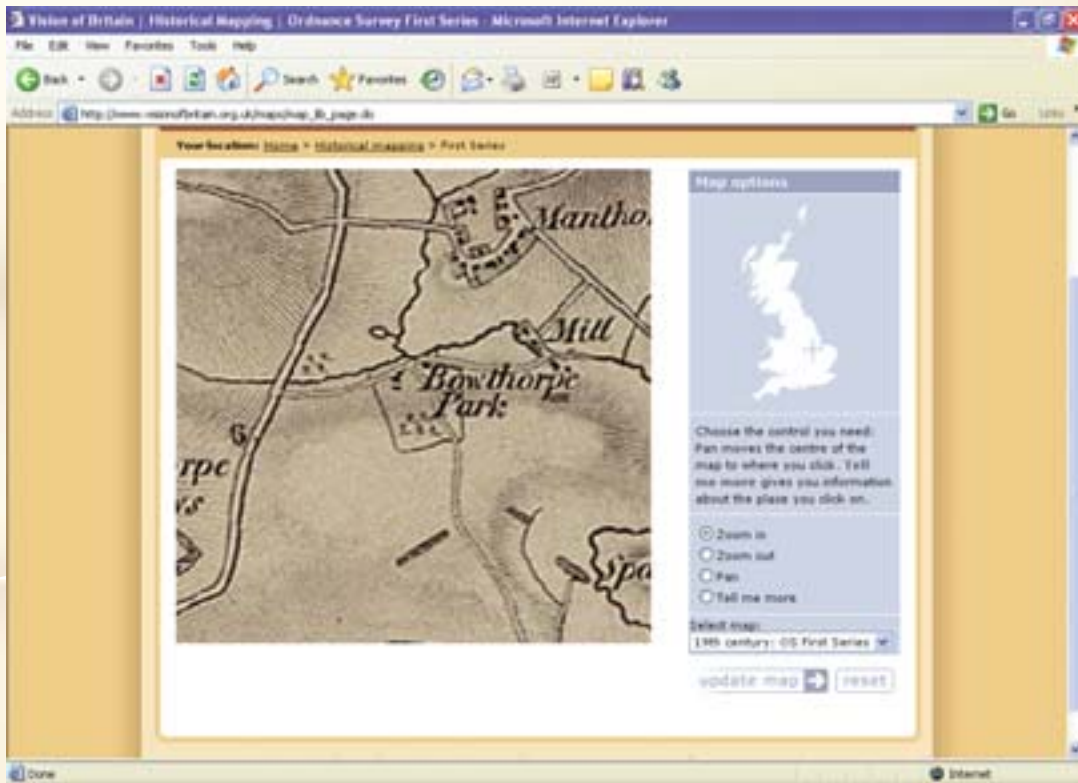


The aerial photo is helpful to point out possible ancient tree locations nearby – either the dotted landscape of a parkland or trees in hedgerows that are worth a look.

Relate this to old maps. www.old-maps.co.uk uses 1st edition 6" to 1 mile OS maps ever produced around the 1880-90s and are some of the most detailed maps ever produced by OS and often have a lot of individual tree detail.



www.visionofbritain.org.uk uses the 1st series OS maps produced about the 1830s or earlier. These are considered the earliest reliable maps for assessing ancient woodland but are also very useful when searching for parkland and wood pasture. Use Google Earth to find out if the trees are still there then go out and find them!



www.ukaerialphotos.com – can sometimes give aerial photos from pre-war Luftwaffe photos.

Preparation

- Once you have found a tree, if it has not been recorded, measure your tree.

How to measure an ancient tree

You can hug it (see overleaf) or you can measure it. This is best done with a long, soft surveyors' tape (5 m should be enough) but you can use string or even a dog lead and measure it back at home.

Try to find the narrowest point or waist of the tree trunk, at around 1.5 metres from the ground on the upper or higher side. Try and avoid big lumps and bumps and keep the tape measure straight. Have several goes and take the smallest measurement.

- If it has already been recorded take the details from the website.
- Use our rough ageing guide on oak trees (see pdf on ATH website) to estimate age.
- Look up this period in history locally and nationally for colourful facts. What has this tree seen during its life? NB On the walk itself there is bound to be someone

who knows their Kings and Queens and will want to have a go at guessing who was on the throne once you establish a rough age.

- Are there any buildings locally of equivalent age? NB All buildings built before 1740 are automatically listed, trees are not.
- Research local information and stories about the trees from older local people etc. Don't forget to add the information to the tree's details on the ATH website.
- If your walk will include families and children read the Ancient Trees and children pdf on the ATH website. www.naturedetectives.org.uk has lots of useful resources such as leaf and twig ID.
- Print off a recording form from the ATH website so that people can have a go at recording the tree during the walk.
- You may also want to take a Woodland Trust leaf ID swatch, Nature Detectives resources and a tape measure.



Nature Detective resources



Tape measure



Leaf ID swatch

Promotion

You could promote your walk as including a visit to a really special tree.

The walk itself

- Before you reach the tree you could ask people to describe what they think are the key characteristics of an ancient tree – fat, probably short, decaying wood in the crown, fungi, hollowing etc
- On reaching the tree, you could get your group to try and ID the species (look for clues – bark, leaves, seeds – may be under the tree). Use the Woodland Trust leaf ID swatch if you have one, or the Nature Detectives ID resources.
- Guess how many people it would take to hug the tree (finger tip to finger tip, arms outstretched, hugging the tree tightly)
- Try a tree hug – then ask the tree huggers to stand in a line with their arms outstretched so people can see how far the girth reaches.
- Guess the girth.
- Measure with a tape.
- Guess the age.
- Share what you have learnt.
- Ask for and record stories they have.
- Tell them how they can take part in the ATH.

Other ideas

1. One enterprising AT group ran an 'Eat the trees' event, stopping at various species of ancient trees and eating something relevant at each one eg birch sap wine, oak smoked cheese, acorn bread, crab apple jelly. They also made a cake in the shape of deadwood (with creepy crawlies!). See the full report on the ATH website, and always be aware of allergies.
2. Ancient trees are home to hundreds of rare and scarce species, at least 27 Red Data Book beetles alone and many other more common species. (see the ATH website for more).

You could have a tree safari to look for signs of as many species as possible including:

- Holes which could house birds, bats or small mammals



WTPL

- Spiders, ants and beetles



WTPL/Richard Becker

- Fungi



WTPL/Georgina Smith

- Epiphytes



WTPL

- Lichens



WTPL/Rosanna Ballentine

- Mosses



WTPL/Carole Sutton

4. Natural sculptures – can you see any faces or any other shapes in the bark or shape of the tree? Any stories to tell about it?

5. Working trees – many ancient trees have survived because they were important working trees supplying food, fuel and timber. Is your tree a pollard?* If so what might it have contributed to the local economy or landscape?

6. Naming a tree is a great way to ensure people are more inclined to care for it. Come up with an appropriate local name and have a naming ceremony – local media may be interested.

** A pollard is a tree that has been cut regularly above head height to supply timber and to prevent browsing of the regrowth by animals.*

**Thank you for supporting the Ancient Tree Hunt.
With your help, we will secure the future of ancient trees.**