

OLD MAPS REVEAL NATURE'S ANCIENT TREASURES

Online maps help to identify hotspots for Ancient Tree Hunters

Historical maps dating back to the 1800s are helping in the quest to find and protect ancient trees, some of which at least 1,000 years old. The Woodland Trust, the UK's leading woodland conservation charity, has teamed up with Landmark Information Group, the UK's leading supplier of digital mapping, to provide historical maps as part of the Ancient Tree Hunt's online mapping.

Whilst the historical maps reveal the extent of loss of ancient trees on our landscape, they can be used now to trace and record the survivors. The Trust believes that the UK has more ancient trees than any other country in Northern Europe, but we do not know where they are. The Woodland Trust is asking everyone to join the Ancient Tree Hunt, recording trees they find at www.ancientreehunt.org.uk

"These wonderful maps are helping us identify some of the best places to search for remaining ancient trees," says Nikki Williams, project manager for the Ancient Tree Hunt. "People joining the Ancient Tree Hunt can step back in time and see online the former landscapes of parks, gardens and tree lined avenues. This gives people strong clues to follow up as well as a fascinating glimpse of local history."

"Groups of ancient trees are extremely important habitats, and the old maps show us exactly where larger concentrations of trees once stood. We can use this information to target our current searches for remaining clusters of ancient trees."

Richmond Crowhurst, Public Sector and Data Sales Manager of Landmark Information Group says: "We are delighted to help the Ancient Tree Hunt. The 1:10 560 scale digital maps are easy to use and prove ideal for revealing forgotten historical features."

Until recently the Ordnance Survey's collection of historical mapping in Great Britain was held only as a paper archive. A joint venture between Ordnance Survey and Landmark Information Group now allows access to an extensive digital archive compiled from over one million Ordnance Survey maps.

The Ancient Tree Hunt map is composed of many layers, allowing the user to alter the appearance of the map and reveal different data. The maps reveal isolated ancient trees which have been left behind as the boundaries of parks and estates have shifted over time.

Anyone visiting the Ancient Tree Hunt online can now access the old maps, and help the Woodland Trust to create the first interactive map of our ancient trees. More than 4,000 ancient trees have been recorded and verified since the launch of the project six months ago.

Ancient trees are home to thousands of species of plants and animals, including many rare and threatened species. As the trees get older, they develop holes, nooks and crannies, as well as dead and rotting wood, providing perfect homes for insects, bats and birds.

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Notes to editors:

The Woodland Trust: The Woodland Trust is the UK's leading woodland conservation charity. It has 250,000 members and supporters. The Trust has four key aims: i) No further loss of ancient woodland; ii) Restoring and improving the biodiversity of woods; iii) Increasing new native woodland; iv) Increasing people's understanding and enjoyment of woodland.

Established in 1972, the Woodland Trust now has over 1,000 sites in its care covering approximately 20,000 hectares (50,000 acres). Access to its sites is free. Further news can be found at www.woodland-trust.org.uk

Landmark Information Group Ltd is the UK's leading supplier of digital mapping, property and environmental risk information. For more information visit www.landmarkinfo.co.uk
Historical maps can be found at www.old-maps.co.uk

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. It is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Countryside Council for Wales, the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action, Scottish Natural Heritage and supported by the Forestry Commission Scotland; and will be working with local partners across the UK. Joining the Hunt are the Tree Council, The Caravan Club, The National Trust, English Heritage, Forestry Commission and HM Prison Service, over 100 regional and local groups, and many landowners.

Partners and Supporters of the Ancient Tree Hunt

The Ancient Tree Forum aims to secure the long-term future of ancient trees by calling for no further loss of ancient trees, good management of ancient trees, the development of a succession of future ancient trees. In addition the Forum and its members seek to raise awareness and understanding of the value and importance of ancient trees.

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation is one of the largest independent grant making foundations in the UK. It makes grants in four programme areas: Arts & Heritage, Education, Environment and Social Change: Enterprise and Independence. The Foundation also takes initiatives itself where it believes important opportunities remain unexplored. In 2007 it expects to make grants of £29 million across the UK. For further information please visit www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk.

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) enables communities to celebrate, look after and learn more about our diverse heritage. They fund the entire spread of heritage - including buildings, museums, natural heritage and the heritage of cultural traditions and language. Since 1994 the HLF has awarded over £3.6 billion to more than 22,500 projects across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, helping open up our heritage for everyone to enjoy.

The Tree Register of the British Isles is a registered charity collating and updating a database of notable trees throughout Britain and Ireland. It provides information on the size and growth of trees which is not available from any other source. It includes historical records taken from reference works going back more than 200 years. The Tree Register organises a volunteer network of over 50 tree measurers who update historical records and discover over 2,000 new trees worthy of inclusion each year. Their patron is HRH Prince of Wales. Learn more at www.treeregister.org.