

-year search for our oldest trees.



The characteristic features of an ancient tree

Veteran Trees: A guide to good management (Natural England)

- Oak – 3 adult hugs
- Beech – 2 adult hugs
- Scots Pine – 2 adult hugs
- Rowan – 1 adult hug
- Birch – 1 hug
- Hawthorn – 1 hug
- Cedar of Lebanon – 4 adult hugs
- Field maple – 1 adult hug
- Sweet chestnut – 4 adult hugs
- Ash – 2 adult hugs
- Pollarded trees may be smaller



Record Tree

## 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 and supported by Forestry Commission Scotland.

## Are you the custodian of an ancient tree?

We would love to have a record of it for the Ancient Tree Hunt. We can help with advice, we can help you estimate its age. We can tell you if it is a record for your area and we will not encourage people to come and look at it unless you want us to.



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

The Woodland Trust, Autumn Park, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG31 6LL

[ath@woodland-trust.org.uk](mailto:ath@woodland-trust.org.uk)

Registered charity number 294344.

Tree illustrations by Neville Fay [www.treeworks.co.uk](http://www.treeworks.co.uk) and English Nature's *Veteran Trees: a guide to good management*

Printed on recycled paper ♻️ 3476 05/07

### Top tip:

UK online centres offer free or lowcost access to email and the internet. To find your nearest centre call free on **0800 77 1234**



WOODLAND TRUST

## The Ancient Tree Hunt



An amazing voyage of discovery to track down some of the oldest living things on earth, lying forgotten in our towns, parks and countryside.

We need your help to discover the forgotten treasures all around us and put them on the map.



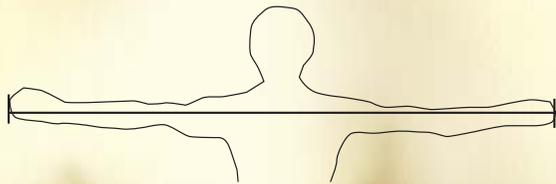
# The Ancient Tree Hunt is a five-year project to find and map all the fat old trees across the UK.

## 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 really old trees start to shrink down. 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**.



*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!*



*1.5 metres: One British Standard 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, *The History of the British Countryside* (1986), Dent*

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.



**There might be as many as 500,000 ancient trees to be found in the UK. And we need your help to find them and put them on the map. This will be the first step towards caring for them and securing their future.**

Ancient trees are full of holes and dead and rotting wood. As the years go by they provide the perfect homes for thousands 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.

*Experts estimate that there are 150-200 really rare species associated with old trees, including 27 Red Data Book beetles*

Ancient oak trees will usually be at least 400 years old, and may be 1000 or more years old. That means that, during one lifetime they will have helped to build houses and ships, fuel fires and feed animals, they will have seen Kings and Queens come and go, they will have witnessed war and peace, a mini Ice Age, plagues and diseases, enclosure, the Industrial Revolution, man reaching the moon, pollution and now climate change. Being so long lived they may hold the key to genetic success and who knows what other secrets yet to be learned.

**Please enter your tree records at [www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk](http://www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk)**

# How do I hunt for ancient trees?

Anyone can find and map an ancient tree. Visit [www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk](http://www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk) for an easy-to-use, interactive map where you can simply click to add your tree. If someone else has already recorded it then you can click to say you have visited it too. You can add stories and pictures to build a mini-website for each tree. There are centuries of stories to be told.

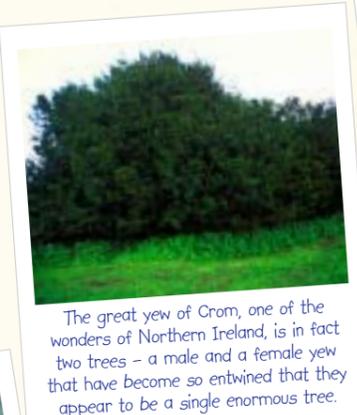
There are groups and organisations hunting for ancient trees all over the UK and there may well be something in your area that you can get involved in. [www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk](http://www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk) has links to all the groups we are aware of. Email us if you have more information to add.

**Top Tip:** You can also record trees that are notable or have great stories even if they aren't yet 'ancient'.

**Top Tip:** Visit [www.old-maps.co.uk](http://www.old-maps.co.uk) for 18th century maps that are so detailed and accurate that they show individual trees that were there 120 years or so ago. Use **Google Earth** to find out if they are still there – then go out and find them!

**Top Tip:** Look at the OS 1:25,000 map for your area and look for parks and historical features which might be clues to the presence of old trees.

Pictures: The Pontfadog Oak: Krzysztof Borkowski; The great yew of Crom: WTP/LSteven Kind; The Lochwood oaks: Archie Miles; The Fortingall yew: Forestry Commission; The Parliament oak: WTP/LJill Butler; The Bowthorpe oak: Ian Retson; The Major oak: Ted Green; River Test oak: WTP/LJill Butler; The white leafed oak: WTP/LKatherine Owen



The great yew of Crom, one of the wonders of Northern Ireland, is in fact two trees – a male and a female yew that have become so entwined that they appear to be a single enormous tree.



The old oaks of Lochwood near Moffat in Scotland helped dendrochronologists (people who study tree growth rings) to work out a ring sequence from 1571 to 1970 which was then used to date timbers in nearby old buildings.



Estimated to be 5000 years old, the Fortingall yew is thought to be the oldest tree in the United Kingdom and probably the oldest living plant in Europe.



The Pontfadog Oak was such a remarkable icon in the landscape even in the 12th century that Owain Gwynedd rallied his Welsh army around it and went on to defeat Henry II in a great battle.



Parliament oak near Sherwood Forest, Nottinghamshire. This tree was such a landmark in the 13th century that King John had a party or held a 'parliament' under it.



The Bowthorpe Oak is one of the largest oaks in the whole of Europe and was big and hollow enough in the 19th Century for 20 people to sit down and dine inside it.



The white leafed oak in Herefordshire has a visitors' book inside which you can sign when you visit the tree – if you can reach it! Look out for all the treasures which have been left too.



Beside this old pollard oak on the River Test near Mottisfont Abbey, Beth chose to have a special picnic with friends to celebrate her 15th birthday.



An old pollard oak from Richmond Park, the Elfin Oak, now in a gilded cage in Kensington Palace Gardens, stands adorned with carved elves, witches and fairies which were restored by Spike Milligan over 20 years ago.



Ian Retson sent us a black and white picture of his family posed beneath the Major Oak in 1964 – one of many pictures and stories we are now collecting about this famous Robin Hood tree.

**Top Tip:** Ask older people in your community if there are any old trees that they remember.

**Top Tip:** To help with identifying what type of tree you have found, visit [www.british-trees.org.uk](http://www.british-trees.org.uk) or buy yourself a pocket guide to trees.

## If you want to go and see some ancient trees

Use the interactive map at [www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk](http://www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk) to find trees that have already been recorded near you. Each tree will be clearly marked as to whether or not it is accessible to the public. Please don't trespass however stunning the tree looks, always ask the permission of the landowner (in Scotland refer to the Scottish Outdoor Access Code).

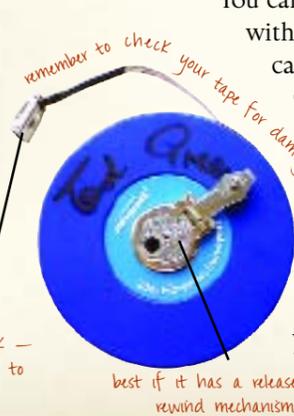
There may well be an ancient tree just around the corner from you but our top 10 amazing ancient tree sites are marked with a ● on the map above.

## How to measure an ancient tree

You can hug it (see above) or you can measure it. This is best done with a long, soft surveyors' tape (5-10m should be plenty) 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.

Take photos if you can to add to the website as a record of your tree.



handy metal hook – can be attached to the bark

best if it has a release and rewind mechanism



camera (if you have one)



notepad



pencil