

## **Various reports and examples of tree related projects from Norfolk County Council**

### **Wood Pasture and Veteran Trees, Black Poplars, and Pollarded Willows**

Norfolk County Council, in partnership with the University of East Anglia has undertaken a survey of veteran, or ancient, trees across the County. The survey now has a data base of 5000 trees and has been used to develop policies for the conservation and management of wood pasture.

Research and survey work has also been undertaken on the native black poplar and a scheme to replant established. Work has also been done on pollarded willows in the broads, and a scheme instigated to managed and conserve them.

Landscape history informs us about the genesis and evolution of our semi-natural environment.

Working closely with the Forestry Commission we can use this information to establish policies for future management

### **Trees in the Norfolk Fens-A study by UEA and Norfolk County Council**

The Fenlands, a level area of drained wetland which extends across western Norfolk, north western Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire – is a landscape which is today characterised by extensive arable fields, bordered by drainage dykes, with relatively few farmland trees, away from the immediate vicinity of farms and villages. This paucity of trees is usually taken to be part of the area's 'traditional' landscape character, at least in the period since it was drained, and reclaimed as farmland. So deeply entrenched is this widely-held view that large-scale tree-planting in the area is sometimes considered to be out of place, a violation of its essential character. The purpose of this brief report is to show that this view is, in part, misleading, and that until the twentieth century much of this area had large number of farmland trees.

It was concluded that, although the southern section of the Norfolk fens has probably always been sparsely treed, at least since drainage and enclosure, the northern silt Fens of Marshland seem to have been very different, with densities of farmland trees comparable to those found in the 'upland' areas of the county. The popular assumption that the present, largely treeless appearance of this district is part of its traditional 'landscape character' is, to say the least, questionable. On aesthetic, environmental and historic grounds, serious attempts should be made to restore some of this lost tree cover, by planting white willows and, to a lesser extent, other trees besides dykes and roadsides.

## **Breckland and its Pine Rows-a study by UEA and Norfolk County Council**

Breckland is a distinctive areas of south west Norfolk and north west Suffolk, distinguished by particularly dry and often acidic soils which are formed in sandy Aeolian drift overlying chalk or, in places, boulder clay.

The pine rows, still often referred to locally as the 'deal rows', are a distinctive feature of the Breckland landscape. They may be defined as single rows of Scots pine trees (*Pinus sylvestris*) which exhibit varying degrees of twisting and contortion. Some are associated with low banks but the majority are not. The rows have quite rightly been singled out by numerous writers on topography and landscape history as a major contributor of the regions 'sense of place'.

The principal conclusions of this project may be summarised as follows:

- There is no evidence for the planting of pine 'rows' in Breckland before the early nineteenth century.
- The peak period for planting was probably between c1815 and c1820.
- Many of the rows were probably managed as hedges for only a short period of time: some may never have been so managed.
- There is no evidence that the pines making up the 'rows' constitute a genetically distinct group. The relatively late date at which they were planted suggests that they were obtained from commercial nurseries which – by the nineteenth century – were sourcing plants from all over the country and sometimes beyond.
- The ecological significance of the pine rows is insufficiently studied, but probably derives mainly from their associated strips of grass, and the age and condition of their constituent trees.
- The pine rows are an important and characteristic feature of the Breckland landscape, and every attempt should be made in the future to protect and enhance surviving examples, and to establish new ones.
- Further research is urgently needed into the character of the fauna, and especially the insects, associated with the mature pines which make up the 'rows'.

## **Heritage Orchards**

Norfolk County Council has led in the conservation of the local heritage varieties of fruit – notably apples. Over a decade ago it helped establish the Norfolk Apples and Orchards – a registered charity and not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. [www.applesandorchards.org.uk](http://www.applesandorchards.org.uk)

Norfolk County Council has also undertaken research with the school of history at the University of East Anglia on the historic evidence of the management, contents and distribution of Norfolk orchards and also a Phase 1 habitat survey of Norfolk orchards.

Norfolk County Council has planted many heritage orchards across Norfolk and has worked closely with the Forestry Commission to allow the planting of orchards within the open space allowed on EWG schemes.

### **The Norfolk Deer Parks Project: Report for the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership**

The Norfolk Deer Parks project brought together information on deer parks in Norfolk held by various institutions and organisations and furthered the understanding of historic parkland in the county by additional research. The aims were to gain a more accurate assessment of the number of parks in existence in the period 1066-1660 and to examine the extent of parkland in the historic landscape by mapping, where known, the physical bounds of parks. Such exercise, while valuable in itself, is also intended to be a contribution to other ongoing projects concerned with biodiversity, such as the veteran trees survey, and provide further information that could potentially act as a guide for habitat management. Deer parks were one of the principal examples of wood pasture management in the historic countryside. Knowledge of where parks were located is key to identifying the potential for recreation and conservation of remnant features, and to include them as part of the ecological network approach to biodiversity conservation. As semi-natural, semi-wooded environments that were often managed as parkland for long periods they are a potentially rich resource for biodiversity.

The principal outputs from the project are a GIS layer showing park boundaries and a gazetteer of sites for use with the GIS layer and containing information on how park boundaries have been reconstructed.

The work was a joint UEA, Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership project and was carried out by Dr R Liddiard.