

TREE WARDEN'S REPORT 2017-2018

1. Tree Disease Locally. There are two tree diseases and one parasite which particularly worry me because so much of our woodland could be affected. Outbreaks should be reported to me (01797 252173) or reported direct to the Forestry Commission, using their Tree Alert procedure (www.forestry.gov.uk/treealert).

a. Sweet Chestnut Blight. This is a fungal disease caused by a parasite. There have been huge losses in America, which has a different variety of chestnut from Europe; but also considerable losses of the European variety – *Castanea Sativa*, the same as ours – all over Europe. The main outbreaks here have been in Devon, Dorset and South London, all believed to have been caused by diseased imports. In each case the spread has remained local. Rules are in place about the import and movement of this wood in any form (saplings, timber, coppiced wood, firewood and biomass). The signs are orange spores in bark cracks, girdling of stems and branches leading to the death of the tree including the stool.

b. Acute Oak Decline. Although widespread in England, not a large number of trees overall have been affected. The signs are black weeping liquid from cracks in the bark and the rapid decline of the tree, e.g. not coming into leaf properly. The advice is to leave the tree standing unless its fall would be dangerous. If there are other oaks close by which could be affected professional advice should be sought.

c. Oak Processionary Moth. Seen at this time of the year as a column of hairy caterpillars, they can strip most varieties of oak of its leaves, weakening the tree and possibly killing it if repeated the following year. Do not touch the caterpillars as they can give a very serious rash and dangerous reactions in some people.

Although the experts continue to say that all our Ash trees will be gone by 2020, I take this with a pinch of salt. I monitor several ash trees in the Parish and, over four years, they are so far unaffected. The dead Ash trees in Rowland Wood off Starvecrow Lane, previously reported, have not spread at all and may have died from other causes.

2. The Kent Renewable Energy Plant at Sandwich, Kent. This is a biomass plant using locally sourced wood fuel to generate a sustainable 28MW of heat and power. Construction is complete and it is now undergoing tests ready to start operating in the summer. The plant has a contract with the UK company Euroforest to supply the fuel. Because the emphasis is on sustainability, coppiced wood will be its main source, meaning chestnut, hornbeam and ash which all re-grow quickly. When they say 'locally-sourced' they mean initially from East Kent. But depending on transport costs, 'local' will soon come to mean West Kent, East Sussex and further afield. We may therefore see many of our coppices regularly cropped again, reverting to the time centuries ago when their products were in high demand for hop poles and charcoal-making for smelting iron ore, though of course with the burning now done at Sandwich.

Bill Bullocke
Parish Tree Warden

16th May 2018