

HERITAGE &  
ENVIRONMENT  
NEWSLETTER

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Important points of interest in this issue:

- Pest and Diseases that could affect Oak trees
- How to research your property's history
- Old and new orchards
- A new Portfolio Holder for Planning
- Volunteers help assess Ormskirk's character
- 27 New World Heritage Sites



THE BRAVE OLD OAK

*"A song to the Oak, the brave old Oak, Who hath ruled in the greenwood long; Here's health and renown to his broad green crown, And his fifty arms so strong. There's fear in his frown when the Sun goes down, And the fire in the West fades out; And he showeth his might on a wild midnight, When the storms through his branches shout."*  
Henry F Chorely.

Continuing the series on pest and diseases of trees this is the second article, which focuses on Oaks.

There are two native Oaks. *Quercus robur* [English Oak or Pendunculate Oak] and *Quercus petraea* [Sessile Oak or Durmast Oak].

The English Oak sustains a greater variety of wildlife than any other species of tree in Europe. Every oak tree is a nature reserve in its own right, supporting for example 284 different kinds of insect, plus birds, animals and even plants.

Oak deals with threats to its wellbeing remarkably well considering the amount of wildlife it attracts and supports.

Fungal Diseases

Several fungal diseases can affect the base of the tree and its roots, notably *Ganoderma* which adds new growth each year.

On the trunk can sometimes be found the bracket fungus *Inonotus*, particularly on old wounds, which can lead to weakening of the wood through progressive decay.

Another harmful fungi is *Laetiporus sulphureus* commonly known as 'Chicken in the Woods', which is bright yellow and will cause major decay to a tree usually rendering it unsafe.

'Sudden Oak Death' is a fun-

gus (*Phytophthora ramorum*) which was first identified in California in 2000. It has about 40 host species, not just oaks, and depending on the host it may appear as a lethal stem canker (associated with bleeding from the bark) or be confined to the foliage and shoots. In England, the most susceptible tree species appear to be red oak and beech while our native oaks, *Q. robur* and *Q. petraea*, fortunately seem not to be very susceptible. Many *Phytophthora* species cause bleeding from the stem in English Oaks, so this symptom does not necessarily signify 'Sudden Oak Death'.

Other threats

A very common and noticeable disease is Knopper Gall that causes disfigurement of the acorns. This is caused by an insect that makes a hole in the acorn where larvae of the insect develop. Infection can lead to reduced germination of the acorns.

There are some new threats to our native oaks fortunately not yet found in West Lancashire or the north of England. Of particular concern is Oak Processionary Moth, which is presently confined to London and the southeast. The larvae of this moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) defoliate oaks by feeding on the leaves. Their hairs can also cause skin irritation and asthma in humans. Repeated attacks will weaken



*Knopper galls cause disfigurement of acorns*

trees but there is no evidence that trees have been killed.

Oak decline was first recorded in the 1920s but is becoming more common. Affected trees typically become stag-headed over many years, although it is thought that the condition is becoming more progressive and less chronic. It has complex causes: infection by root infecting fungi, recurrent drought and insect attack. Declining trees occasionally show dark, watery fluxes from cracks in the bark.

***"They say an oak tree grows for 300 years, rests for 300 years, then spends 300 years gracefully retiring."***

## BE YOUR OWN HOUSE DETECTIVE

Exploring the history of your house can be a fun, fulfilling and useful experience. The more you know about an old building the more likely you are to value it, appreciate its oddities, and make only appropriate changes that respect its history. A vast amount of information can be found out through documentary research and by simply looking closely at your building. Research the history before you decide on major works - you may well change your ideas as you learn more and avoid mistakes you will later regret. The more time you spend simply looking at the building, the more likely you are to understand how it developed.

Use your knowledge of the history of the building to respect its history not to attempt to restore it to its 'original' state - you can end up creating an unsatisfactory fake.

So that you know when to start and stop researching you first need to have at least a rough idea of how old your house is. If you are unsure, it is worth consulting one of the many books now available which describe the development of British architectural styles. There are also plenty of books that give advice about tracing the history of your house.

### PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

By photographing and making a plan of your house and comparing it to others in your street or area you may be able to work out what alterations have happened to it over the years. You will also be able to spot original features both internally and externally. Most Victorian houses conform to well-established plans and types that can help to date them from books, older houses can be more difficult as they may not conform to standardised layouts.

Is your house one of several that have a similar design? Does it relate to a particular period of development in your area? The documentary evidence will help to build a stronger picture about these questions.

We would strongly advise against ripping off wall plaster or undertaking other destructive investigations in your understandable enthusiasm for finding out more about the building. If you get really stuck there are experts who can help unravel the mysteries of your home.

### DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

One of the most important ways of finding out more information is to consult the documentation created over the centuries relating to ownership, occupancy and use. This material is often scattered between archives, libraries and museums, sometimes making it time consuming to track down. Since surviving evidence will vary from property to property, it may be necessary to consult a wide range of sources. Lanca-

shire has its own Records Office and libraries often have a good local history collection as well as providing free internet access.

If your building is listed a good starting point can be the 'list description' which gives an official estimate of the date of your house and sets out some of the interesting architectural features to be seen. Copies of the list description are available from the WLDC Heritage section or from: [www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk). A word of caution, however, many entries are very brief and they will not necessarily tell you everything that is important about a building and certainly should not be relied on to identify what you can or cannot alter. Also be cautious about what the estate agent, previous owners, or local people tell you about the history - local myths about interesting buildings persist!

Other sources to start with include:

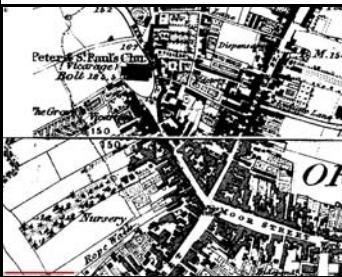
- Title deeds
- Early photographs
- Previous residents or owners
- Local studies collection in your local library
- Early OS maps or tithe maps
- The Victoria County Histories - local library or [www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk](http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk)
- Census returns - local library
- The Lancashire Lantern website ([www.lantern.lancashire.gov.uk](http://www.lantern.lancashire.gov.uk)) holds a number of web based resources including:
  - Community information/clubs and societies
  - Census index
  - Newspaper index
  - Obituaries
  - Parish registers
  - Armed forces index
  - Record Office transactions
  - The Image Archive - local photographs, postcards and other images held in libraries across the county

Sources can help tell you when and how your house has been altered and interesting details such as front garden features, windows and doors can be discovered. You might find out who lived in your house many years ago and what they did for a living. You can learn what your area was like when your house was built and perhaps why and who built it.

We will be producing a leaflet later in the year which will provide more detailed advice about this subject. As with all our leaflets it will be available in hard copy or on our website.



*Church St. Ormskirk  
1609 map*



*Church St. Ormskirk  
1845 map*



*Church St. Ormskirk  
1894 postcard*

## AN APPLE A DAY?

### Orchards in Decline

An orchard is an intentional planting of trees or shrubs maintained for food production. It is a rich example of the cultural landscape and the apple is a wonderful symbol of variety and meaning. Together they provide a way of expressing both the robustness and the vulnerability of our local culture. Many local recipes, songs, customs, wassailing, cider making, storage buildings, social gatherings and skills stem from the traditional orchard.

Not so long ago every county had important orchard-based economies, supporting the livelihoods of whole communities in the cultivation, harvesting, processing and distribution of fruit and fruit-based products. Today the surviving examples of these traditional fruit orchards are well worth conserving wherever possible, not just because they often contain rare local fruits and add visual interest to the landscape, but because recent research has shown that their biodiversity value is more than double that of modern orchards.

Worryingly, figures show that about two thirds of Britain's orchards have been lost since 1960. Some are lost due to development or simply due to cheaper imported fruit from abroad. Other orchards are dying naturally due to old age or lack of management and subsequently not being replaced.

Not a moment too soon, conservationists are beginning to take a closer look at old orchards. One of Britain's first orchard nature reserves is Tewin Orchard, near Welwyn Garden City in Hertfordshire. Leased from the RSPB, it is managed by the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust. The great variety of creatures it attracts embraces bats, a badger colony and 20 types of moth, including, in spring, the privet hawkmoth. Butterflies abound, including the marbled white and the white-letter hairstreak. It has not been sprayed since 1958, enabling healthy grassland to develop. Wild flowers such as bird's foot trefoil, field scabious and various cranesbills flourish there.

### West Lancashire

In West Lancashire the historic landscape comprises many types of ancient features. These include ancient woodland, hedgerows, grassland, historic parks and gardens, ancient villages, and of course,

old orchards. Sadly, there is limited information available with reference to orchards in West Lancashire but remnants of these once important areas can be seen as you drive through many towns and villages in the District.

The name Appley Bridge apparently comes from a large apple tree which was next to the bridge used to gain access to the village from the south over the River Douglas and apart from a few houses the tree and bridge were only main feature of the village for early settlers. The bridge has been replaced several times and is currently a flat stone bridge, the tree however is no longer there but evidence of ancient orchards can be seen in the area.

### Community Orchards

Community Orchards offer a way of saving vulnerable old orchards and opportunities to plant new ones. They provide places for quiet contemplation or local festivities as well as being a refuge for wild life. New Community Orchards continue to be planted in many different forms and by many different groups around the country. These include school orchards, city orchards, a linear orchard along a cycle track in Gloucestershire, an orchard of local varieties around a caravan site and footpath in Norfolk and in the National Forest in Leicestershire on land around a community hospital.

Support for planting and management is available under the Environmental Stewardship Scheme (Higher Level Stewardship) run by DEFRA, see [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk) for more details. Grants are also available in England for the restoration of neglected fruit or nut orchards. Natural England also provide advice and guidance on planting new orchards or managing mature or neglected ones, see [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk) or call their North West team on 01772 865224.

### Grow Your Own

Nothing beats the crunch of a juicy, just-picked apple. In this day of organically produced everything - why not grow your own? Lancashire used to be well known as an apple growing area but most local types are no longer commercially available. However a vast number of other tasty varieties are still available from local nurseries. Guidance on planting trees can be downloaded from our website.



*The remains of old orchards can be seen throughout the district. The one above is in Great Altcar, the one below in Appley Bridge*



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## MORE INFORMATION

NEW PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PLANNING. Councillor Martin Forshaw in his new role as Portfolio Holder for Planning & Transportation said: "West Lancashire has a wealth of historic buildings and landscapes, which together with the trees and woodland areas create a wonderful and distinctive place to live in and to be proud of. It is important that we all look after the heritage within the District as it undoubtedly adds to our local identity, provides character to the places where we live and benefits the quality of our lives. The Council recognises that to properly look after our historic environment needs the support of everyone who lives and visits the District."



27 NEW WORLD HERITAGE SITES. The World Heritage Committee, meeting for its 32nd session in Québec, Canada (2 - 10 July 2008) inscribed twenty-seven new sites on UNESCO's World Heritage List (nineteen cultural and eight natural sites). The entire list of 878 sites of outstanding universal cultural or natural heritage value can be viewed on their website: [whc.unesco.org/en/list](http://whc.unesco.org/en/list).

## NEW DESIGN GUIDE

The West Lancashire Design Guide SPD has now been published. The adopted document is available both as a hard copy and also through our website.

The design guide provides an overview of the design principles and sets down the expectations the Council will employ when considering planning applications and is intended to expand on the policies contained in the Replacement Local Plan.

The 3 key aims of the guidance are: to promote the highest standard of building design for all types of developments; to provide a 'good practice' benchmark to guide prospective developers and assist in the assessment of planning proposals; and to help deliver a more at-

tractive and sustainable environment in West Lancashire.

For more information, or to obtain a hard copy contact Ian Bond (Heritage and Environment Manager) on 01695 585167 or e-mail [ian.bond@westlancsdc.gov.uk](mailto:ian.bond@westlancsdc.gov.uk).



## ORMSKIRK TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

Initial work has started on the appraisal of the historic core of Ormskirk Town Centre.



The review is aimed at identifying the key buildings, places and features which make the conservation area special and will look at how the area can best be preserved and enhanced. Vol-

unteers from the local community and special interest groups are assisting with the appraisal.

A draft document will be produced in the autumn for widespread consultation, which is likely to include various exhibitions and information dissemination points.

For more information please contact Cy Griffiths (Conservation Officer) on 01695 585102 or e-mail [cyllyene.griffiths@westlancsdc.gov.uk](mailto:cyllyene.griffiths@westlancsdc.gov.uk).