



CRANN

Ireland's tree magazine

SPRING/SUMMER
ISSUE 2023 | NO:117

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Gabriel Bruton
EDITORIAL COMMITTEE
Crann Directors
PRINTING
GPS Colour Graphics
LT.D., Belfast

CRANN BOARD CHAIRMAN
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Marguerite
Arbuthnot-O'Brien
CRANN HEAD OFFICE:
People for Trees (Ireland)
Ltd. trading as Crann,
P.O. Box 860, Celbridge,
Co. Kildare.
Tel/Fax: (01) 627 5075
Email: info@crann.ie
Website: www.crann.ie



COVER
Our cover photo 'Tree in a field of rapeseed' was taken by **Denis Grehan** just outside of Carlow town

Photo credits: Orla Farrell, George Cunningham, Diarmuid McAree, Emma Reeves, P.J. Wright, Ronan Lynch, Sean McGinnis, Franke van der Laan, Dr Mary Forrest

Coillte, the Irish Strategic Forestry Fund and Gresham House

AT THE beginning of 2023 we were full of hope that forestry, and the essential part it plays in all of our lives, was going to expand under the climate change plans. However, in early 2023, and as a result of the announcement of Coillte's involvement with ISFF, there has been nothing but utter confusion within the Forestry sector and the general interested and involved public.

Contradictory stories emerged on television, radio and in print the results of which were even more confusion, uncertainty and argument.

Every section of the forestry industry tried their best to understand what was happening.

Every organisation tried to respond and to adopt a position as to where the industry was going.

The general confusion stems from the fact that little or no information was provided. Communication from the state service and government generally was appalling.

In order for Crann - as the oldest tree organisation in Ireland - to take a fair and just position, and to understand what was happening and why it was happening, we framed a set of 26 questions. (See page six.) These incisive and relevant questions were then sent to Coillte, Minister Charlie McConalogue and various public representatives and journalists* for a response.

The level of response was abysmal and, indeed, very worrying. In fact, the only replies we received were from Coillte, and an acknowledgement of receipt from the offices of Charlie McConalogue T.D., and Senator Pippa Hackett.

While we were grateful for Coillte's reply, they did not address any of our questions directly. What we received was a 'Coillte Fact Sheet - Irish Strategic Forestry Fund'

Most of our questions were unanswered. There was no specificity and no attempt to answer the singular concerns that each of the questions raised. Seven of the 26 questions were given borderline replies.

The fact sheet, reprinted in full on page seven, sent

to Crann by Coillte, makes it clear that the ISFF has a total target of 12,000ha. This is small within the overall national target. It is made up of the purchase of 3,500ha of new forests over the next five years. The balance of the area for the fund 8,500ha, is to be made up of existing forests.

It is not clear whether this is the land and crop or just the harvesting rights of the crop above ground. What is clear is that it establishes a new market for forested land, which should be welcomed by forest growers.

Outside the abysmal national representative response to our letter, it is important to point out that the national target of 450,000ha by 2050 and Coillte's overall strategy to plant 100,000ha as the national target should be welcomed.

As a country, we must look forward to the expansion of forestry and all that its expansion necessitates and encompasses.

There is a very stretching and provocative challenge ahead for us all.

If we are to understand, become involved or, indeed, react positively to changes and state decisions in relation to the land of our island, it is imperative that good and qualitative communication is at the forefront of any and all of those decisions.

Every citizen of Ireland, whether living or working on the land or within our cities, has a right to know why and how land re-alignment decisions are made by semi-state or government bodies.

We all live on this island. We are privileged to do so.

The confusion over the association between Coillte and the ISFF was presumptive, unnecessary and ill-considered.

It should not happen again. Lessons have been learned.

PJ Fitzpatrick

PJ Fitzpatrick is a board member of Crann

*The letter and questions were sent to the following: Charlie McConalogue T.D., Richard Boyd Barrett T.D., Peter Burke T.D., Matt Carthy T.D., Michael Fitzmaurice T.D., Senator Pippa Hackett, Marian Harkin T.D., Martin Heydon T.D., Eamon Ryan T.D., Mr. Alistair McConnell, RTÉ and Mr. Kevin O'Sullivan, Irish Times



OUR MISSION: To enhance the environment of Ireland through planting, promoting, protecting and increasing awareness about trees and woodlands.

The views expressed by contributors to the magazine are not necessarily those of the Editor, the Board of Crann or its committees. We welcome all articles on trees and related topics. Crann Magazine is the periodical publication of People for Trees (Ireland) LT.D., trading as Crann. Crann is a voluntary, non-profit organisation dedicated to planting trees and protecting Ireland's woodlands. Crann ISSN 1649-5217 Registered Charity No: CHY13698



CRANN CONTENTS

Spring/Summer | 2023

- 4** **Crann at Bloom**
The Crann crew set out their stall and met the public at the very successful festival
- 6** **Questions for Coillte**
We reprint the questions and response we received in relation to Coillte and Gresham Asset Management
- 8** **Tree lives**
Emma Reeves explains the features of a veteran tree and that even when dead it has a purpose
- 11** **Books**
George Cunningham reviews John Feehan's tree writings plus an extract from *Camcor, The River of Birr*
- 14** **The many faces of birch**
Dr Mary Forrest looks at the lady of the woods and her companions
- 18** **Fallen but not forgotten**
Ruth Dunne tells the story of how a fallen giant was repurposed to help educate pupils at her school
- 21** **Poetry**
Three poems by Carmel Cunningham
- 22** **In trees we unite**
MEERGroen is an organisation that seeks to curb climate change through actions rather than words
- 28** **The serious fun of tree planting parties**
The benefit of a nine-day working week is not lost on Orla Farrell and the Easy Treesie mission
- 32** **With a capital Kew**
Peadar Collins enjoyed some time in the majestic Kew Gardens



- 35** **Neighbourhood walks**
Monkstown resident John Edmondson produced a guide to the various trees in the village
- 36** **The Speaking Tree**
Rev. Myozan Kodo Kilroy examines the connection between trees and the sacred

CRANN Membership applications

Ireland was once entirely covered with woodland. It is now the least wooded country in Europe. CRANN is Ireland's leading tree organisation, uniting people with a love of trees. CRANN's mission is to enhance the environment of Ireland through planting, promoting, protecting and increasing awareness about trees and woodlands. CRANN is pursuing this mission through contributions to urban & rural planting projects, through its schools programme and through this magazine.

Members receive:

- A copy of CRANN magazine.
- Invitations to join with other members on a variety of woodland walks and talks.
- Access to advice and information about trees in Ireland.
- Most important of all, by joining CRANN you will be helping secure a future for Ireland's rich heritage of trees and woods.

Annual Membership rates:	Unwaged/DAPs	€25
Individual	€35	
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Life	€700	
Corporate	€100	

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Please send completed application form with payment to:
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Payment option: via PayPal www.crann.ie
CRANN is an Irish non-profit organisation promoting and planting broadleaf trees.





BDO present a cheque to Crann: Diarmuid McAree; Arjan Endhoven, BDO Netherlands; Peadar Collins; Derek Henry, Partner in BDO Ireland. Below: Diarmuid during his presentation

WORKING TOGETHER MEANS WORKING BETTER



IT WAS with great pleasure Crann was able to help BDO who are the fifth largest global professional services firm. This year BDO reached out to Crann in its respect for the environment. This company takes its position very seriously on the future of Environmental law and regulations especially the EU's new Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism. BDO is fully appreciative of this major EU initiative and how it will have substantial implications for its clients. Leading by example BDO took a business-like approach to its carbon impact for this conference and invested its value in Crann's superb work on the ground. At the conference, as chairman of Crann, I

addressed the staff of BDO from around the world on how we understand what they are doing and show the different connections we have.

Diarmuid, with Marguerite's help, produced a wonderful Powerpoint presentation with which he lit up the conference going into great and interesting detail to explain the value of trees to our environment as well as the social and health benefits.

In gratitude of Crann's efforts, Dr. Arjan Endhoven, BDO Netherlands, and his Dublin colleague Derek Henry presented Crann with a cheque for €6,500

Peadar Collins, Chairman

CRANN – 'TREES FOR IRELAND' 2023 AGM

The Crann – Trees for Ireland 2023 AGM will be a ticketed event (see Eventbrite details herewith) or book via email to info@crann.ie. The arrangements for the AGM are as follows:
Date: Saturday 7th October 2023
Time: 1.00p.m.
Venue: National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin, D09 VY63
Booking via Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/crann-trees-for-ireland-agm-2023-tickets-665240521307>
All Membership fees to be paid up to date.
The meeting will be limited to the standard business of a general

meeting. Proxies will be available for those who may not be able to attend. Proxy Forms are available on request, to be received by Crann – Trees for Ireland, PO Box 860, Celbridge, Co Kildare no later than 5p.m. Wednesday 27th September 2023. To request a proxy form Email: info@crann.ie or Tel: 01-6275075

The Chairman and board would like to thank George Cunningham, Jess Bolton, and Marie Louise O'Donnell for their valuable contributions as they step away from the board

Giants Grove, largest or not?

A query about the size of the forest and the reply from Sean McGinnis who manages the site

To the editor,
I greatly enjoyed reading the recent Autumn/Winter 2022 issue of Crann magazine and would like to pass two comments.

1. In Sean McGinnis's article about Giants Grove he claims it will be the largest redwood forest outside the United States. I am not sure this is right. The Royal Forestry Society's grove of redwoods on the Leighton Estate in Wales is around 9ha of which part is well over 100 years old and all at least 80 years. It is a fabulous stand and conveys just what redwood forest is like. Also, at the back of the forest research station in Rotorua, New Zealand, is a hugely impressive redwood grove but I can't now recall its extent from when I visited it in 2003.

2. I enjoyed George Cunningham's appreciation of John Evelyn's *Silva*, albeit taking a pinch of salt with some of the great man's silvicultural observations. I have a copy of the two volume Hunter edition of 1775, but the quote I love best is one that brings Evelyn's faith and forestry together. In a facsimile copy of the 5th edition of *Silva* it appears on page 281 (in chapter 1 of Book IV) where he writes,

'In a word, and to speak a bold and noble truth, trees and woods have twice saved the whole world, first by the ark, then by the cross; making full amends for the evil fruit of the tree in paradise, by that which was born on the tree in Golgotha.'

I was so taken by this quote that I reproduced it twice in my book *God's Trees - Trees, Forest and Wood in Bible* (DayOne, Leominster UK, 2nd edition, 2018).

May I take this opportunity to wish you and all at Crann a fruitful and productive 2023.

Kind regards,
Julian
Professor Julian Evans OBE FICFor
Forestry Commissioner



We did a lot of research before planting the Giants Grove, and although we cannot be certain, we believe the continuous 8ha and 1000 Redwoods at the Giants Grove is the largest Redwood forest outside of the US.

The Charles Ackers Redwood Grove on the Leighton Estate in Wales is 10ha, but includes mixed woodland and open areas along with the redwoods, so we think our 8ha is larger. And the Royal Forestry Society have said there are '500 or so' Redwoods at Leighton, so the density is a lot less. Being originally planted in 1857, there's no doubt the Charles Ackers Redwood Grove was the original, and was definitely the largest for a very long time. But records are made to be broken, and I expect (and hope) that many more, and much larger, Redwood forests will be established around the world in the future. Sequoias are so threatened in their native range that the world needs a lot more Redwood Groves, of all sizes.

I hadn't heard about the Redwoods Forest, Whakarewarewa, New Zealand, but it's 6ha, so not quite Giants Grove size, but it's set within 5,600Ha of protected forest, which is absolutely amazing.

Regards,
Sean McGinnis
Forestry Commissioner

Crann at Bloom



Left: Marguerite and Dale overseeing all things Crann.
Right: Dr Joan Whelan.
Below: President Michael D Higgins and his wife, Sabrina, chat with Peadar Collins

THANKS to our wonderful administrator Marguerite, Crann was well represented at this exceptional Bloom in the Phoenix Park. The weather came as only you might expect around the mediterranean. Five straight days of blue skies with a gentle cool breeze that kept it pleasant. It was such a joy to meet Crann's membership from all over Ireland and indeed for the members to meet the directors of the board also. Special thanks to Dale and his son Nigel for there stalwart efforts on the stand. Dale is a wizard at connecting nature with our younger members and their teachers.

Thanks must also go to the following: Mark Wilkinson for organising the magazines and stand furniture; Diarmuid McAree who spent a number of days at the show and also attended events around the city on behalf of Crann; Dr. Joan Whelan, chairperson of Irish Forest Schools, who worked the stand for a number of days and our newest director Marie Doyle who spent Monday meeting the people at the show.

Apart from Crann the show had a good tree interest. Dr. Eoin Lattice from UCC spoke at length about the advances his team at the university were making in rolling out a greater awareness of the need for trees not just on UCC's amazing arboreal campus but aslo nationwide. He's a most interesting man with a great group around him.



Crann's newest board member, Marie Doyle

All of the show gardens were well represented with trees, my personal favourite was the one with that very rare *Fagus asplenifolia*. Then there was that amazing man Billy Alexander from Kells Bay House and Gardens. What a champion. He has single-handedly put



tree ferns in the national psyche. His gardens in Kells Bay aren't just to be visited but it's a must to stay overnight and wake up in this magical garden in one of Ireland's unique micro-climates.

The OPW had a most informative and well-managed stand showcasing the vast botanical treasures around Ireland. Indeed they host Bloom along with our Patron who made a special visit to the show and we at Crann are most appreciative that he spend some time at the Crann stand.

Hope to see all our members and new members at next year's show.

Peadar Collins
Chairman

A big box of books

As a thank you to Crann members for their continued support, former Crann director Dr George Cunningham will sponsor a box of books for a member, couriered (foc) to anywhere in the ROI (box of about 50 new books; diverse topics; fiction and non fiction)

All you have to do is send your email or mobile number to georgewwwwwwcunningham@eircom.net or to 0877926991, before 25th August 2022 and you will be entered in a draw for the box.

Statement by President Higgins on the threat to the Amazon posed by legislation in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies



2 June 2023

"It is of the utmost importance that the legislation passed this week by the Chamber of Deputies in Brasilia, bill number 490, be seen for what it is—an action that endangers all of humanity, present and future.

The bill, which would allow for the large scale building of roads, mining and deforestation of the Amazon and allow direct confrontation with some very small populations of indigenous peoples, is the single biggest disaster threatening the international climate change movement based on sustainability.

Far from being a reverse of the policy of a President, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, bravely elected with a clear mandate to put an end to the destruction of one of the great lungs of the world, the Amazon, it is a direct confrontation with him on the part of those who are insisting that democracy does not matter and that the prosecution of their private interests must prevail.

It is a challenge to all Heads of State and Government to now speak out firmly on where they stand on what is emerging as the greatest threat to democracy—the uncontrolled, unregulated actions of the unaccountable.

These actions are causing the destruction of the Amazon and threatening the lives of the indigenous peoples who have protected it. These indigenous peoples, who are this weekend marking the first anniversary of the death of two frontline campaigners—Bruno Pereira and Dom Philips—murdered one year ago on 5 June 2022, deserve our clear and unequivocal support.

The major signatories to our international conventions on climate sustainability must speak out and, of course, we should hear unequivocal support for President Lula da Silva from the European Union, the African Union, and all of the other unions who subscribe to the international treaties that are there for the protection of all humanity, and indeed from all who believe in established science.

It is not the time for silence, and it would be singularly insufficient to just note that those promoting this destruction simply differ with an elected President.

Ten percent of Amazon cover has be deforested, large-scale roads are being driven to facilitate a mining industry and forms of intense agricultural production. Brazil has a responsibility for more than three-fifths of the Amazon rainforest and has suffered the greatest portion of the recent deforestation, just less than half a million square kilometres.

This recent action by the Chamber of Deputies stands as a direct challenge, not just to the elected President, but to all those other governments in the neighbourhood who had recently been conferring on a mutually-agreed common strategy of conservation.

How else can what has been proposed be morally judged other than as a crime against humanity? Let us hear the voices that stand in protection of international law and the rights of humanity."

Set out below are the questions and clarifications requested by Crann and opposite is the fact sheet supplied by Coillte in response

Questions and Clarification in relation to Coillte and the proposed Gresham fund required on the following

- 1 The fund is to be controlled by Gresham House by setting up a headquarters in Dublin known as Irish Strategic Forestry Fund (ISFF). Is this an address or vehicle of convenience or is this an unnecessary layer added to the process?
- 2 What holding interest has Gresham House in ISFF?
- 3 Has a legal agreement been signed yet in relation to Gresham House, Irish Strategic Forestry Fund (ISFF), Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) and The National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) and Coillte?
- 4 When were the agreements signed between these organisations?
- 5 Do we need so many organisations involved?
- 6 Is the operation management agreement completed/ signed between these organisations and Coillte or which organisation has signed?
- 7 Is ISFF planning to have a portfolio of approx. 12,000 hectares?
- IF SO**
- 8 How is Coillte going to fund the balance of its 100,000 hectares target?
- 9 Has 1200 hectares of Coillte immature forest already transferred to this fund?
- 10 In some reports it appears - that Gresham House raised all the funding - which can be Irish or International (with €25m from the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF). Is this correct?
- 11 Has ISIF already transferred this money to Gresham House or to whom?
- 12 Are the profits for this venture allowed to go abroad?
- 13 Is the forestry grant system still part funded by the EU?
- IF SO**
- 14 If some or all of the International funding is from non EU countries - Is the EU going to grant aid these non EU funds with forestry grants?
- 15 Has the EU been questioned or has approval been obtained on the use of EU grants aiding non EU funds?

RE THE RURAL COMMUNITY WHERE THE LAND IS

- 16 Has any consultation taken place with the many farming organisations?



- 17 Can a guarantee be given that the intervention of ISFF will not increase the land prices for farmers or other forestry companies?
- 18 Is any exchange sale or cooperation system planned to accommodate farmers who are trying to expand their holding?
- 19 Is ISFF going to qualify for any of the Farm Schemes which are funded by EU and National Exchequer, which farmers qualify for when they plant their land?
- 20 Is ISFF going to do anything additional for the rural communities other than Coillte planting and management of the plantations?
- 21 The cornerstone of Coillte's management is Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) which is essential for the timber industry to have certified timber for the market. Has any of the organisations discussed this ISFF with the relevant SFM auditors to see if the timber produced by this fund will meet the sustainable requirements?
- 22 Will funding from non EU countries affect the SFM process?
- 23 Who made the decision as regards this funding? Was it the Government? Was it the National Treasury Management Agency? Was it Coillte?
- 24 Who acquires the carbon credits in this proposed venture?
- 25 Would it not be better to re-organise or adjust the legalities of Coillte, so that Coillte can draw down the grant aid?
- 26 Would the Government consider fully funding the new forestry strategy programme by income derived from windfall or corporation taxes?

Coillte Fact Sheet – Irish Strategic Forestry Fund

We are aware of the concerns that have been expressed about Coillte's involvement with the Irish Strategic Forestry Fund (ISFF) and Gresham House. There has been a lot of misinformation reported and we welcome the opportunity to clarify the facts on the need to create new forests in Ireland and Coillte's response to this challenge.

Climate action – the need to create new forests

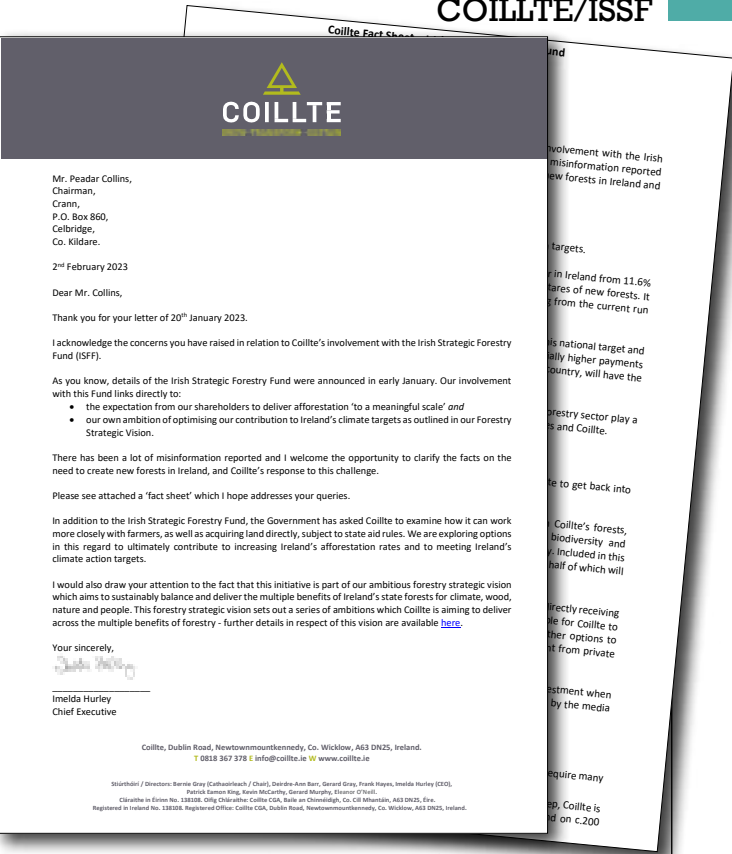
- Creating new forests is integral to the delivery of Ireland's Climate Action targets.
- The Government's national afforestation target is to increase forest cover in Ireland from 11.6% to 18%. Achieving this target will necessitate the creation of 450,000 hectares of new forests. It is an ambitious target, which will require a significant increase in planting from the current run rate of approximately 2,000 hectares per year.
- The Government's ambition is to have farmers at the centre of delivering this national target and it has committed €1.3 billion to its new forestry programme with substantially higher payments available for farmers. Essentially, farmers as the biggest landowners in the country, will have the opportunity to play the most significant role in the creation of new forests.
- Given the scale of the challenge, it is important that all stakeholders in the forestry sector play a role in meeting our afforestation targets, including private forestry companies and Coillte.

Coillte's response to climate action targets

- Against the backdrop of the climate emergency and the expectations of Coillte to get back into afforestation, Coillte launched a new Forestry Strategic Vision in April 2022.
- This new strategic vision is focused on delivering the multiple benefits from Coillte's forests, bringing more focus to climate action, setting ambitious new targets on biodiversity and recreation, while continuing to deliver for the forest and wood products industry. Included in this vision is the ambition to enable the creation of 100,000 hectares of new forests, half of which will be native woodland.
- For Coillte to create new forests it needs land. Coillte is currently precluded from directly receiving afforestation premiums due to EU state aid rules, so it is not economically feasible for Coillte to buy land directly for afforestation. Therefore, Coillte needed to explore all other options to support the creation of new forests in Ireland. This includes accessing investment from private sources, or utilising land from public sources.
- Coillte was clear on its afforestation ambitions and the need to access private investment when it launched its Forestry Strategic Vision in April 2022. These details were reported by the media at that time and subsequently discussed during stakeholder engagements.

Coillte's approach to afforestation

- Coillte's target of 100,000 hectares of new forests is a very long-term target and will require many different initiatives in order to deliver it. The first of these initiatives are focused on:
 - **Public Lands:** The use of public lands for afforestation. As a first important step, Coillte is working with Bord na Móna to enable the natural regeneration of woodland on c.200 Coillte Fact Sheet – Irish Strategic Forestry Fund hectares of cutaway bog and subject to the project being successful, to extend to c.1,500 hectares.
 - **Native Woodlands:** The creation of new native woodlands. These will be realised by the Nature Trust, which is a not-for-profit entity which works with organisations that want to deliver social good by providing funding for new native woodlands. The Nature Trust was set up in 2021 and to date has raised funds that when deployed would be capable of creating 625 hectares of new native woodlands.
 - **Mixed Woodlands:** The creation of mixed woodlands, which will be realised by the Irish Strategic Forestry Fund. These forests will be a mixture of productive conifers and native broadleaves which is fully in line with our ambition to deliver the multiple benefits of forestry.



Irish Strategic Forestry Fund (ISFF)

- Coillte partnered with the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF), which is state-owned and part of the NTMA, and Gresham House to establish ISFF.
- The total area of new forest planted through this fund will be c.3,500 hectares, which is expected to take 5 years. This equates to less than 1% of the State's overall longer-term target of 450,000 hectares. In addition, the fund will acquire c.8,500 hectares of existing forests. The total forest area of c.12,000 hectares will be managed on a sustainable basis and will be open access for the public to enjoy.
- Coillte and ISIF have entered into binding, contractual relationships with the ISFF. Coillte is not considering any other private investment agreements to deliver afforestation at this time.
- Coillte will not sell any existing, publicly owned forest to the fund, nor will it seek to purchase any other public land on behalf of the fund.

Structure of the Irish Strategic Forestry Fund:

- **Investors Role:** is to invest capital into the Fund. ISIF is the cornerstone investor with a €25m investment. It is important to note that it is the investors, through the Fund, that own the land.
- **Coillte's Role:** is to source land, to plant new forests and to provide forest management services to the fund. The benefit of Coillte being involved is to ensure the forests are managed to the highest standards of Sustainable Forest Management and will be open for public access for everyone to enjoy. Coillte will be working with local forest management companies and forest contractors in delivering this role.
- **Gresham House's Role:** is to act as the Fund Manager. Under the Alternative Investment Fund Management Directive as per Central Bank regulations, the Fund has to have a regulated Fund Manager. It is important to note that Gresham House is not an investor and will not own the land.

Moving Forward

In addition to the Irish Strategic Forestry Fund, the Government has asked Coillte to examine how it can work more closely with farmers, as well as acquiring land directly, subject to state aid rules. Coillte is exploring options in this regard to ultimately contribute to increasing Ireland's afforestation rates and to meeting Ireland's climate action targets. This initiative is part of Coillte's ambitious forestry strategic vision which aims to sustainably balance and deliver the multiple benefits of Ireland's state forests for climate, wood, nature and people.



Veteran trees have a place and Bats for sure

Emma Reeves

IT'S HEARTBREAKING at any point in a tree's life when you look at it and shake your head and say "she's not coming back, it doesn't matter if it was planted last November and eaten by the goat or 200 years ago and struck by lightning, a certain amount of pride is associated with all trees. Veteran trees are undoubtedly the hardest to let go, but it doesn't have to be the end. A veteran tree is one that has survived until maturity it's not quite ancient but is recognisable as a tree with special features which justify their proper management and protection. Like army veterans, they have been through the wars and their experiences are displayed physically. There aren't many ancient trees left in Ireland because of our history but examples of veteran trees are more common. The specific features of the veteran tree include age, heritage, biodiversity status and the tree's general notability.

Age: Tree age is easily determined by counting the rings but this requires a cross section of the trunk and therefore for your tree to have perished. Living trees can however can be aged reasonably well by using the Mitchell's Rule, Tree Age Calculator, easily found on the internet. This rule assumes an increase of 2.5cm in the trunk diameter each year. By dividing the the diameter of the tree trunk at breast height by 2.5 a good estimate of age can be ascertained. It has also been found that different tree species have different growth factors, these have been determined for many common species. Multiplying diameter (at breast height) by the specific growth factor can give more accurate age estimations. Age isn't everything however, some trees might

Dr Emma Reeves, who lives near Navan, has a PhD in botany from UCD



be very old but lack the features of a veteran tree. Poplar for example can remain youthful looking in old age. Evidence of the beginning decay is a key descriptor of a veteran tree this includes the presence of saprotrophic fungi and their fruiting bodies. Rot holes where branches have fallen and torn bark are also key. Deadwood remaining in the tree and on the ground (>20cm) are also indicative of a veteran. So as the tree ages it develops an increasing range of wildlife.

Heritage: There are some trees which for one reason or another have become an integral part of our cultural heritage. For instance, if you were wandering through through the crowd at the Harry Styles concert in Slane Castle, trying to find your friends, the gnarled silhouette of the 'Meeting Tree' a Sweet Chestnut tree at the centre of the grassland would have offered guidance to all lost rockers. Similarly, 'the Hungry Tree' at the Law Society, King's Inn, is a recognisable to inhabitants of north Dublin's inner city as an 80-year-old Plane which has grown around a cast iron garden chair.

Notability: Occasionally there are trees which might not be as aged as the typical veteran, or even native but have become notable for other reasons for example the avenue of Monkey Puzzles at Woodstock gardens, Inistiog, Co.Kilkenny, is iconic, making the onlooker feel like they're walking through the Jurassic. Older specimens of Wellingtonia *Sequoiadendron giganteum* and Tulip trees *Liriodendron tulipifera* gain attention because of their great size and unique features, punchable



The Meeting Tree in Slane Castle with its Bat Detector highlighted Below: The Hungry Tree in King's Inn



bark in the redwood and the stunning flowers and unusual leaves of the Tulip tree.

Biodiversity: Veteran trees are incredibly important for biodiversity, providing suitable micro habitats for species of fungi, plant, insect, mammals and lichens. Biodiversity features of veteran trees include;

- Deadwood present in the crown
- Lightening strikes create crevices for bat species as do people with chainsaws
- Broken and shattered branches caused by high winds

- Holes of various sizes, some dry others containing water and humus
- Hollowing of roots
- Presence of Mycorrhizal associations identified by toadstools and bracket fungi
- Deadwood surrounding the tree base
- Flaking bark
- Cavities in the heartwood caused by white and brown rot (Chicken of the woods *Laetiporus sulphureus*)
- Living tree, new wood still being produced, leaves providing shade and flowers nectar and pollen

Veteran trees should never be removed but sometimes trees just die (and may require removal). Classification as veteran tree is the result of the tree's life history, in the same way wrinkles and scars add character to our faces. Aging creates an opportunity for increased biodiversity.

Veteran trees are so important for so many different species in such a range of habitats it would be impossible to go into the complexity in this short article, indeed this is a constantly developing area of ecology, with new and exciting findings. I will attempt to limit the focus to just the importance of veteran trees to Bats.

Ireland is home to nine different insectivorous bat species;

Common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*
Soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*
Nathusius pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*
Liesler's bat *Nyctalus leisleri*
Brown long eared bat *Plecotus auritus*
Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii*
Natterer's bat *Myotis nattereri*
Whiskered bat *Myotis mystacinus*
Lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*

All Bat species in Ireland are protected by the Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended) and they are listed on Annex IV of the Habitats Directive and must be protected where ever they occur and that is often in trees. Where a bat lives is called it's roost and often they change their roosting site dependant upon what time of year it is and the needs of the bat. During the summer females gather in maternity roosts to rear their young, a hollow tree makes a perfect site. The boys don't share with the ladies during the summer months and hang out in bachelor groups with other males, often in dense ivy, these are known as transitional roosts. If cavities are big and secure enough, bats may roost over winter in tree hibernacula, the bats becoming torpid during winter. Brown Long eared bats are partial to roosting in veteran trees as they offer good cover from predators and masses of insect prey which the little mammal can pick off the leaves.

Of all our bat species the Leisler's bat is the one most likely to be found roosting in a tree. During the breeding season in autumn, trees become more important as mating roost sites.

I have noticed an increase in dead old ash trees, standing lonely in the middle of fields, still covered in ivy. Ash dieback has become more noticeable in our landscapes as the leaves have failed to come on. Trees of all ages succumb but it is most upsetting when veteran trees are lost at the point of full biodiversity potential. The most unpleasant outcome would be harvesting the timber and the loss of a roost. The National Roads Authority have produced an excellent document 'Best Practice Guidelines for the Conservation of Bats in the Planning of National Road Schemes'. This document gives wonderful advice on recognising potential bat roosts. Further advice on Bats and bats roosts can be obtained from Bat Conservation Ireland. (www.batconservationireland.org)

Mature standing dead wood sequesters carbon. In this state the tree becomes host to insect species which are specific to dry dead wood. Holding the carbon in their bodies until they hit the ground whereupon the damp soils speed up decay and carbon release. A dead veteran still has a purpose.

Everyday is a school day for our man Dale

Dale Treadwell went to a Limerick school to help them discover the great outdoors and, of course, plant some trees

Crann school days are always a fantastic experience. Planting trees as part of an educational day has been a staple of my being for the past 30 years. I have planted trees in school grounds from North America to Japan, in my own homeland of Australia and all over the island of Ireland. This year's Crann projects took me to a number of different schools from Wexford to Kildare to Donegal to Dublin. My visit to Croi na Collie in county Limerick will be remembered as a special day. From the very first wolf howl call to bring the students back from their natural play to the story telling circle with seats of stumps and logs I knew I was in a special place. We had a great day of storytelling games, looking at bugs in big viewers. Building mini geodesic domes and most importantly planting trees.

It looks like Dale was top of the class as the school sent a very nice message back

Hi Dale,
Thank you so much for your visit to Croi na Coille. We thoroughly enjoyed your time with us and the children learnt so much from you. They especially loved your story telling, and your insects and spiders. Thank you for planting such a fantastic variety of trees with all of the children.

Thank you also to Crann for giving our school this wonderful opportunity. The older classes also loved completing your STEM challenge constructing a geo dome which involved a lot of building and teamwork.

You (and your dinosaurs) would be warmly welcomed back anytime, and if you are ever near this side of the country, please do call into us again.
Best wishes on all your future endeavours.

Kindest regards,
The Croi na Coille Team



Three midland authors, each with one of their own works, at the recent official opening of the expanded Dimma's Bookstore in SVP Roscrea: George Cunningham; Dom Laurence Walsh, oco and John Feehan.

The tree writings of John Feehan

ALTHOUGH John Feehan in his many publications on all aspects of the environment has no specific publication dealing only with trees, his diverse scholarly books and articles in journals and magazines on trees, woodlands and forestry if brought together would make a sizeable tome. Over 45 years he has produced a massive volume of nature/landscape/literature unequalled or surpassed by any modern Irish scholar. Many

A short review by
GEORGE CUNNINGHAM

of these volumes contain extensive chapters or sections on trees and forestry and the wider context of such planting both historical and into the future.

From his first major book, *The Landscape of Slieve Bloom* (1979), to his magisterial study of Co. Laois, to his *Farming in Ireland* and the *Bogs of Ireland*; numerous other books; through definitive and popular articles in

journals such as *Tearmann* and magazines like *Crann* (his millennium contribution was reprinted many times and produced also as a supplement; and *Scéal na Móna* to mention just a few all contain important dissertations on various aspects of our tree heritage. On the same topic he contributed to countless other publications, notably one that was in honour of this writer, *The Carnival of Learning* (2012). His 10 page illustrative article, *Walking in God's Garden*: a meditation on the spirit of trees, in this beautifully-produced volume, was specifically mentioned

and lauded by President Michael D. Higgins when he received all concerned with the publication at Áras an Uachtaráin shortly after its launch at the 50th Roscrea Conference.

This writer is engaged in bringing together an illustrated bibliography of John's works which will be published in late summer or early autumn. (See box for prepublication details).

One of John's latest publications (he is also at present working on at least two books: *The Meadows of Birr Castle* and

An illustrated bibliography of John Feehan's writings, running to in excess of 150 pages, quarto, limited signed edition of 300 copies, will be edited by George Cunningham and published later in the year by Parkmore Press. It will retail at €39.99 but a prepublication offer of €25 euro (plus €10 p/p) will carry until the end of July. Orders to Roscrea People, Parkmore, Roscrea, Co Tipperary E53YK02; parkmorepress@gmail.com. Bank details for direct payment (please notify by email or phone -087 7926991): IE27 AIBK 9352 7120 6383 82 (BIC AIBKIE20) – AIB Roscrea.

a major work on Brosnaland) is again a beautifully produced volume on his native place: *Camcor, The River of Birr*. I found this to be one of John's most endearing works, full of personal touches about how

the river alongside his home had influenced his childhood and growth to maturity. Here too John deals lovingly with trees, most notably the alder. With his permission we reprint the detailed notes on it.

ALDER *Alnus glutinosa*

Alder is by far the most common and characteristic tree on the banks of the Camcor, and indeed of rivers and other waterside places in general. It can thrive under waterlogged conditions few other trees can tolerate, because its roots harbour very special filamentous nitrogen-fixing bacteria, which provide it with nutrients otherwise beyond its metabolic reach. Like most forest trees alder is monoecious: which means it has separate male and female flowers, but they are produced on the same tree – and like other monoecious trees the female flowers mature and become receptive several days before the male catkins.

After fertilisation the female cones close up to protect the developing seeds between the scales of the cones, and they only open again in winter, when the seeds are ready to set out in search of a wet place to germinate. For the first stage of this journey the little nutlets are winged for flight, and produced in great quantity, but most of them are going to end up in the water. They are beautifully adapted for dispersal by water; apart from the winged flanges along the side, they have a waterproof coat of oil, as well as pockets of air in an enclosing husk inside for buoyancy.

The leaves are shaped like inverted hearts, with a notch rather than a point at the tip. And they feel rather sticky, because they have an oily coating that stops them getting wet. Alder is the first tree to get its leaves in spring (and the last to lose them in autumn), and this waxy coat is an insurance against inclement weather at that time of year.

In an earlier Ireland, where we humans co-existed with great forests: on whose sustained produce our way of life depended, trees were known, appreciated and managed in a way we can scarcely imagine or relate to today.

Alder was ranked along with willows, hawthorn and birch, rowan and elm, and wild cherry in the second rank of value, the *Aithig Fedo*, or Commoners of the Wood.

Alder is a fast-growing tree that matures at 60 years of age. It can live for 150 years (though this is rare), and can grow to a height of 25m. A striking example of how quickly it can colonise is the speed with which it returned to what is now Camcor Park at Oxmantown Bridge. when I was going to school this was an open field – Kelly's Field – as photographs taken at the time show

In spite of this rapid growth, its timber has a peculiarly dense quality, which made it ideal

for making things like masts and poles (because it doesn't splinter easily), and for piles and fence-posts in wet ground, because it doesn't rot as other timbers would (This is why Venice was built on a foundation of alder piles). It was also widely used for making clogs and bowls, and made excellent charcoal (especially for making gunpowder).

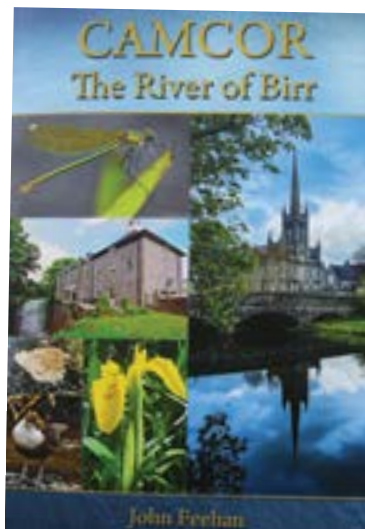
In a violent age before the invention of firearms alder had another highly valued use: for making shields. If you were going into battle you wanted your shield to be made of alder because (if you looked after it properly) it wouldn't split if your opponent struck it violently with his axe – ideally, the axe might get stuck in the shield, giving you perhaps the advantage of an undefended next stroke. In the National Museum there is a shield that is made from a single slice of the trunk of a forest alder a metre across. You will find it hard to find an alder that size in Ireland today.

Offaly has a special connection with alder. Sir Charles Coote, who wrote the first detailed account of the county over 200 years ago described alder as 'the native tree of the county', and tells us that William Drought preserved an alder forest at Droughtville purely on account of its antiquity, and even though the ancient trees were 'rapidly decaying.'

A black dye can be made from alder, and it was the fashion in Ireland long ago for men to dye their eyelids black. There is an unforgettable line in the famous Irish saga-tale of the Sons of Uisliu in which the heart-broken Deirdre is describing the beauty of her slain beloved Naoise: where she compares the blackness of his eye-lids to the blackness of the blackest of beetles, the beetle known as the devil's coach-horse beetle, the *dara daoil*.

The missionary monks who went from Ireland to Europe in the centuries after the breakup of the Roman Empire also stained or painted their eyelids black: and they had the most eye-catching of tonsures, where they shaved the hair from the top and sides of the head but allowed the long hair to flow freely down on the back. They must have been something to look at, with their strange Irish tongue to go along with all this!

Reprinted with pleasure and permission from John Feehan's, new work, Camcor, The River of Birr, Offaly County Council, 2022. €20.



Birch

THE LADY OF THE WOODS AND HER COMPANIONS

Dr Mary Forrest

WHETHER in the Irish countryside, local parks and open spaces or our gardens birch are widely grown and much admired. In this article we look at native birch which occur in the wild, birch from foreign lands which have become common in this country and some lesser-known species.

While Birch, *Betula*, grow rapidly in their early years, in comparison to Oak and Beech, they are relatively short-lived trees at 40–100 years. At a distance they are identified by their bark, often white or peeling shaggy and by many slender, graceful branches and branchlets. Closer to, the leaves are alternate, entire, ovate in outline, often with serrated leaf margins. In the hand prominent pairs of veins on the under surface of the leaf and a thinly textured leaf are evident. Unisexual flowers are borne in early spring before the leaves emerge. Male flowers, noticeable in the winter months are held in erect or pendulous catkins and female flowers in erect catkins. *Betula* fruit and nut are very tiny but the overall catkin can be several centimetres long. In the winter months catkins disintegrate on the tree and the seed is windborne.

Birch, *Betula pendula*, *B. pubescens*, is native to Europe including Ireland.

Often called the 'Lady of the Woods' birch is known for its white stem with black knarled

patches. Two species are native in this country, Silver Birch, *Betula pendula*, and Downy Birch, *Betula pubescens*, though some consider they are one species *Betula alba*. The leaves are small (3–6cm) often diamond shaped on thin stems which sway gently in the breeze. In Silver Birch young shoots are warty to the touch whereas in Downy Birch young shoots are clothed in soft hairs, hence the common and scientific name. Silver Birch will grow tall up to 30m, with in time a domed shape with long



A close-up of a *Betula nigra*

pendulous branchlets, whereas Downy Birch is smaller and shrubby in outline. Their names in Irish are *Beith gheal* and *Beith chluimbach* respectively.

The word in Irish for birch is 'beith'. According to the website Logaimn.ie the Placenames Database of Ireland the word 'beith' or a derivation of the word occurs in 75 placenames, located across the country. They give an indication of where Birch grows. Some examples are

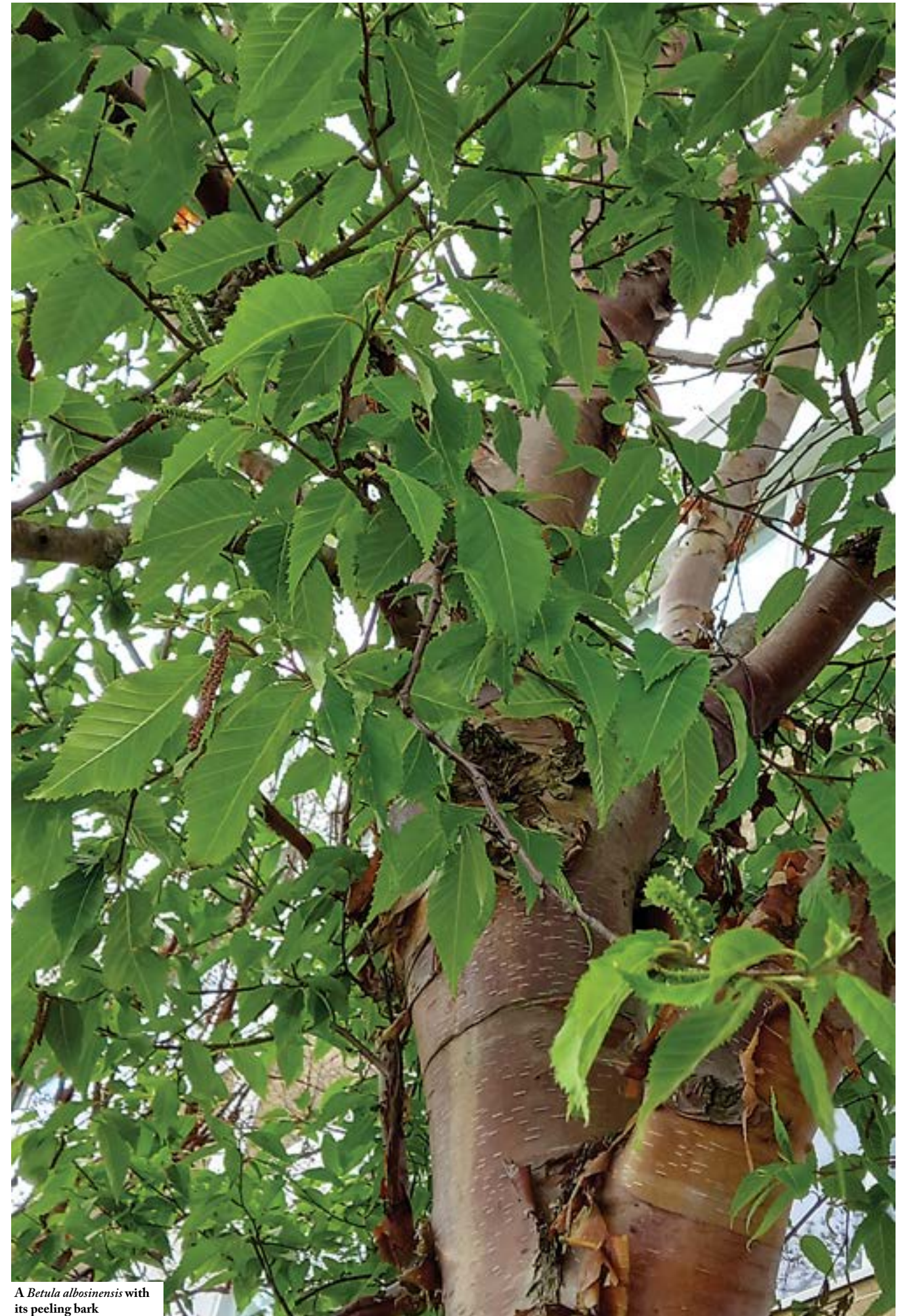
Achaveagh, Aghavea, achadh-beithe field of the birch trees, Tyrone, Donegal, Fermanagh Ballybay, Bel-atha-beithe, the ford mouth of the birch, Monaghan

Corbeagh, corr bheitigh, round hill of birch, townlands in Longford and Cavan
Glanbehy, birchy glen, Kerry
Glenveagh Gleann Bheatha, Donegal
Glenbeigh, Gleann Beithe Kerry
Kilbeheny, coill beithe, birch wood.
Limerick and Kilbaha, Clare

Rossbeigh, peninsula of birch, Kerry
Slieve Beagh, sliabh beatha, mountain of birch, Tyrone.

As well as placenames birch gives a name to rivers Behy in Kerry and Beagh in Galway and a lake, Lough Beagh in Donegal.

Betula pendula and *B. pubescens* are colonisers of bare, often poor soils. They are among the first plants to germinate on cut away bog, clear felled forestry sites and disused railway stations. Being a pioneer species, they have proven useful on embankments by motorways and on reclamation sites. They have been planted with success in car



A *Betula albosinensis* with its peeling bark



From the Dalarna region of Sweden *Betula pendula* 'Dalecarlica'

parks both screening cars from view and weather and serving as wildlife corridors, for example at Avondale Forest Park, Co. Wicklow and Glenveagh National Park, Co. Donegal. Native birch is also planted to create amenity woodland. Swathes of Silver Birch underplanted with Bluebells are one of the native trees planted on the extensive grounds of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine at Backweston, Celbridge in Kildare.

With an ability to grow in less favoured sites they have proven suitable for the often-inhospitable growing conditions in towns and cities. Silver Birch has become a fast-growing urban street tree and has contributed to creating wooded areas in shopping centres, business parks and public open spaces. Their white stems, catkins in spring and buttery yellow autumn colour and small leaves make them worthy garden trees.

One unusual landscape planting of Silver Birch can be seen at the Glebe Gallery, Gartan, Donegal. The artist Derek Hill created a garden with distinctive design elements, one a semicircle of Birch with a centre piece of a large leaved Whitebeam, *Sorbus bedlundii*, could be likened to a chorus and soloist but with trees as the players.

Nurserymen have selected distinctive forms of Silver Birch. From the Dalarna region of Sweden *Betula pendula* 'Dalecarlica' has lobed leaves, often cut to within a few millimetre of the midrib of the leaf. With a tall slender habit, it becomes a fine park or street tree.

Young's Weeping Birch, *Betula pendula* 'Youngii', is true to its name. A small tree with drooping or pendulous branches, it forms a good barrier or informal divider in a garden.

Another cultivar of Birch *Betula pendula* subsp. *pendula* 'Spider Alley' PBR makes a specimen tree with corkscrew-like stems which are particularly noticeable during the winter months.

As Silver Birch and Downy Birch have become widely cultivated landscape trees in Ireland so too have species from Asia and North America.

Himalayan Birch *Betula utilis* was introduced from the Sikkim Himalaya by Sir Joseph Hooker in the mid-1800s with further introductions from Western China in the 20th century. With snow-white often peeling bark, growing to 15–17m it is often cultivated as a specimen tree, or in groups of three in a garden. On a larger scale it is grown as an avenue tree or as a 'planting' or copse in grounds and campuses. The larger leaf, 5–8 cm with 10–14 pairs of veins distinguish it from native Birch. A related Birch *Betula utilis* var *utilis* (formerly *Betula utilis* var *jacquemontii*) attains a similar size



The familiar *Betula pendula* in a woodland setting
Percita at Flickr, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons

but with 7–9 pairs of veins on each leaf. In recent years this Himalayan Birch has been bearing long pendulous catkins, due perhaps to warmer summers. Selections of *Betula utilis* with chocolate brown stems and peeling bark becoming available in the trade will make a good addition to winter interest in a park or garden.

In the 1880s F.W. Burbidge, Curator of the Trinity College Botanic Garden, received seed of *Betula utilis*, one seedling developed a particularly silver-white stem and was given the cultivar name of *B. utilis* 'Trinity College'.

River Birch or Black Birch, *Betula nigra*, is native to the Eastern United States. It was introduced into cultivation in Europe in 1736 by Peter Collinson, a keen amateur arboriculturist who introduced American plants into his London garden. As the common name suggests it grows well in damp conditions and is fast growing. The most striking feature is its dark deeply fissured rugged trunk and flaking bark, noticeable even at a young age. The leaves are distinctive too, glossy green, up to 12 cm long with leaf margins deeply toothed. On the Belfield campus of University College Dublin, several

River Birch were planted in raised beds. Despite the wind tunnel created between buildings, the trees are thriving.

Some species of birch, now cultivated in plant collections in Ireland deserve to be more widely planted.

Paper Birch or Canoe Birch, *Betula papyrifera*, is native to north North America. It forms a large tree with a dull white trunk with noticeable lenticels and strong upswept branches. The leaves 4–10cm are rounded at the base and pointed at the tip. There is a fine example in the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, where the river Tolka, the millrace and a statue of Socrates meet.

Native to western China *Betula albosinensis* var *septrionalis* was collected in the wild by the plant hunter Ernest Wilson in 1908. Though the name may be a mouthful, given time and space it becomes a wonderful tree to 20m. Perhaps the most striking of all birches with orange-brown bark peeling from the trunk to reveal a pale salmon coloured bark. One of the finest examples in the country at Brook Hall, Derry was planted by the main avenue in 1937.

Betula ermanii is native to eastern Asia and

northern Russia. On young trees the bark is white becoming dull white/grey as trees mature. In time the tree becomes broadly conical in outline. Close at hand the shiny foliage is broadly ovate in shape. In Trinity College Dublin two large trees, each sitting on a carpet of grass, form part of an ensemble of the built and natural environment as one enters Parliament Square from College Green.

At first glance *Betula maximowicziana*, with strong branches and large heart shaped leaves, could be mistaken for a Lime, *Tilia*, but the 10–12 pairs of leaf veins and long catkins indicate a Birch. Native to Japan it was introduced into cultivation in the late 19th century. There is a fine example at Mount Usher, Ashford, Co. Wicklow, well positioned by the Vartry river with a backdrop of a wall and a pond in the foreground.

Birch, the Lady of the Woods and her companions from foreign parts now grace the rural and urban landscape in Ireland—trees to plant and to cherish.

Dr Mary Forrest, a former Head Gardener at Glenveagh National Park, Mary was a lecturer in horticulture in UCD for over 30 years.

Fallen but not forgotten

RUTH DUNNE tells how a felled giant was given a new life teaching the pupils at her school about the events which occurred over its lifetime and the need to respect and protect the heritage of such trees.

IN 2019, our school, St. Oliver Plunkett Primary School in Blackcastle, Navan, Co. Meath was offered the opportunity to use the stump of a Holm Oak tree which had fallen in a recent storm for a project in the school. The tree had stood in nearby Dalgan Park where Ger Clarke was then employed. Through a member of our Board of Management, Kenny O'Rourke, Ger offered us this opportunity.

Our school has over 400 pupils and has DEIS II status. Prior to the project, during my tenure as Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator, we had in place a very active Parents Gardening Group who had carried out a number of garden projects in the school grounds including designing and executing a garden for the 'Postcard Garden' section of Bloom 2019 which was awarded a Certificate of Distinction. The chance to incorporate the tree stump into our existing garden developments was not to be missed.

Holm (Holly) Oak

The Holm Oak (also called Holly Oak) is not native to Ireland. While there are about 600 different varieties of oak tree in the world, only two are native to Ireland—the Sessile Oak and the Pedunculate (or English) Oak. The Holm Oak comes originally from the Mediterranean. Many were planted in Ireland in the 1700 and 1800s when large estates were being developed and planted. It is the largest non-coniferous evergreen which can be grown in Ireland and can reach 20 metres in height.

The word 'Holm' is an Old English word for

holly. The leaves of the Holm Oak resemble holly leaves with glossy, dark green, upper sides and have pale hairs on the underside. It is from this resemblance in the leaves that it gets its name. It is also evergreen like holly (while other oaks are deciduous). Its Latin name is *Quercus Ilex* (*Quercus* meaning oak and *Ilex* meaning holly). However, despite its name, Holm Oak is an oak tree and not related to holly.

The base of a Holm Oak tree divides into several stems (about 6 or 7) and each develops into a separate trunk. The 'stump' offered to our school was just one of these stems / trunks.

Dowdstown House

Our Holm Oak tree was situated at Dowdstown House which is about 6km

south east of Navan on the Dublin Road. Dowdstown House is part of the estate now known as Dalgan Park owned by the Columban Fathers.

This area has been important since ancient times. The Slí Midhluachra, one of the five Royal Roads leading from Tara, ran through here on the way to Slane, Armagh and the North East. It is recorded that a church was built here about 550 AD. After the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, the estate was granted to Robert Rochford. It is believed that much of the estate was planted with trees in the 1760s and the house known as Dowdstown House was built then.

The estate was later acquired by the Tylour family of Headfort, Kells. One of this family, Robert Tylour, became owner around 1819.



St. Oliver Plunkett Primary School
Parents Gardening Group Committee



Padraig Farrell (Acting Principal), Anthony McDonagh (Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator), Pat Roche (Green Schools Co-ordinator) and the current Green Schools Pupils Committee with the Holm Oak stump
Below left and right: The stump before work started to repurpose it



HOLM OAK TREE TIMELINE

- About** 1770 tree planted
- 1789** French Revolution Storming of the Bastille
- 1798** United Irishmen Rebellion
- 1815** Battle of Waterloo
- 1829** Catholic Emancipation
- 1833** Slavery abolished in British Empire
- 1845** Great Famine begins
- 1851** Great Exhibition
- 1861** American Civil War begins
- 1869** Suez Canal opens
- 1879** Thomas Edison tests first light bulb
- 1883** Krakatoa volcano erupts
- 1889** Eiffel Tower opens
- 1896** First 'modern' Olympic Games held in Athens
- 1903** First airplane flight by Wright brothers
- 1912** Sinking of Titanic
- 1914** First World War begins
- 1916** Easter Rebellion
- 1922** Irish Free State established
- 1927** – First 'talkie' movie, 'The Jazz Singer', released
- 1929** Wall Street Crash
- 1939** World War Two begins
- 1945** World War Two ends
- 1953** First successful ascent of Mount Everest
- 1963** President John F. Kennedy assassinated
- 1969** First man on the Moon
- 1973** Ireland joins EEC
- 1975** St. Oliver Plunkett NS built
- 1979** Pope John Paul II visits Ireland 1989-Berlin Wall falls
- 1990** Mary Robinson becomes first female President of Ireland
- 1998** Good Friday Agreement signed
- 2002** Irish Punt replaced by Euro
- 2018** Pope Francis visits Ireland
- 2019** Storm causes tree to fall



Tom King (left) and Kenny O'Rourke with the finished article

He had risen to the rank of general in the British Army by this time. A story is told that he was one of three Meath generals who fought with Wellington at Waterloo in 1815 and that he later laid out tree plantations at Dowdstown to represent the regiments at the battle. However there is no record of a General Robert Taylour at Waterloo, so this story may be no more than that. In 1837, it was recorded that 'the Hon. Gen. Taylor has a seat in the cottage style in a demesne of about 590 acres, of which about 240 are plantations.' It is believed that our Holm Oak tree was planted in this time period between the late 1700s and early 1800s.

Robert Taylour died in 1839 and his nephew Richard Taylour became owner of Dowdstown. In about 1870, Dowdstown House was extended significantly and a central 'tower' added. In 1927 the estate was bought by the Columban Fathers who moved their headquarters there from their previous base in Galway. From Galway they took the name 'Dalgan' and so the estate was renamed 'Dalgan Park'. In 1938 they built a new building to meet their needs elsewhere on the estate. The builders were Sisks and it was the biggest civil construction project carried out in Ireland at the time. The Columban Missionaries continue to operate from Dalgan Park.

The Stump

After much deliberation, our Gardening Group decided that the stump should be treated and varnished so that it could be placed on display within the school grounds, highlighting the tree rings so as

to educate the pupils on the age of the tree, the historical events which occurred over its lifetime and the need to respect and protect the heritage of such trees. A local craftsman, Tom King from Bohermeen, took on the task of preparing the stump for display. It was first transported to his workshop, then left to dry out. Tom spent many hours planing down the surface of the stump and applying varnish to bring up the tree rings. Ultimately, a slice of the stump was removed to form the final display portion and mounted on a wooden frame. The work was time consuming and of course also delayed by the intervention of Covid. Tom's outstanding abilities as a craftsman and artist have recently received national recognition. Trading under the name of An Gobha (The Blacksmith) from his forge in Bohermeen, Tom was awarded Overall Best Product Award at Showcase 2023 in the RDS for his iron St. Brigid's Cross.

Our Holm Oak stump now stands on permanent display in our school grounds with accompanying signage to educate pupils on the timeline of the tree's life. It is used as a focus around which teachers can design lessons dealing with history, environmental issues and respect for natural heritage and resources. After 200 years of life growing in Dalgan Park, our tree stump has been reincarnated and hopefully will continue for many years to inspire and educate many new generations.

Ruth Dunne is Special Education Co-ordinator at St. Oliver Plunkett Primary School in Navan



Carmel Cunningham, whose early life centred in Cork and north Kerry, has been living in Roscrea since 1965 where she taught at Roscrea Vocational School until 1996. Married to George since 1968, their two sons Paul and Brian work in Dublin.

These poems are taken from the collection 'Moments'



Our Birches

See the beauty of our birch trees
Standing upright.
Before the snow fell and the frost came
Their leafless branches made glorious patterns,
Creating diverse, sculpted images -
All unlike from different angles.
Then the frost appeared, and they became
Our ice trees shimmering in the winter sun,
Swaying back and forth, diamond-like in the light,
Glorious in their shaky might.
Next came their coat of snow,
And our birches were breathtakingly lovely
In their purity and innocence of white,
Utterly and completely still,
Knowing their exquisite splendour
Would be marred by movement.

The Undressed Ash

Bluebells, white bells in the grove,
Encircling leafless, lovely, awesome,
With colour it's awash.
Bees quietly flit from white to blue,
Sun dappled carpet on the ground.
Yet astute ash is still unrobed,
The chirping of songbirds gives some sound.
It seems as if sweet summer has arrived,
But wily ash with worldly wisdom knows
That foxy frost can yet one night descend.
So ash when dressing, with great foresight, froze.
Twill wait with patience and with dignity
Til time has come to vest itself with clothes.

Seasons of Love

Green leaves,
Autumn colours,
Empty branches,
Opening buds.
Empty life,
Opening friendship,
Golden years,
Always love.

IN TREES WE UNITE

An ecological solution to curb climate change

MEERGroen (in English MoreGreen): Is an organisation founded by Ecologist Franke van der Laan, based in The Netherlands. Having worked for 25 years with various organisations, with a Top Down approach trying to implement ecological systems and change, he became disillusioned with the lack of progress due to bureaucracy, and business-only focus, leading him to the conclusion that the majority of mankind is persistent on a path of self-inflicted destruction.

IN HIS own words: “since around 1980 mankind is becoming a burden that mother earth cannot cope with any more: the resources that we pull out and the waste we put back cannot be buffered any longer by the world’s ecosystem. Politics and business is all about mankind, (not the ecosystem), about money (not health and happiness), about short term interest (not leaving the world as a better place for our children) and about growth (in spite of the fact that the ecosystem is collapsing around us).”

Franke however believes there is still plenty of optimism and energy and switched his approach to focus on bottom-up initiatives. The basic concept is that mankind is capable of achieving anything when it puts its mind to it.

“We can save collapsing banks in the credit crisis by finding €3,000bn in two months, we can close the entire world for fear of a Corona infection. Why shouldn’t we be capable of saving the world from a far worse climate crisis? What we need to achieve, is to get the proverbial five pc front runners mobilized, and that will change the entire system,” said Mr van der Laan.

Thus MEERGroen with a bottom up program was shaped with activities focused on ecology and on turning concern around into positive hands-on energy.

MEERGroen has a few leading principles; first of all it runs projects ‘Eight days a week’



Saving and planting trees is fun above all

so there is no reason not to join for availability reasons. The second principle is that many different activities are offered to suit all interests and capabilities, from vegetable gardening, flower meadows, orchards, nature playgrounds, insect hotels, managing estates, making blogs, vlogs, pictures, to nature education. Anybody with an interest in nature can find something to his taste. Within 12 years this has led to 1,800 volunteers running 1,100 ha in 70 projects, 200 of these are the core group and the rest is comprised of groups from companies, apprentices, team building and leadership courses.

MEERGroen is an acronym summarising the working values; Maatschappelijke (Social), Ecological, Educational, Economical and Recreational benefits that can be achieved with active civil participation.

Franke calls this the ‘1+1= 10 model’: the five MEERGroen values+ volunteer participation = tenfold benefits. With active citizens turning concerns about the

environment into positive action, resulting in fun and a human population in balance with nature for at least 100,000 years.

Activities

MEERGroen activities are split into 2 main seasons:

- April to October the focus is on vegetable gardening and flower meadows
- November until March the focus is on forest and tree management.

15 years involvement in ecological forest management has led Franke to the following observations: forests are generally considered a cost factor rather than an asset or inspiration, due to the fact that most forest owners are thinking in economic terms. The effect being, that year upon year management budgets are cut with little budget left after 80 years. That has the consequence, that either forests are chopped with large machines every one to 10 years, or nothing is done and they are growing full with seedlings. In both cases millions of



Franke van der Laan saving as many trees as possible

trees and hundreds of species will wither away.

By ecologically, recreationally, and culturally managing such forests (in collaboration with owners who generally are very willing to get that work done economically), MEERGroen discovered the potential to make those saplings available to anybody concerned about climate and biodiversity, and is willing to offer space for the otherwise doomed saplings to grow to maturity.

MEER BOMEN NU (MORE TREES NOW) campaign. A collaboration between MEERGroen, URGENDA and Caring Farmers

In 2009 the first 1,000 trees were handed out by MEERGroen for free and each year since those tree-hand-out-events grew in magnitude.

The tipping point came in 2020, MEERGroen had 40,000 saplings ready for distribution, when Urgenda a national organization showed interest. Urgenda is world

famous for its bold initiative to challenge Dutch government politics with its own promises and policies to address the climate issue. Urgenda stands for the urgent agenda for climate action. They promote 40-50 different actions: from becoming vegetarian, installing solar panels, driving electric cars, to planting trees as a carbon sink. One mail in their network resulted a day later in an order for 100,000 trees. That was a challenge that MEERGroen could not ignore and 12 days later they had 110,000 trees available: 10,000 for their own region and 100,000 for Urgenda. Most of them went to Caring Farmers: farmers that look for more sustainable work practices rather than traditional export oriented industrial farming. By April 1, 2020 all trees had found homes and happy owners.

This success led to the birth of the meerbomen.nu campaign (More Trees Now). In the summer of 2020 a few hundred interested volunteers throughout The Netherlands were trained in the method. A

donation of 190,000 fruit trees (due in part to political tensions and Corona) provided a big boost. The handing out of indigenous trees and fruit trees generated massive interest and publicity in the national press and television.

The Tree Planner; Facilitating massive participation

In 2021 the campaign grew to more than 3000 volunteers and a very useful ICT tool, The Tree Planner, was designed and implemented. The TreePlanner enables foresters, planting locations, volunteers and tree hubs to align supply and demand of trees locally and regionally.

Those participating indicate a preferred radius range, between 25-200 km and areas of interest for which they wish to receive notifications about events.

Land owners and tree planters can initiate harvesting or planting days for free. The only requirement is a hands-on support

contribution, in cases where large areas are to be managed or large numbers of trees are requested.

Forest management is only done in the period when trees are at rest, between November 15 and March 15. The main focus is on harvesting saplings between 60cm and two metres in height, but larger specimens are also saved from special species (walnut, cherry trees, etc). Apart from saplings other means of propagation are also used: cuttings, runners, etc depending on the species.

Between November 15 and March 15 the focus is mainly on large (semi) professionals with numbers between 500 to 50,000 trees per location. They can setup events and advertise them through the Tree Planner.

Once a week an automated email from the Tree Planner is distributed to people, with all events for the coming weeks, within the range of interest that they registered.

Between March 15 en April 1 the focus is on the urban citizens, with widely publicized 'hand -out' days. To prevent traffic chaos of thousands of people showing up for free trees, registration is required and a maximum of 50 people are allowed per half hour.

With an average of 1sapling per square metre, the Dutch forested area of 500,000 hectares has the potential for 5 billion saplings a year! All these saplings are supplied for free by mother nature, and the work force consists of people concerned about climate change, and willing to give their time for free as well. This way the campaigners hope to generate the will and positive energy to solve the climate crisis in a way that promotes ecological and social values (and ultimately, to unite mankind).

People who join in the effort generally get very enthusiastic. In this way we distance ourselves from a commercial model in favour of a 'favour model'. This attitude has led to tree nurseries and garden centres supplying superfluous trees for free, trucking companies making their trucks available for transport, hotels making meeting and training facilities available and governments sponsoring the movement in return for the distribution of free trees to citizens... in unlimited numbers!

Internationalisation

Tree planting to fix CO2 is very fashionable: In the Netherlands 37,000ha of extra forest is the forest policy goal. In Ireland the current 11pc forest cover is to be upped to 18pc and also the EU climate policy aims at planting three billion trees before 2030. The problem is that commercial nurseries only start producing new trees when they see a secure profit. The consequence is that those trillions of trees have not been seeded yet.

MEERGroen sees the More Trees Now



Main picture and below left: A day's harvest of 6,000 saplings of 40 species with over 20 participants



Franke and Grant at their workshop with schoolchildren and Easy Treesie at Fingal county hall



approach not as a competition of commercial nurseries but as complementary to the trees that commercial parties can supply. And since the goal is to add millions of square kilometres of new forest to fix all excess CO2, there is benefit to everyone.

Through the More Trees Now campaign 1.8 million trees have been saved and planted in the last three years. It is thought it will take one million square kilometres of new/extra forest, (assuming that forests on average over 10 years can fix 200 tons per ha) to pull all the excess CO2 out of the atmosphere. That is a substantial area, for which we need an ecological focus worldwide. But considering what is at stake with a climate that is running

out of control and futile attempts to keep on growing with technological measures, it is more than worthwhile.

Irish Visit during Tree Week

In March of 2023 MEERGroen visited Ireland during Tree Week meeting up with like-minded organizations and individuals to research International collaborations on combating the climate crisis.

The idea behind the visit was to target countries with similar conditions as in The Netherlands, so the program can be adapted easily, and where the level of interest in nature and concern about climate change and

biodiversity loss is also similar. The ultimate goal is to run the program worldwide with the current focus on the EU with 27 countries. In January 2023 Germany Mehrbaeume.jetzt was kicked off successfully. From March 18 March 28 2023 MEERGroen went on tour in England, Scotland and Ireland to find partners for the More Trees Now campaign.

The main contact in Ireland was Orla Farrell, the driving force behind Easy Treesie who had very kindly organized daily activities involving schools and councils in Fingal, Swords and Wicklow where trees were planted and the MEERGroen method was demonstrated, showing how many trees can be 'saved' and harvested.

One of the highlights was a visit to Dunsany Castle, with Bob Hamilton, a 950 year old estate where Randal Plunkett, the current Baron of Dunsany, has started a 300ha rewilding process with lots of potential to harvest and plant trees.

The Irish tree week also involved some meetings and lectures. They attended a lecture given by the Society of Irish Foresters and the National Botanic Gardens and learned how Ireland from 1901 onwards has been working towards 18pc forest cover from 1pc. They see potential for the More Trees Now approach to be of assistance in that process.

In Wicklow they met with Diarmuid McAree, founder of Trees4all and also planted some trees. They were hosted by Síolta Chroí an Eco Restoration Camp in Carrickmacross in the middle of a traditional dairy region where they discussed and demoed practices and hosted a webinar about Eco restoration, rewilding and the More Trees Now principles with some 40 attendees.

The March roadtrip made clear that there is interest and potential for a More Trees Now Campaign in 2023/2024, with at least 15 organizations and people expressing interest in Ireland and the UK.

Kick Off season 2023/2024 in Ireland, England and Scotland

Dates are set around November 23 for saving trees, planting a climate forest and handing out trees around Wakelyn, East Anglia in the UK. MEERGroen is hoping to have two other potential locations in Ireland, England or Scotland. This will require a group of active participants to deal with the organization and announcements.

■ The first action is to join in monthly Teams sessions to get the campaign organized before September 2023

■ A couple of days before Kickoffs the MEERGroen team will do one or two on-the-job training sessions in locations, such as Corby, Estate, Dunsany in Ireland and/or Scotland and Northumberland.

■ The decision to start low-key and gradually build the campaign out or go nationwide from the start still needs to be determined. In either case the interest generated needs to be channeled through a website and tool such as the Tree Planner. These will need to be localised and available by September to channel responses.

■ These programs are best run locally, so MEERGroen is looking for partners in Ireland, England and Scotland willing to take up the task to run the campaigns, including fund raising and publicity. Of course they are available for advice and backup.

ACTIONS NEEDED TO PROCEED

1. Funding to cover localisation and translation costs for the Tree planner tool in English with a useable location / postal code structure.
2. Land owners who are interested in assisting with their forest, where we can harvest/save trees
3. Tree hubs where we can temporarily store saplings and from where they are distributed
4. People and landowners who have space/land for tree planting
5. Partners who want to organize the campaign nationally, regionally or locally
6. Government bodies that facilitate and back up the entire process
7. Experienced foresters and ecologists willing to guide harvest and planting events and work with the volunteers groups
8. Logistical and nature-marketing people or organizations

SCHEDULE

Between June and September a plan of action needs to be formulated

From September to November the announcements/marketing campaigns will we held based on the

Dutch and German experiences, growing momentum and availability of land owners locally.

Late November on the job training course with the MEERGroen team during the kick offs.

And then it is up the response from society and available creativity to use trees to unite mankind and address climate change and biodiversity problems.

Please indicate your interest and availability in order for us to start organizing the campaigns and the kick off (monthly or weekly Teams sessions) by contacting : info@stichtingmeergroen.nl or text WhatsApp to 00316 48226490 Franke van Der Laan.



ENFUSE FINALS 2023

Going head to head with 57 other teams from TCD, NCI, UCD and DCU our Easy Treesie – Crann team scoop one of the top 3 awards in our ongoing collaboration with TU Dublin. Tree cheers!

ENFUSE matches local SMEs, micro enterprises and social enterprises with teams of master’s level university / college students. Teams develop and present bespoke plansto their allocated enterprises to implement and to their lecturer to assess. These plans outline ways for the business to address challenges they face and develop competitive opportunities to expand.



Winning team: Emmanuelle Brucci; Mariana Vasutova; Orla Farrell, Crann; Maria-Jasmine Adekanmbi; Aditya Dubey.

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PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION 2023

Our annual photographic competition, sponsored by Coillte, attracted another record entry last year. Standards were very high and we look forward to receiving equally good images for this year's contest.

Theme: **Trees, Forests & Woodlands**

Sponsored By: **Coillte**

First Prize **€250**

Second Prize **€100**

Third Prize **€50**

ENTRY IS FREE!

Closing date: September 15, 2023

Digital entries should be emailed to

CrannCoillte2022@gmail.com

Prints should be posted to **Crann – Trees for Ireland, Photo Competition, Crann, PO Box 860, Celbridge, Co Kildare.**

RULES

- This competition is open to all amateur photographers.
- Entries can be digital (emailed) or prints (posted).
- Emailed images must be in jpg/jpeg format, minimum file size 2MB, maximum file size 8MB.
- NOTE: Emailed entries must be as attachments to the email (not embedded in email).
- Prints of photos should be minimum size 6x4 inches (15x10cm) up to maximum size A4.
- A certain amount of manipulation of digital images to enhance the subject matter is allowed but gimmicky special effects are not.
- Each photographer may submit up to 3 entries.
- Prints should have the following information on the back: Name, Address, Telephone Number, Title of Print, Location and Date Taken.
- Prints should NOT be mounted.
- Prints cannot be returned.
- Emails should have the following information: name, address, Telephone number, email address, title of picture, location and date taken.

• The copyright of the image remains the photographer's. However, Crann and Coillte retain the right to use any images in future publications and on related social media and websites e.g. Crann may use some of the competition pictures in related third party publications, tweets, website, social media and promotional literature like calendars. You may be requested to supply the images in high resolution eps/jpeg format for this purpose.

• Entering this competition implies full and whole acceptance of the competition rules.

• The judge's decision will be final and no correspondence or communications will be entered into in relation to the results

PHONE CAMERAS

We have a special section for phone camera photographs.

Entries should be emailed to

CrannCoillte2022@gmail.com, with the words

'Phone camera' entered in the subject line.

The winner will receive a special prize of €50.

CALENDAR

Photographers who enter our competition may see their pictures selected to appear in a wider range of platforms, thus promoting Crann – Trees for Ireland.



BIODIVERSITY DAY IN ROSCREA

Above: An ash tree was planted during the week in honour of the 6th class pupils by George Cunningham of Crann, seen here with the chairman of Roscrea Tidy Towns, Denis Ryan, acting principal Val Carey, class teacher Jane Hogan and some 6th class pupils. Right: Residents of Copper Beech Estate, Roscrea who were presented with potted trees by Crann's George Cunningham for biodiversity week; trees were donated by easytreesie. Pictured with George Cunningham and Denis Ryan, chairman of Roscrea Tidy Towns are (from left) Aimy Coffey, Anne Louise Delaney, Mag O'Rourke and Michael Bracken. The man who does all the voluntary work there Chick Conlon was camera shy!



LONGFORD DEMESNE, SLIGO.



Yvonne Foley, Longford Demesne Woodland.



Above: Martha Kivlehan, Gerry Foley, Mary Foley, Aidan Foley, Mary O'Connell and Kathleen Foley

Below: A large crowd attended the biodiversity day at Longford Demesne, Dromard, Sligo.



The **serious** fun of tree planting parties

ORLA FARRELL and Easy Treesie appreciate the benefit of a nine day working week as the jobs keep coming in!

WE'RE IN the middle of another nine-day week as I write; this time for National Biodiversity Week—

and for a fifth year in a row Easy Treesie is running a parade of events. Our volunteers tell us they get such a buzz from Tree Planting parties that they don't want to stop for summer so we've a new programme—Tree Maintenance parties! You've also told us that meeting online is often convenient; if you missed our online webinars you'll find them on the Tree Council channel. There you'll find our launch of our *Champion School Plants 3,555 Trees* film, the inspiring story of the dynamic tree planting Coláiste Chiaráin school community in Croom, Co. Limerick. We talk to the President of the Tree Council of Ireland and Fingal Tree Officer, Cormac Downey about 'How to Keep Your Trees Alive'. We look forward to next season when we invite everyone to join our 'Plant an Elder Wand' initiative. And we look back at the achievements of our tree planting communities and the fun we've had. It's been Serious Fun; the motto, as it happens for Barretstown. Since that is our philosophy too, what joy it was to be off to start planting the first of 4,500 trees with them for our very first planting party of 2023. 100,000 children have passed through the gates of this holiday camp, for children who are sick, since Hollywood actor Paul Newman welcomed the first visitors 30 years ago. There's no place we'd rather be.

The tree-mobile is very tightly packed; what's the kit? Well, see a typical short-list of supplies in the sidebar! Since we like to travel

sustainably, we bring as many people as we can too so on the way I collect Steven Doody and Deirdre Lane, artists working on our community participative project. We are off on a road-trip to the country, what fun it is to see the countryside. And as our trip is to Kildare, which is the home county of Crann, all the better as we are on the home pitch!

All that good land, ah, what a sight. The better the land, the better the trees grow and that is a fact. Much fun is had as we drive along, Deirdre is a Kildare native and Steven is from neighbouring Wicklow so both take on the role of guides and we hear tales aplenty shortening the road.

I'd always been in awe of the Barretstown mission. It was so interesting to hear the story of how Paul Newman had benefited so much himself from the great North American practice of going to camp. His dream was to make the experience available to children who were sick by making sure that there was a medical and care team on hand so that they were free to enjoy a holiday too. When children started crossing the Atlantic to attend

Rush & Lusk Educate Together, St. Macullin's and Corduff NS came out to add 1,000 saplings to their local canopy with Fingal County Council



The Easy Treesie team join with Minister Martin Heydon, the Barretstown and Kildare Chamber-Intel communities at our first planting event of 2023

his US camp he decided that these children would benefit from a new camp closer to home to avoid the distress of an arduous journey. He searched all over Europe for a suitable place and when he finally came to Ireland, was greatly facilitated by the Government in his search and in securing Barretstown Castle for the project.

A secret pleasure is that when we arrive to plant trees, we always get a VIP welcome; today it's 'Everyone please go to the public car park. Orla and your team, since you have

all the gear, you may park at the front door of the castle.' It is the birthday of the late Paul Newman today—we'll be planting an oak tree in his memory as well as celebrating the work of 'Sustainable Kildare's climate action championship', hosted by Intel and County Kildare Chamber who explain that their campaign demonstrated 'the power of small actions'.

We have been looking forward the whole way to tea and scones we have been promised in the tree house. The day is cool enough, so

I am surprised when CEO Dee Ahearne, welcoming us with beaming smiles, says it will give us a chance to warm up. The tree house it turns out is a magical indoor sunroom, entered through a glade of birch and tall ferns. Banks of outdoor sinks are supplied for handwashing, the heavy doors are kept snugly closed electrically and inside is a fairyland of fairy lights, a welcome breakfast of lemon croissants and other delights, steaming tea, coffee and of course, (signature snack of the world tree project), hot chocolate.

After our tea break we pose for some photographs with our tree planting crew to record the day's event. Steven has been using plastic tubs in the nursery having cleverly acquired a quantity of them from a local food establishment. Making the Scots Pine saplings, which feature in the photographs, look good requires some staging. We hide the recycled plastic Mayonnaise tubs in which the Pine are planted inside our fancier, shinier new buckets—important given Minister Martin Heydon is present to launch the initiative.

We chat with Mitch, who has run the camps here for over a decade and Peter who will ensure all the saplings are safely planted. Our conversation covers the hares, rabbits and deer all living on site and the issue of tree-guards; these animals love nothing better than some fresh new saplings. The Coillte nursery team has had 1,500 saplings delivered the previous day with a wide variety of species. We have brought just a few spindle as well... a fairy tale tree because of its connection to Sleeping Beauty who pricked her finger on a spindle and slept for 100 years. This is the



kind of place so peaceful I can imagine a long sleep and a prince striding across the Kildare parkland. Or St. Brigid perhaps, our first 1,500 saplings also mark her anniversary this year just in time for our new National Holiday.

Following our morning planting session we are kindly brought back for more refreshments by Keith. We sit in the tranquil setting at wooden tables and chairs and chat to some of the volunteers who will be carrying out the afternoon's tree planting. We hear of the Barretstown Camp policy; the children leave their sickness at the front gate. They also leave their phones there for the week. While there is wifi available, required now for diabetes management by some of the visiting children, the password is not generally available and children spend their time at camp with that old technology; Mother Nature. A pheasant lands as we wheel away the last of the tools to enjoy the newly-planted glade, planted along the avenue leading from the Castle. These new trees will be standing sentinel for years to come encircling this Magic place.

We've had very many highlights this year. The Easy Treesie podcast was launched at Christmas and has been heard as far away as Holland by members of the stunning Tree Rescue MeerGroen project! I had spotted their work in a two minute film from the Economic Forum. What fun to hear they were coming to Ireland as part of a tour taking in England, Wales and later France and Italy to show us what they are doing! I issued a cordial invitation through their Kerry-born organiser, Aileen, to tag along with us for Tree Week if they thought any of our events would work for them in their missionary cause. Our Invitation was to our planting events; the global motto of the Trillion Tree initiative, "Stop Talking, Start Planting" focuses us on doing exactly that and away from talking events, be they ever so interesting. (Though we certainly listen attentively to local requirements before planting, which is carried out by our communities as far as possible on public lands. Our parks and greens are hugely valued by all and consultation is critical to the success of restoring tree cover.) Since our Dutch new friends are people of action, we agreed an exciting tour with much planting, taking a few rests to listen at a handful of talks and off we set.

Franke and Grant made space for me in their capacious van and we set off on a Grand Tree Week Odyssey. First stop, the Botanic Gardens where I bring them to the Wild Ireland space after one of the wonderful talks. They point out all the great possibilities there, surrounded as we are with a living catalogue of our native species. From there we head to Wicklow town to network with council

Santa Sabena, Sutton students lineout for a Tree Planting party with Steven Doody, Easy Treesie Community Liaison and Verity Swann, Rotary



officials and tree lovers at Anja Murrays talk at Wicklow library. Our team do the same at dawn in St. Anne's Park where we are joined by our new Tech Lead Dr. Emma Carrigan, then heading to Seagrang Park for tree-planting with an international group of pupils and our old friends at Baldoyle who are about to accept the National Tidy Towns Tree Award in the coming weeks. We get straight to work, Franke with his sharp secateurs always at the ready harvests an elder wand, cutting a branch he spots poking out onto the footpath and in the process pruning this bushy tree nicely back so that it now no longer blocks the pavement. Each pupil plants an Elder Wand in the soft wet ground amongst the woodland we started at our very first Tree Academy. 50 trees planted, free, in a flash! What a great way to plant a tree! We decide on the spot that this will be our first project for our next planting season, letting Nature be our Nursery.

On with the tour! After joining Brendan Smith, Galway Tree Planter extraordinaire, at Croke Park for a bite to eat and to hear how they can join this Tree-volution we set off for Dunsany to view the wonderful



Above: Enjoying a poetry reading from a young environmental poet, National Tree Week. Ronan Lynch

Below: Apple volunteers plant 100 saplings at their EU Headquarters, Hollyhill, Cork and sponsor 250 more at Bishopstown Community School and the surrounding area to mark Earth Day
Below right: A break for the Salesforce Tree Maintenance team to hear the story of the People's Choice Global Top Ten Community Gardens at Santry from its lead gardener, Ciaran Connelly

rewilding heaven. Littlepace in Fingal is our next stop on the following morning. We chat with the Parks team who are out with augurs and spades digging the holes for the children

who are coming out to do the planting. The day starts with a double espresso and a whole-school-meditation over the speakers. Next we welcome two classes after they have walked their park 'Daily Mile', a tradition in this school which happens rain or shine. The Fingal team has identified an old hedgerow which has become patchy and bald and it is at this spot we are putting back the old line of hawthorn and holly, rowan and oak. The prize for most work done? Future Apple Blossom! Franke pruned the crab apple to stop branches rubbing together and to allow in more light. The tree-planters who managed to plant 250 saplings in an hour with their bare (gloved) hands took home three bouquets. For a second year in a row, Fingal Co. Council are giving away 16k trees to its citizens, this initiative goes from strength to strength. Next, our workshop with the Swords Woodland Association. We rescue tiny oak seedlings which would not have grown in an area where the ground is left mulched only. Then on to Shankill where Diarmuid McAree and the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Parks team sees how new cherry seedlings too close to the

mother tree can be transplanted to a place where they can grow.

In other news, we're streamlining the www.easytreesie.com website where we plan to post big thank-you messages to the very many supporters and volunteers who have brought us to over 400k trees planted so far, from those who have made many contributions such as Coillte, Plant-for-the-Planet, Salesforce, Maxol, and the Loreto Order to newer groups such as Goodera, EY, Tenable & Fingal Volunteers. Above all we thank our planting communities, the children and community leaders from from Bishopstown school in Cork City way up to Northern Ireland's Creggan Heights.

Please contact Orla or Marguerite to sponsor trees on our project (Certificates available) or apply for trees to establish in your community at orla@easytreesie.com and info@crann.ie

The Easy Treesie Story - listen wherever you get your Podcasts. Logo by Ruza Leko



WHAT TO BRING FOR A PLANTING PARTY?—THIS IS OUR KIT

- A Smile!
- Saplings; bare-root is best with roots kept moist or trees in pots; we try to have at least 5 species suitable for the site when establishing new woodland
- Bucket or watering-can for soaking bare-root saplings for an hour before planting (our silicone buckets fold flat for ease of transport and storage)
- Water; use rain or grey water if possible
- Gardening gloves, large and small; we use cotton as they feel good, they last and launder best, (if they are too fancy much time can be spent choosing a pair, neutral colours safest). Rubberized ones are handy if there are briars and nettles.
- Spades; can be shared, one between 2 or 3 is good. We use Bulldog planting spades, their size and weight makes them suitable for all ages.
- Trowels; – some people prefer them
- Mud-proof container for dirty gloves; ask the volunteers to pull them apart as they won't wash right if stuck together
- A tarpaulin; so handy to protect the car from mud and water when transporting trees and tools
- First aid kit; with appropriate care this will never be required
- A wheelbarrow is handy; ours folds up!
- Personal gear; waterproof hiking boots or wellies depending on conditions, raincoat, hat, a whistle is handy to round people up easily
- Hand sanitiser
- Treats for the tree planters and their supporters; we like meeting at a refreshment/bathroom stop and start with some chocolate before we get our hands dirty
- Swag; Prizes for good effort like our Crann Magazines and Calendars
- Banner; We bring ours and one for the school and/or group who are planting
- A phone or camera; to record all the good work and share it with the wider world and to remember where you planted your trees so you can find them to water them, weed around them and generally check they are doing well!
- Tree guards; if required, stakes and ties for taller trees
- Permission forms if required
- A refuse bag; Not only do we leave no trace, we like to leave any place better than we find it so we collect any litter we come across while planting.



This is the Kew to be in

Peadar Collins

E NGLISH may be the spoken language on the streets of London, but there is another lingo rarely used. The botanical language. It's complicated like any rarely used tongue. It's long-winded, tongue-twisting and colourful. That being said, the centre of modern day plant distribution started in a place simply called 'KEW'.

Kew is the treeman's Mecca. There are parks all over London and in every city that radiates out from this one-time capital of a vast empire. The tree plant life in the parks of Ireland for example, The Phoenix Park, St Stephen's Green and many of the private estate plant collections around Ireland and England all owe their origins to the amazing scientific and global sourcing, co-ordination and distribution work done by Kew.

Now, 250 years later, it's now a very different world. Today's educated horticulturalists and the advancement of glasshouses and transport around the world have made trees available to everyone, so we can enjoy and appreciate their beauty.

The layout of Kew is on a grand city scale. Avenues of oaks, towering pinetums, vast collections of trees staged with appropriate space on a parkland style. All interconnected.



Peadar beside a wonderful, *Aesculus hippocastanum*, european horse-chestnut

Ponds and lakes lined with flowering plants and stocked with wildlife. Exotic colourful birds in flocks, playfully flying in the canopies of grand flowering *Aesculus hippocastanum*. Around every twist and bend of the weaving pathways lies a botanical surprise or a stunning architectural vista.

May is probably the high point of the year when the freshness of foliage and the brightness of flowers is best felt and seen. The highlight now as I write is the humble

wirey hawthorn. Forgotten for most of its life but in May, it's on fire. The most important flowering tree in our countryside hedgerows. It is represented properly at Kew and shoulder to shoulder with a big portrait of Charles III. Welcoming all to Kew.

Whatever we think or say, believe or want to change. Nature is a place loaded with immense fascination. I can only imagine what it must have been like 250 years ago when horticulturalists looked in a fascinated way at what nature had to offer here. Then to discover a global wealth of beauty and invested in it being recreated here for all to admire. This lust for nature's beauty and value is at the foundation of a place call Kew. You would have to say the English Royal family cultivate their continuity in many ways and processes, but there's nothing more self-perpetuating than nature and along with jewels and fine clothes the Royal family has also adorned itself with nature.

There are many thousands of trees at



The Palm House in Kew Gardens



Cercis siliquastrum, Judas tree, displaying abundant clusters of purplish-pink, pea-like flowers



Aesculus x carnea Briotii, red horse chestnut
Right: *Quercus castaneifolia*, the chestnut-leaved oak.
Below right: Peadar at the Privy Garden in Hampton Court



Kew, and it requires you to visit here several times a year to experience their individual uniqueness. In the wonderful month of May you will see the *Cercis siliquastrum* a very ordinary unsuspecting tree for most of the year, and then it flowers in a vibrant dark pink/purple with a bizarre clustering of flowers that seem to emanate from the bark of the tree. Mad! London may be famous for its *Platanus* (Plane) but without question it would be very empty without its *Aesculus hippocastanum* (Horse Chestnut). Kew has built a towering walkway through the canopies of these chestnuts. Here also you will find Hybrid Chestnuts smaller in stature and more profuse in pink to red flowering, which are used very cleverly around the dining areas. Also, the *Aesculus indica* with its bronze canopy of foliage nestled in as contrast with its cousins from around the world, one of which is the America buckeye Chestnut with its nearly yellow flower.

Trees are more than foliage, flowers and indeed a source of food shelter and provider of life sustaining oxygen. They also form the

architecture of our living environment. And their place in our towns and cities as much as in our countryside is invaluable.

While I'm in London and with a beautiful girl at my side why not go and see Kensington Park and the daddy of them all, Hampton Court. So off we went.

Kensington Park is well integrated as a park. Very relaxed, used and maintained. With bold squirrels that would pick your pockets. I liked the topography of Kensington. It's hard to feel different hills and slopes in a city, but this park is big enough to feel that. Hard to explain. I guess it shows something for me in town planning. Token green areas are great, but a scene of vastness for the psyche of city residents is very important.

As we keep on building and have our ears bent from listening to how much we're not building. We are not concerning ourselves about the provision of vast spaces encircled by houses. As you fly over the city and look down on post-war suburban London. You have to wonder how does this idea of parks not seem as important?

On our final day in London and we are next to the Thames where we find the home of the never-to-be-forgotten Henry VIII. A palace in surprisingly condition for its age. Again of course it is the trees here that took most of my attention. It's an odd thing I've noticed over the years, but there are Yew people. There are people with a fascination or call it a deep appreciation for this native enduring tree. It holds and indeed commands respect. Eat me if you will. During the history of this Palace in the early 1700's Queen Anne established what is now a Yew spectacular Again if you appreciate Yew (*Taxus baccata*) here you will feel history around them.

These take hundreds of years to have presence. Yet their being doesn't overwhelm the palace. I think this is very clever. I've seen this giant Yew style topiary once before and had to stop and admire it, it was in the Bathstone village of Corsham close to where I once lived on the edge of beautiful Bowood. That is a story for another day...

I'm glad I visited the trees in London. Long may the trees live!

A VILLAGE TREE TRAIL

John Edmondson

LIVING in Monkstown, an attractive settled Dublin suburb on the sea with a small village at its heart, we're fortunate in having a lot of trees including some spectacular specimens.

Of the nature events run by the local Tidy District group, tree walks have proved especially popular. To build on this, we decided to produce a high-quality printed leaflet of a self-guided trail to stimulate interest in our trees and encourage people to look at what we have around us.

With specialist help from Charles Shier of the Dublin Naturalists Field Club, we first listed many of the species which are found along a loop walk starting at the local DART station. We then selected one specimen of each of forty species to highlight. These are all on public ground or very easily seen from the road if inside someone's garden.

We included most of the native trees in the neighbourhood, several common introduced species (especially conifers) and some more unusual trees. Of note are a giant redwood, a Monterey cypress with a large heronry, a huge common walnut, a fine arbutus, an English elm in excellent condition, a corridor of Irish yew in a graveyard and a dawn redwood.

Designing the leaflet was a challenge—it had to fit into your pocket easily without crumpling and still give enough information about the trees and, crucially, their precise location. The aim is that an inexperienced person could be sure to identify the trees we had chosen (we didn't want to put markers on or near them). The images of leaves were vital and were taken from my own photographs and, by kind permission, ones used in the National Biodiversity Data Centre's excellent Trees and Shrubs swatch.

The production of the A4 leaflets on 170 gsm weight matt coated paper was straightforward, if time-consuming, using home desktop publishing software and an inexpensive but good quality online printshop.



A fine Monterey Pine on Carrickbrennan Road

The cost was largely funded by community grants from Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.

We had 5,000 leaflets printed and put one in each of the 2,000 letterboxes in Monkstown in early summer 2022. Others were handed out at the DART station and are available to pick up at key points around the village. More were given to local schools to use as they see fit for

projects or as teaching aids. We ran three very popular guided walks on different parts of the Tree Trail during the summer where all sorts of questions were asked about the trees themselves, trees and forestry in general, and on nature and environmental topics.

The response to the leaflet has been universally excellent and we will probably reprint them in 2024.

We would be delighted to see the concept or design used by other community groups. If they'd like any advice, they should email us at monkstowntidydistrict@gmail.com or call me at 086 3552525.

The Tree Trail leaflet itself can be seen on our website at <https://monkstownvillage.ie/resources/tree-trail>



THE ROOT TO REBIRTH

TREES have a deeply rooted significance in our subconscious and in our dream life. Recently, I had my most vivid dream in years. It featured a luminous 'Tree of Life', glowing brightly in a dark place. It was a beautiful and uplifting dream, signifying renewal and growth. It was a profound and deeply personal experience.

In dream and in spirituality, the Tree signifies a connection with the sacred. It signifies our connection to the otherworld. What is interesting is that this is true across cultures. For example in Ireland, the Oak, Ash and Yew are considered sacred trees, with potent spiritual properties. The Druids reputedly made their wands out of Yew. And in this tradition, a few years ago I was gifted a Zen Buddhist teacher's stick, a symbol of office, like a Bishop's mitre, crafted from the branch of a thousand year old Yew tree, that had come down in a storm in Co Wicklow some years back. It's a gift I greatly treasure, and which some day I will pass on.

In my own spiritual tradition of Buddhism, trees are a recurring presence. The Buddha was an historical person, living where India and Nepal border today, some two-and-a-half millennia ago. And for every salient moment of his life, trees played an important part.

The Buddha was born under a tree, was enlightened under a tree and died, at the age of eighty, lying on his side under a tree. Clearly trees symbolise something vital and transcendent to figure so prominently in Buddhist tradition. Indeed, one of the most important sites of Buddhist pilgrimage



internationally is, in fact, a tree.

The Bodhi tree, at Bodhi Gaya, in India, is as important to Buddhists as Jerusalem is to Jews, or Mecca is to Muslims. It is believed to be the descendant of the tree that the Buddha meditated under when he experienced his great enlightenment. At this very spot is a *Ficus religiosa*, or sacred fig, that was grown from the original tree of the Buddha's time. Across the Buddhist world, similarly sacred trees have been propagated from this original tree. And around them Buddhist monks chant sacred texts, sit in meditation and offer incense and prayers. But there are many other ways that trees figure in Buddhist

THE SPEAKING TREE

The concept of The Speaking Tree dates back to the 5th century BC in India when the founder of Buddhism meditated for 49 days under a Pipal tree, or *Ficus religiosa*, and became enlightened. This column in Crann is a platform for thoughtful comment that may stimulate debate or just reflect on the way of the world.

faith practices also.

Before there were Buddhist monasteries and mountain hermitages, there was the 'forest tradition'. In this original Buddhism, monks and nuns lived lives of renunciation, leaving the towns and villages behind and living in great simplicity in the wilderness and forest. In this, they were following the example of the Buddha himself, who lived, taught and died in the forests of his time and place.

The religious significance of this can be read on many levels. The trees and forest represent the interconnection of all life. They point to a reality that is sacred and much greater than the human dimension, and which demands our respect. Living in the forest is to live in harmony with nature and within our means. It is to live according to the law of the trees, rather than trying to bend the trees to conform to our laws. In this tradition, there is great wisdom.

Even in Buddhist culture today

there is a deep affinity with trees and woodland. In Thailand, for example, certain monks have taken to ritually ordaining trees, dressing them in the robes of a Buddhist monk, in order to protect forested areas from exploitation and damaging commercial felling. Such is the persistent and cherished respect for forest and woodland in Buddhist religious sensibilities.

Trying to bring some of this wisdom to Ireland, a number of years ago, I looked into the possibility of propagating a *Ficus religiosa*, from the original Bodhi tree in Bodhi Gaya, right here in Ireland. It was a naive plan, as immediately I learned that the climate here is entirely unsuitable to sustain such a tree. However, in my investigations, I did learn that they have a *Ficus religiosa* in Dublin's Botanical Gardens, in one of their magnificent Victorian glasshouses. If you haven't seen it, do go and visit. It's very beautiful.

But you don't have to visit Dublin to see this tree. Because the trees all around you, where you live, are already sacred in themselves. Maybe next time you sit under an Oak or an Ash, a Yew or an Elm, you will remember the Buddhist relationship to trees and bring to mind the sacred nature of our trees and forests. If this happens, it'll be an important moment of enlightenment in itself.

REV. MYOZAN KODO KILROY

Rev. Myozan Kodo Kilroy is a Zen Buddhist priest. He is the founder of Dublin Zen Centre and the guiding teacher at Zen Buddhism Ireland. Founding president of the Irish Buddhist Union, he represents Buddhism on Dublin City Interfaith Forum. He has a book forthcoming from Wisdom Publications in Boston next year. See www.zenbuddhism.ie for more information.

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Joseph Spollen
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Ciara Wynne
087 185 3647
ciara.wynne@bnm.ie



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