



## **Report to Witham Town Council of the activities of the Witham Tree Group – 2019/2020**

Once again weather played a large part in the Tree Group's activities. Another hot dry summer meant that our small bowser was in weekly use ensuring that our valuable new plantings were not lost. And in the very wet winter that followed we were fortunate to be able to get all our new trees into the ground on the few days when it stayed rain free.

The 2019/20 planting season was dominated by the first phase of our major project – the creation of a WW1 Memorial Park, funded largely by Braintree District Council and supported by the Town Council. The site chosen was the open space between Bramble Road and Honeysuckle Way. The design, by BDC, built on the existing hedge linking these two roads to create a linear wood/copse. Two rain free days in December and another in January saw 53 substantial trees planted with help from our friends at Aegon and students from Rickstones Academy. Bee Brook Tree Services, contracted by BDC, provided much valuable support. Species planted included oak, field maple, hornbeam, hawthorn, alder and elm. Further plantings to complete the Park are planned to take place in the 20/21 planting season.

In the spring of 2020 several memorial trees were planted including, in the Town Park, a Larch to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Trefoil Guild. In total 63 large trees were planted in the 2019/20 winter season, almost three times the number planted in previous seasons. The Town Council's funds enabled the planting of 9 of the trees along with a quantity of mesh and a number of posts.

Ensuring that all these trees survive our, now regular it seems, dry summers, has necessitated a larger bowser. A £500 grant from Essex County Council has helped us acquire a second hand 1000 litre bowser which our in house design engineer, Eric Teverson, has expertly turned into a very efficient irrigation machine. With a new high volume pump to extract water from the River Brain and three outlets on the bowser, our small team is now able to irrigate the 53 Memorial Wood trees with 20 litres (2 large cans) each in a little over 20 minutes. A refill from the river then enables us to water the remaining trees planted last winter together with the trees planted in the spring of 2019. We anticipate that these watering sessions will be needed on a weekly basis throughout the summer.

In addition to concluding the creation of the Memorial Park, we are hoping to plant in the coming season a small wood/copse, to be funded by BDC, in keeping with the move towards increased woodland planting in the county. Potential sites have been identified and BDC's Tree Officer is currently examining them with BDC officials for suitability. Lockdown has inhibited planning for other planting but we hope to be in a position to put proposals to the Town Council in the autumn.

Much of what we have achieved would not have been possible without the support of the Town Council and we look forward to continuing that relationship for our mutual benefit and for the creation of a greener future for our town.

Allan Waight  
Deputy Chairman  
Witham Tree Group

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