

# The Jubilee Gardens Tree

THE Parish Council Committee, which deals with the maintenance of the Jubilee Garden, has been considering the future of the tree in the centre of the garden since last year, as the effect of its growth on other plants was causing concern.

At the March meeting Mrs Whitmarsh reported that she had met with a Taunton Deane Tree Officer who had told her that the tree was not rare but a Spanish (Roble) Beech, planted in 1978 to mark the Queen's Silver Jubilee.

He could foresee that there would be no objection should it be decided to take it down and replace with something more suitable.

Four arboriculturalists had been consulted. Their consensus was that the tree was large after 30 years and would get much larger as it could grow for the next 300 years.

The grass under it would never get any better and the shrubs around it were being deprived of light and could not thrive.

The tree had been badly scalped in the past and as a consequence a major part of it was growing sideways to the north.

To log it or thin it would be very difficult because this would result in a very uneven tree. To prune it back would only encourage greater growth.

None of them advised pruning, all suggested it would be best in the long term interests of the Jubilee Gardens to take it down and plant a smaller more decorative tree in its place.

As a result of this, it was agreed to get quotes and have it taken down. On April 7th when the tree surgeons arrived to take down the tree, a group of nearly a dozen people assembled objecting to the tree's removal "because they had not been given the chance to air their views in favour of retaining the tree". The tree felling was postponed. Following the April Parish Council meeting, where



the idea of any sort of referendum on the tree's future was strongly rejected, a letter was sent to the principal protester inviting him and his friends to the May Parish Council meeting where the Parish Council would debate the future of the tree again and looked forward to hearing the views of the protesters.

No one turned up to the May meeting, the Parish Council unanimously agreed with the recommendation of the Jubilee Garden Committee. It was decided to apply to Taunton Deane for the removal of the Tree in a Conservation Area.

The Jubilee Garden is owned and managed by the Parish Council for the

benefit of everyone. It is an attractive area of open space in a crowded town centre. People go there to chat, to read the newspaper, make telephone calls, eat their lunch or play with their children.

If you have never done that, take an opportunity to use it and sit in the sun for a few minutes. You will find it a pleasure. MW

## Wivey Tree Matters!

YOU might have caught wind of a recent dispute over the proposed felling of the beech tree in the centre of Jubilee gardens.

The tree was given a reprieve and a proposal was made that the issues surrounding its future be aired in our very own paper.

Mark Lewis gives this account:

I was incredulous when, on a Thursday afternoon, I heard that the tree was going to be cut down the following day. Apparently this was a decision the Parish Council had made and it was too late to stop it.

I could remember no articles in the Messenger, had noticed no public notices and had not heard any one speak of it.

"For a few moments I descended into a depressed passivity then I realised that if I did nothing and acquiesced to this destructive act I would feel somehow implicated every time I walked past the gardens.

I phoned friends and acquaintances and discovered that nobody knew about the proposed tree felling. Wivey buzzed as the message about the tree

was passed on. People expressed anger and disbelief.

I suggested that the felling could be stopped and that this would entail the unprecedented event of concerned Wivey citizens getting up a bit earlier than usual and staging a 'tree protest'.

Several people said they would be there. A certain radical energy was gathering momentum. Emails were sent and a local teacher swore that he would conduct his class around the tree in the morning.

I telephoned our local councillor Mary Whitmarsh. She informed me that the tree was considered too big and would continue to grow for many years, that shrubs were dying because of its shade and that the grass was not growing underneath it. It had been pollarded badly in the past which meant it was not easy to cut back now.

She felt it was too late to change the Parish Council decision.

Early Friday morning, eight adults and three children were gathered around the tree armed with a flask of tea. At 8am three young tree men arrived and sat in their vehicle looking somewhat bemused.

Shortly afterwards, Councillors Mary Whitmarsh and Brian Collingridge appeared. They raised the same points again, stressing that the tree would not be easy to reduce and that if it were then it would grow back.

We said that the tree was dear to people's hearts and that the community who use the park should have been consulted in a decision about the tree's future.

We liked having a large impressive tree and were not bothered about the patchy grass. Shade loving plants could replace dying shrubs. What could be finer than a 300-year-old beach tree in the middle of Wivey?

After negotiation the councillors undertook to consult the community via the June edition of the Messenger. There would be a sign in the park and the opportunity to leave comments at Wivey House and the Post Office.

Our beautiful tree would see another day and we would get to enjoy the gentle unfurling of its springtime greenery.



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