

New street trees for the Suburb



Rowan in Autumn

Is there a gap outside your house where there used to be a tree? Perhaps there is a only stump left where your street tree came down in a storm or was demolished by a careless driver, some trees are victims of vandalism or disease, and others are simply coming to the end of their life because they were planted 70 or 80 years ago. Douglas Gardner, who lives in Willifield Way, missed the flowering hawthorns which used to be outside his house and sent a photograph of the missing trees to RA Chairman Richard Wakefield asking if they could be replaced.

Armed with reports from residents, the computer database on which London Borough of Barnet keep a record of all their

street trees, and my own observations, I had surveyed every Suburb street and compiled a list of missing trees. Although the Suburb roads seem to be filled with trees there are more than 150 gaps, and LBB can budget to replace only 30 trees in each ward of the borough each year.

By the time the Chairman passed Douglas Gardner's letter to the RA's Trees Committee, the 30 trees for this year had already been chosen, and I showed him how many gaps and dead trees were already on the waiting list. It seemed as though the Willifield Way hawthorns would have to wait another year or so to be replaced. However, after a mention at the Residents Association AGM, and a report presented to the RA Council, it

was decided that this would be an ideal way for the Residents Association to benefit the whole Suburb. About £2,550 will be spent this year to plant an additional 30 trees which will match the LBB planting. In addition, the Trust will be giving £1000 to bring the total number of trees to be planted to 71.

If you know anything about trees you will have noticed that most of the Suburb roads have a mixture of trees. Cherries, rowans and alders are planted side by side with no regard for a planting scheme. But the original planners had a very precise vision for street trees on the Suburb. Most London streets have limes or planes and the Suburb was meant to be different. The roads were planted with almond, peach, tree of heaven, himalayan tree cotoneaster and false acacia. Sadly many of these have disappeared over the years and the planting scheme the first residents knew, has almost been lost.

However, with the enthusiastic assistance of the LBB Tree Officers, the Trees & Open Spaces Committee are able to make a start on recreating the original planting scheme. In the last couple of years we have been working closely with them to choose the trees which are planted on the Suburb. For example, last December, five young silver birch were planted in Thornton Way. This winter will see two new almonds in Asmunds Hill and another in Hutchings Walk. We will plant a tree cotoneaster in the section of Asmunds Hill between Willifield Way and Erskine Hill and 6 rowans in Rowan Walk.

It will be a slow job, because you cannot simply rip out a healthy tree if it is the wrong sort - you have to wait for it to need replacing - but gradually we hope to return to single species planting. This means that, like Heathgate with its double pink cherries, all the Suburb roads will have one species of tree planted, or in the case of Hampstead Way - Acer colchicum, Acer schwedleri, whitebeam, silver birch, another acer and London plane - a number of groups of trees. But, as anyone who knows that Heathgate started out with poplars will realise, it is not always

possible to plant the original trees. Sometimes the original trees are no longer available and we have to make a decision about a substitute. Holne Chase has Siberian crab apples, but these have been superceded by newer varieties. So any future planting in Holne Chase will be Malus Rudolph which is quite similar to the old Siberian crabs, but not quite the same.

Everyone who lives on the Suburb must be aware of how important the architecture is in creating a sense of place; the trees are just as much a part of the original planners vision.

GEORGINA MALCOLM



Requiem for an oak

There is always anguish when a great tree is lost. The sad state of the oak at no 51 Oakwood Road was no exception when tree surgeons arrived to, as the neighbours saw it, destroy the tree. Frantic calls to the Trust, the RA Chairman, the Trees Committee and to Barnet, petitions were signed and all to no avail because the tree was diseased and considered a danger and permission to reduce it by 40% had been sought and granted. In 1986 this tree was not made the subject of a tree preservation order because it was diseased.

As is so often the case a simple exercise in consultation and communication would have obviated the fuss. The RA Council agreed to recommend to the Trust that all neighbours are consulted whenever they are likely to be affected whether or not there is a statutory obligation to do so. The RA's Trees and Open Spaces Committee will check to make sure that trees which should be subject to preservation orders are protected.

RICHARD WAKEFIELD



Almond blossom

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