

# Towards a resilient ancient treescape centred on the Fowey Valley

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What do we know about the existing Fowey Valley ancient treescape?

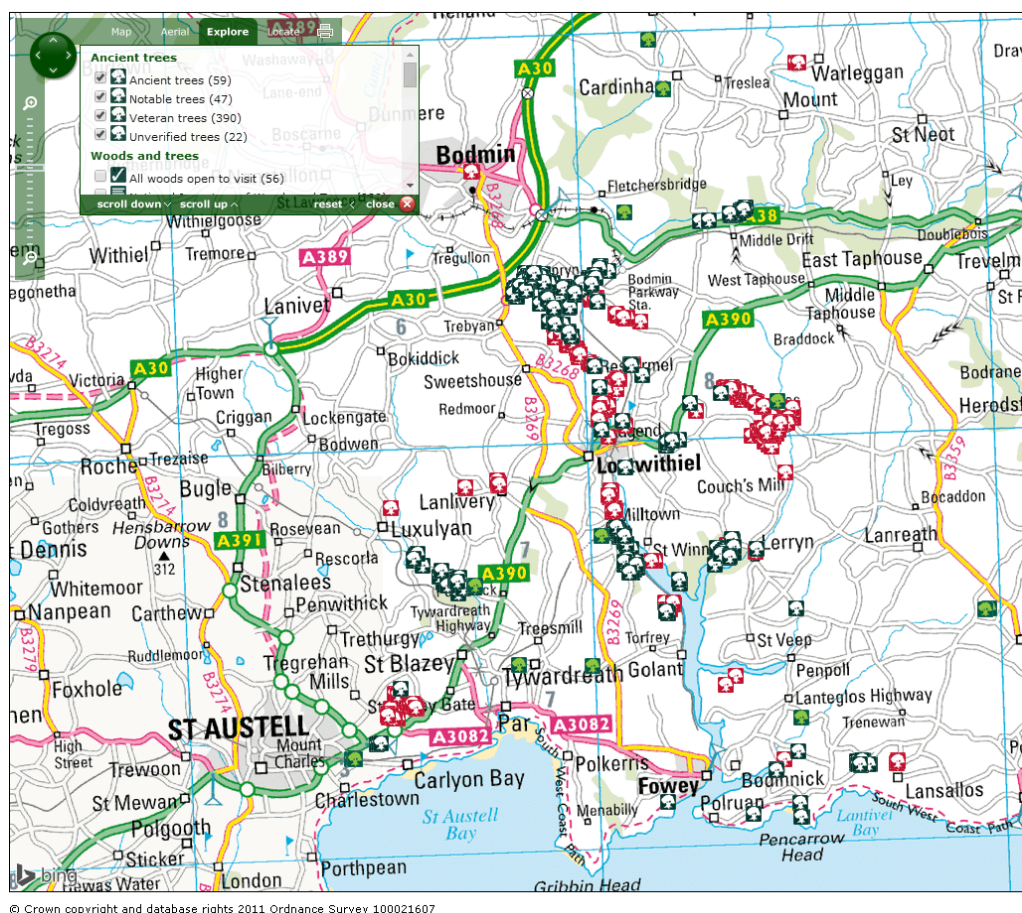


Thanks to many organisations and Ancient Tree Inventory volunteers, led by Lead Verifier for the South West, Tim Kellett there are many records of ancient, veteran and notable trees for the Fowey Valley. An outstanding number of ancient trees have been identified.

Recognition of the significance of ancient treescapes has developed significantly in the last 25 years. It is also becoming more evident that the UK is host to some of the most important collections of ancient and veteran trees in Europe especially those associated with historic mediaeval landscapes.

The Fowey Valley is a top location in the UK for its collection of special trees.

Records of the ancient, veteran and notable trees for the area can be seen on the Ancient Tree Inventory ([www.ancientreehunt.org.uk](http://www.ancientreehunt.org.uk)). The following image is a screen capture of the map for the Fowey Valley.



## How do we compare the value of the tree collection or ancient treescape in the Fowey Valley with other UK areas?

The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) accepted the English Nature (now Natural England) Veteran Tree Site Assessment Protocol as a way of distinguishing the value of sites

[http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/sssi\\_veterantreesadded06.pdf](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/sssi_veterantreesadded06.pdf)

The primary criteria are:

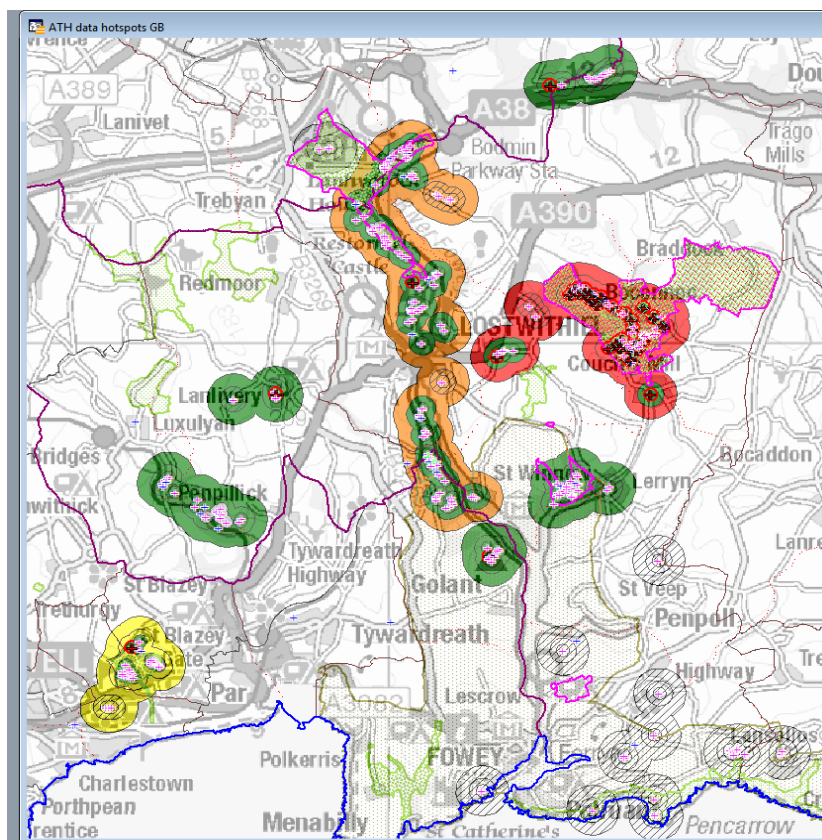


**Table 1: Veteran tree site assessment protocol**

Field Measure	Possible thresholds		
	High value	Medium value	Low value
<b>Primary assessment criteria</b>			
Number of veteran trees	>100	10-100	<10
Number of ancient trees	>15	<15	0
Number of trees >1.5m dbh	>15	5-15	<5

The Woodland Trust assessed the data collected on the Ancient Tree Hunt database using the live tree records in September 2013 according to this JNCC protocol. The data collected for the UK is still far from complete and therefore the picture is just a snapshot in time.

The map below demonstrates the quality of the combined value of the tree records for this particular area. Red zones are high value, orange zones are at the upper medium value (between medium and high) and yellow are of medium value.



At present levels of knowledge, Boconnoc, which comes out as high value / red, is one of only 62 ancient tree hotspots in the UK so far identified.

High, High-medium, Medium and Medium-low  
scoring ATH 500m radius sites.  
(Numbers in brackets show number of sites)

GB

- Medium low (2034)
- Medium (152)
- High medium (209)
- High (62)

NI

- Medium low (22)
- High medium (7)

Tree data used was Ancient Tree  
Hunt data saved at 23/09/2013

Landscapes with many mediaeval characteristics and processes will have provided continuity of habitat down the centuries. There is evidence that some of the features in the Fowey Valley can be traced back to early or middle mediaeval times.

The ancient trees found in historic landscapes are important in their own right but also very valuable for their associated rare species especially the decay and mycorrhizal fungi which in turn create interesting habitat for invertebrates and nesting or roosting animals and lichens on the aging bark. Independently the Fowey Valley has been assessed as important for its rare lichen interest and saproxylic invertebrate interest to confirm what is reflected in the ancient treescape.

Historic parkland and wood pasture provide conditions for trees to grow full crowns and then retrench which enables them to age without competition so they give rise to landscapes of particular character and atmosphere.

## Developing ancient treescape resilience

It is widely accepted that in order to maintain the values inherent in this historic, cultural and biodiversity rich area into the distant future, we need to

- Protect and care for the existing special trees
- Restore lost landscapes around the hotspot
- Create new habitat where it can best provide connectivity

The aim would be to inspire greater understanding of how special the ancient treescape is and establish how it could be enhanced or restored through a co-ordinated approach.

This will need a stakeholder approach: owners, agencies, local authority and national government advisors and the community working together. The Woodland Trust and Ancient Tree Forum are keen to work with others especially if it could achieve the following actions:

**1. Surveying for and recording any special trees in the area not currently on the database.**

It would be valuable to identify if there are trees which should be on the Inventory so that a better picture of the quality of the landscape can be identified.

**2. Providing best practice advice to owners and managers**

Guidance is available through handbooks and Ancient Tree Guides. Most of this is on-line or will be shortly.

Working in partnership to ensure that owners of trees have access to New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS) subsidies wherever possible or other sources of funding.

**3. Maintain the genetic resource and establish new open grown trees**

Collect seeds or plant propagation material from the existing oldest trees and grow on for the future. This helps keep the ancient genes in the gene pool.

Establish the right tree in the right space – give ancients of the future plenty of room to grow full crowns and grow ancient without competition.

**4. Raising the profile in the community of this outstandingly beautiful treescape**

This could be achieved by engaging the whole community through events and information and by specific training of volunteers.

## **Resources**

[www.ancientreehunt.org.uk](http://www.ancientreehunt.org.uk)

[www.ancient-tree-forum.org.uk](http://www.ancient-tree-forum.org.uk)

Lonsdale, D. (2013) Ancient and other veteran trees: further guidance on management. Tree Council  
[http://treecouncil.org.uk/index.php?page=shop.browse&category\\_id=1&vmcchk=1&option=com\\_virtuemart&Itemid=4](http://treecouncil.org.uk/index.php?page=shop.browse&category_id=1&vmcchk=1&option=com_virtuemart&Itemid=4)

Read, H., (2000) Veteran Trees – a guide to good management. Natural England - out of print but available on line: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/75035>

Ancient Tree Guide no1: Trees and farming

Ancient Tree Guide no2: Trees in historic parks and landscape gardens

Ancient Tree Guide no3: Trees and development

Ancient Tree Guide no4: What are ancient, veteran and other trees of special interest?

Ancient Tree Guide no5: Trees and climate change

Ancient Tree Guide no6: The special wildlife value of trees

Ancient Tree Guide no7: Trees for the future

Ancient Tree Guide no8: Trees and events