

# MUNICIPAL ARBORIST EXCHANGE PROGRAM

## From Bath UK to Bath (Maine) USA

Story and photos by Mark Minkley, Senior Arboricultural Officer, Bath and North East Somerset Council, England

Thomas Hoerth, host for my two-week exchange in September 2004, is City Arborist and Tree Warden for Bath, Maine and is employed within the Cemeteries and Parks Department. His role is supported by a voluntary community forest management committee and covers strategic planning and management advice as well as hands-on tree maintenance. Bath, Maine has a population of just 10,000 and over 18,000 trees, so Thomas has his work cut out for him!

Nothing had prepared me fully for the differences between our jobs and the trees for which we are each responsible. The notion of an exchange between local government arboricultural officers of twin towns across the Atlantic seemed an excellent opportunity not to be missed—thank you, SMA.

With all the hype of the American election at the time of my visit I was curious to see if trees and the environment hit the political agenda any more strongly in the U.S. than the U.K. What I had not really reckoned on was the difference between 4% tree coverage in Bath, UK compared to 94% in Maine—wow!

I was lucky enough to make my visit just as fall arrived so I could witness the beautiful colours across woodland panoramas. In the U.K., with so much less tree cover, much of my work involves legislation to protect our trees. This can be very effective as the laws cover both public and private trees and the enforcement procedure is clear to enact. I was surprised how little legal backup was in place to protect trees in Maine but also heartened by the positive attitude to trees voiced by so many of the public I met.



Mark Minkley worked with Bath, ME City Arborist and Tree Warden Thomas Hoerth on a takedown and a chain saw course, (Tom pictured on this page) and on tree planting and a street tree watering research project (Tom pictured on subsequent pages).



Over the two weeks I spent shadowing Thomas, the following projects and case studies are just some of those that stood out in my diary.

- Thomas gave me a tour of the key trees and sites locally, starting off with the cemetery, which has a diverse and well-treed setting.
- We met up with the Bath Forestry Committee at a woodlot owned by the City of Bath. No management is currently being undertaken due to lack of budget (now there's a familiar story!), but Thomas has managed to survey much of the site with local school children carrying out timber cruises. The hope is that the children will be involved in plotting this information onto GIS and will use the site as an outdoor classroom. The woods had some good quality hemlock that might generate some income towards future management costs.
- Thomas got me involved watering street trees as part of a research project he has funding for, "Cost Effective Sidewalk Planting Site Rehabilitation." The grant is to monitor the benefits of regular watering on established street trees over a three-year period. Members of the forestry committee get actively involved watering newly planted trees, which means the success rate of planting in Bath is very high.
- On Breast Cancer Awareness Day the city turned pink! Highway, shop fronts, balloons... everything! Thomas had arranged a tree planting event with two trees, *Cornus mas* 'Golden Glory' and *Magnolia stellata* 'Centennial', planted in the grounds of Patten Free Library. The grounds of the library have some excellent trees, my favourite being a mature cucumber magnolia, which is the largest I have seen.
- Thomas and I spent a most enjoyable Saturday at Maine Coastal Botanical Gardens running a chainsaw course for householders and volunteers of the gardens.



- Thomas has managed to multiply his resource of one many times over by successful funding bids and working with the Bath Forestry Committee and other community groups. He has done extensive programming with school children.
- The arborist licence scheme that is run by the Maine Department of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Resources is one that I would like to see replicated over here. In England,

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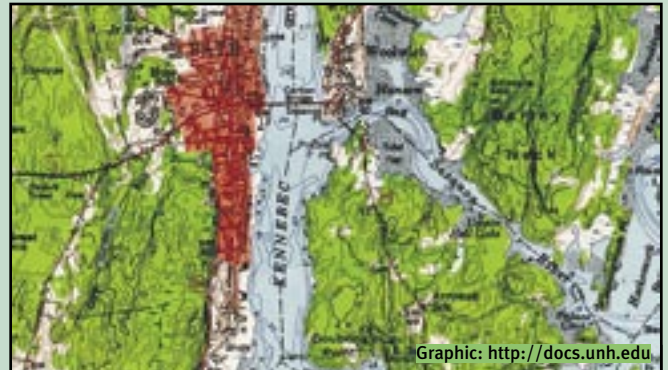
the lead arboricultural organisation is the Arboricultural Association; it runs two schemes, Approved Arboricultural Contractor and Registered Arboricultural Consultant.

The schemes are voluntary, and whilst some local authorities and other large contracts are only open to licenced companies, the majority of arboricultural work is carried out by companies not assessed by the scheme. This makes appointing an arborist an unnerving experience for many householders.

By contrast, the law in Maine requires anyone practicing arboriculture to first obtain an arborist licence. Whilst the exam may not be as arduous as those in England, every arborist in Maine has to have a licence rather than the company as a whole.



## Vital Statistics: Bath, Maine

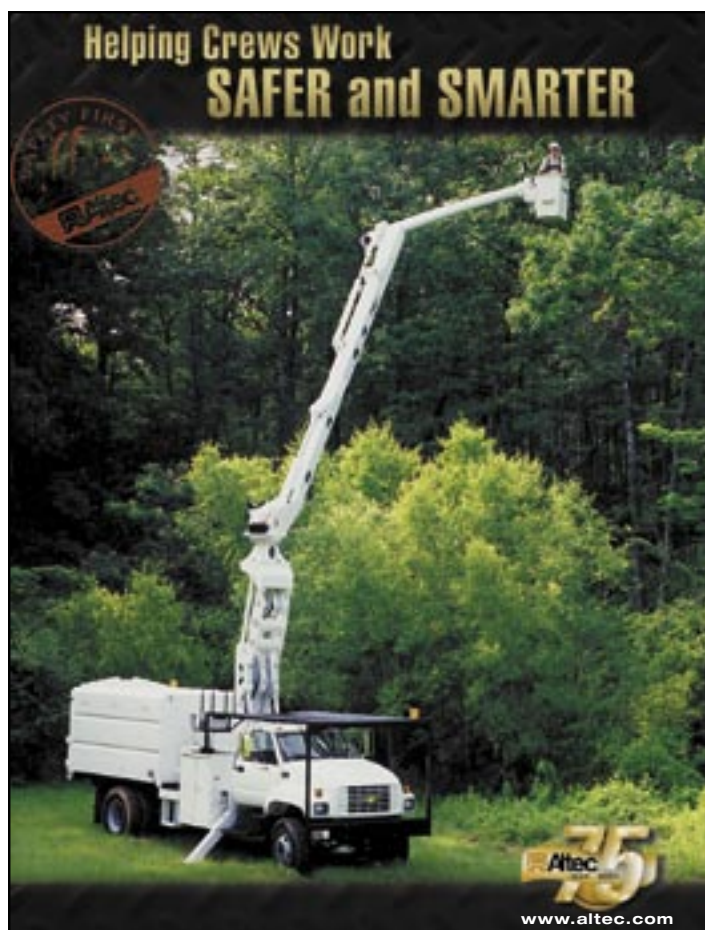


- ❖ **Population:** 10,000
- ❖ **Public tree population:** 18,000
- ❖ **Full-time park forestry staff:** 1
- ❖ **Management plan:** Yes, since 1997
- ❖ **Street tree inventory:** Yes
- ❖ **Pruning:** 7-year cycle
- ❖ **Volunteers:** Inventory, plantings, watering, fund-raising, and more
- ❖ **Ten most common trees:**
  - *Acer platanoides*, Norway maple
  - *Ulmus americana*, American elm
  - *Fraxinus americana*, White ash
  - *Pinus strobus*, White pine
  - *Acer saccharum*, Sugar maple
  - *Thuja occidentalis*, Northern white cedar
  - *Prunus* spp., Cherry
  - *Malus* spp., Crabapple
  - *Betula papyrifera*, Paper birch
  - *Fraxinus pennsylvanica*, Green ash
- ❖ **Source of pride:** Extensive education program with local schools
- ❖ **Biggest challenge:** \$21,000 annual forestry budget

- The Maine Forest Service Community Forestry Programme is called “Project Canopy”, and I met with its director, Michael DeBonis. Whilst in England, community forestry is only funded within 12 community forestry areas, in Maine the whole state is covered. Maine’s approach is far more inclusive and means that more funding is available for local groups and tree officers.

I came back to Bath, England inspired and my arboricultural batteries fully recharged!

I would like to thank Doug Still and the SMA Municipal Arborist Exchange Committee for making this opportunity available, as well as Altec Industries Inc. for their financial support of the programme. Thanks to John Bubier, Bath City Manager, for kindly loaning me his condo for the duration of my stay. Thanks to Denis Hebert and the Bath Forestry Committee for their hospitality. Finally, thanks to Thomas’s family for making me feel so welcome and showing me around their beautiful city. Thomas, I hope we can further develop our sister cities exchange! 🍃



### Looking ahead to the September/October issue of City Trees

- *A New Wood Wasp Pest*
- *Board Member Profile: George Gonzalez*
- *Faux Trees for Cell Towers*
- *Fruitless Street Tree Cultivars of Merit*
- *Gas Lines: Problems and Solutions*
- *Moving Large Trees*
- *Municipal Arborists and Tree Boards*
- *Profile: Portland, OR*

