

MUNICIPAL ARBORIST EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Brilliant, Just Brilliant! From Bath, Maine to Bath, England
by Thomas Hoerth



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The proud sponsor of the 2006 SMA
Municipal Arborist Exchange Program

I want to begin by thanking Doug Still and the SMA Municipal Arborist Exchange committee for making this opportunity available to the membership, as well as Altec Industries, Inc. for their financial support of this year's exchanges. This program encourages life-long learning and professional education and development, and for that I applaud SMA.

I had first unsuccessfully applied for the Arborist Exchange in early 2003. In 2004, I contacted Mark Minkley, Council Arborist for Bath and Northeast Somerset, England. Because he was also interested in applying, I felt we had a better chance of being accepted, which, in fact, was the case. To quote Mark, "Oh, this is brilliant!"

My wife and I cobbled together a plan to travel through Europe with our daughters, with the exchange in Bath, England taking place at the end of the trip. We arrived in Bath on Sunday, July 25th.

Bath & NE Somerset Council is both a designated Conservation Area and recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. The Council covers 220 square miles and has a population of roughly 160,000 with 80,000 in Bath and the remaining in the towns of Keynsham, Radstock, Midsomer Norton, and Chew Magna and numerous small villages. With the pressures of such a population base and that of tourism, great efforts are required to protect the Council's trees. Conservation Areas are identified and described as follows. By the end of the exchange, I would fully appreciate the impact of this definition and the reasoning for such measures.

While a Conservation Area is generally centered on listed buildings and other historic built features, the landscape surrounding it and trees within it contribute significantly to its appearance. 1) The setting of a Conservation Area can be equally as important as the buildings or historic features themselves. 2) There are over 30 designated Conservation Areas within Bath and Northeast Somerset at present. The City of Bath Conservation Area covers almost



*Tom ended his exchange in Bath, England by assisting with a Gallery pear takedown.
Photo: Mark Minkley.*

three-quarters of the city making it one of the largest single Conservation Areas in the country.

Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 all trees in a Conservation Area with a trunk diameter of 75mm (3 in) or more (measured at 1.5 m [5 ft] above natural ground level) are protected (subject to some exemptions). It is an offence to prune, fell or otherwise damage a tree without first giving notice to the Council. The purpose of this requirement is to give the Council the opportunity to consider whether a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) should be made to further protect the tree.

Within the Bath & Northeast Somerset Council Planning Service there are two groups: Development Control and Policy, and Environment and Projects

(PEP). The "Tree Team" within PEP consists of Mark Minkley and Paul Wilkins. They deal with Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), trees in Conservation Areas, and municipal planning as it affects trees. They maintain a register of "notifications of works" to trees within Conservation Areas that is available for public review.

The Bath & Northeast Somerset Council's Parks & Open Spaces section handles other arboricultural responsibilities and is managed by Mark Cassidy and Denise Hart. This section inspects and undertakes maintenance of the 24,000 trees growing on Council-owned land. They also manage nine hectares (about 22 acres) of woodland and implement new tree planting schemes.

On my first working day in Bath, I met with Mark and Paul for their weekly strategy meeting. They reviewed and divided up roughly 25 requests for review. What surprised me was the fact that they had jurisdiction over trees on what we in the U.S. regard as private property.

As other municipal arborists will attest, the site visit with a homeowner is a subtly important activity, one that reveals a great deal about how people perceive and interact with trees. Accompanying Paul and Mark, I was saddened but also relieved to know that most people in Bath, England, as well as in Bath, Maine, still do not fully comprehend the functions, requirements, and ben-

This is an excerpt of Tom's account of his exchange in Bath, England.

For the full version, please see:
www.cityofbath.com/forest/index.htm
or contact Tom:

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Aerial view of Bath, England. Photo: www2.sjsu.edu

Vital Statistics: Bath, England

- *Population: 90,000*
- *History: A UNESCO World Heritage Site; a Roman settlement with baths fed by hot springs*
- *Tree population: Parks Section responsible for 14,000 trees*
- *Full-time park forestry staff: 9*
- *Management plan: Yes*
- *Street tree inventory: Yes (EzyTree database)*
- *Ten most common trees: Alnus incana, Betula pendula, Fagus sylvatica, Ginkgo biloba, Malus spp., Platanus x hispanica, Pyrus calleryana ‘Chanticleer,’ Quercus robur, Sorbus spp., Tilia spp.,*
- *Biggest challenges: Development issues and budget constraints*
- *Source of pride: Manor Road Community Woodland, a national example of excellence; Royal Victoria Park (first public park in England) and botanic gardens within (planted 1887); Group of London plane trees within the Circus (listed Georgian buildings)*

efits of trees. Education is critical so that a TPO will be a last resort. My hosts and I agreed that the position of tree officer for a community is very much about talking with people about something that they live with day in and day out. We agree that it’s a pleasure but requires skills not taught in school.

In addition to site visits associated with work orders, I attended my hosts’ conference for regional certified foresters, went on tours of trees in local parks and cemeteries and on the University of Bath campus, attended Council meetings related to Conservation Areas, met the mayor of Bath, observed and pitched in with work crews... I even met with the Bath historical architect who showed

me a book entitled the “Bath Pageant”, copyright July 1909. In that year, Bath hosted a gathering that included guests from other communities named “Bath” (two from Canada and nine from the United States).

My last full day was spent with the tree gang (as they call their crew) taking down a dead, 11 m (36 ft) Callery pear in a park. The tree gang predominantly climbs and only very rarely uses bucket trucks. The crown was removed and then chipped. After cleaning up as much as we could, the bole was dropped and bucked-up. They worked safely, efficiently, and well!

I cannot overemphasize how important it is for municipal arborists to not only examine another community’s tree program, but to then host a colleague. Ah, the luxury of perspective! And oh, how thankful I am to Mark and his colleagues for opening their doors and to the SMA and the exchange sponsor for this “brilliant” opportunity.

Stay tuned for Mark’s forthcoming article about the two-week visit he made to Bath, Maine in September 2004.

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