Tree pruning specification for red oak 1284 at St Mary's Church Horsham



Oak 1284 *Quercus rubra* is a Church of England asset, managed by Horsham District Council in a disused cemetery at St Mary's Church, Horsham under the Local Government Act 1972.

The tree cannot be identified on any historic maps, but it is in excess of 100 years old. The tree hosts many veteran features such as dead wood, cavities and fungal associations and is managed by Horsham District as a veteran tree. The tree is not listed on the Ancient Tree Inventory. The tree is within Horsham Conservation Area established in 1974.

1284 is within the disused portion area of the cemetery. The area was overgrown with understorey and brambles until 2023 when the area was cleared to allow a 20% canopy reduction to be performed on the tree. The area is cut once annually by HDC contractors, and the area is infrequently used at present by church groups.

In the wider area there a few recorded veteran or notable tree but this likely reflects under-reporting due to the location. From observation N.Matheson has noted many trees in the wider area displaying veteran features particularly at the nearby Barrack field. Oak 1284 is somewhat isolated and for many of the species associated with

veterans it likely represents an ecological island especially for species with low dispersal ability.

The tree features multiple large *Gandorema spp* fungal brackets and has distinct changes in resonance at multiple points when struck with a nylon hammer. The tree's response to remedial reduction works in 2023 has been poor with crown die back and small amounts of response growth. The tree is within one tree's length of human infrastructure, paths and the church itself.

The tree has had detailed surveys performed on it in 2019, 2024 and again in 2025 after concerns were raised during a scheduled inspection. The most recent inspection noted that while within tolerable boundaries decay is advancing faster than the tree can compensate for and that the included bark in the union would present a considerable structural weak point. Management for retention such as reductions, bracing and the necessary decay scans would not be financially proportionate to the limited amenity value the tree provides given its obscured location. The ecological benefit of the tree which at present is not especially high, can be greatly improved through using veteranisation techniques in a reduction of the tree to a "monolith of several metres in height. This resultant stump may be safely retained for years to come offering habitat and a food source to many species.

N.Matheson has authorised these works which have been passed to County tree Surgeons.

- Reduce to around 6mH retaining 2-3m of secondary stem and primary scaffold out from the bifurcation point. Works to be carried out within 2 years.
- Produce a veteran tree management plan to include provision of additional ecology habitat by means of coronet cutting, cut wood retention, artificial bat slots etc.
- Visual Tree Assessment every 2 years.

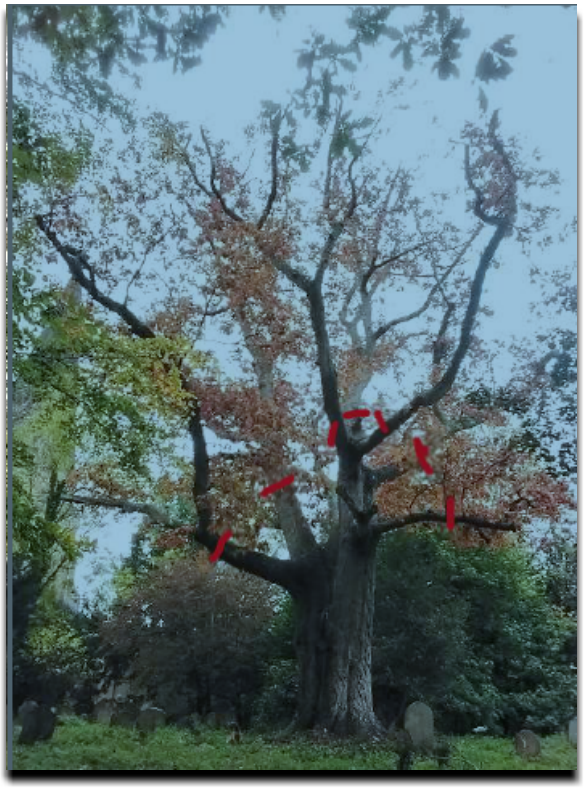

Figure 1 Final pruning cuts in red.

Timing: The task should be undertaken after the main bird nesting season but while the site is reasonably dry. I propose August/September 2026, access into the site will need to be planned as for operations at the same cemetery in 2025.

Operational guidelines:

The site manager and stakeholders will need to be consulted ahead of the works to determine use of site after the operation and the feasibility of retaining large diameter wood on site. Brash and smaller diameter wood to be chipped and spread on site around the monolith.

These notes are a guideline to the operator as NM fully understands that the situation will look different when the operator is in the canopy. NM or George frame of CTS are to be on site when works are being conducted.

Country Tree surgeons to be responsible for undertaking ecological checks, health and safety and site management as per their policies and operating procedures.



1284 Asset Notes

Degrading bracket at the base of the southwest stem - possibly fistulina. Further small fungal eruption at approximately 3m. Ganoderma pp. Final fungal fruitification was noted at 2.5m northern side of the stem. Possibly Ganoderma app. Potentially tight stem formation from ground.

12-05-20 This tree has recently received an approximate 25% reduction. At the time of this assessment the canopy was somewhat sparse. Considered to be partially due to the tree still not being fully in leaf and some pruning related stress. No obvious changes to the previously reported fungal fruiting bodies.

10-02-21 No obvious change in condition since the last assessment.

11-11-21 No obvious evidence of the previously reported Fistulina hepatica at the base of the southwestern stem. The suspected Ganoderma spp remains, but appears unchanged. Similar observations were made relating to the fruiting bodies located on the northern lower stem.

27-01-22. No obvious changes in condition appear to have taken place since the last inspection. Continue to monitor.

27.10.22 Ganoderma brackets present at: 0.4 metres on nnw, 2 metres on nw, 2 and 3 metres on ssw, 0.5 on sw and juvenile bracket forming at 0.5 on w. Mallet sounding around these areas exhibited tonal differences. Some large pieces of deadwood in crown, recommend further reduction of 2-3 metres.

06.06.23 Continue with preciously recommended work.

03.04.24 Ganodermas showing more fruiting bodies. Tree appears to be dealing with reduction well. Tomograph ordered and should give a good indication of the internal condition of the tree.

08.10.24 Report from Andrew gale attached.

07.08.25 More fruiting bodies buf foliage looks healthy. Degraded ffb (not Ganoderma) found around tree. Continue with inspection cycle