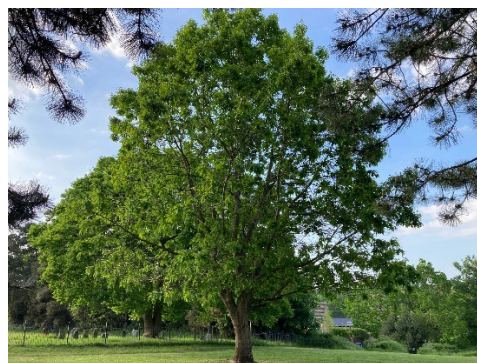


The Woodbridge town monument for Peace

I have been greatly lifted in recent months by the emergence of a civic interest in this monument. Agreed in 2017 by the town council, it is a commanding, mature tree on the town's popular Kingston Field. Its title, displayed on a nearby bench, is *Woodbridge Tree for Peace 2017 – inspired by the Quaker Peace testimony*.



2017



2021

Fresh interest was stirred by a photograph of the tree on the mayor's official 2020 Christmas card. Wishing the monument to become more widely known and more fully understood, the council has recently agreed to extend the monument by the dedication of a second tree as the *Woodbridge Tree for Peace 2021*.

The title distinguishes these two trees from 'peace trees' of the memorial sort, ceremoniously planted to lock a major event into our civic memory. Rather, these trees look forward as symbols of a hope; solid symbols of the otherwise abstract idea and fragile condition that we call 'peace'. A poem¹ written about the tree by Kate Foley in 2017 captures their character through its personification; these trees have feelings, generosity and potency as teachers. They are 'for peace' in the same way that fans might be 'for football' or 'for' their current celebrity idol.

To widen public knowledge and understanding of the monument, the plan is to publish simple ways in which people might engage with it actively, initially by following a walking trail between the two trees. A map and explanation of what can be seen on the trail could zoom in on its opportunities for building our inner peace, on its illustrations of the helpful impact of human co-operation or the importance of respect for the natural environment, and on where it can challenge or awaken personal aptitudes and skills that contribute to peace - for example our listening and communication, and our capacity for compassion, empathy or forgiveness.

The council wishes there to be quite soon* a formal ceremony of dedication for the monument. Taking the vision further from that, a website is being established - to provide further information, to invite responses to the monument, and to become a platform for peace education. Importantly, other activities could engage schools and other community youth groups; the young, after all, have more to gain from deeper peace than have most reading these words.

News of this project generally meets with interest because of the personal and community health and well-being benefits that it offers, of the backing of the town council and, not least, of its focus on a world issue. And unlike the well-resourced monuments and trails for peace in large cities, this is

¹The poem can be found at the end of this article

a monument that could be replicated and provide the same benefits at modest cost in many smaller communities.

These Trees for Peace form a town monument for all. There is therefore a place for many hands and voices in shaping the monument's detail and development. If you are interested by this prospect I will be glad to talk about it, and specially happy to receive practical suggestions and offers of help to make it a reality.

* It has now been agreed that this ceremony will take place:

When? At 2.00pm on Tuesday 21 September the UN International Day for Peace

Where? At the Tree for Peace on Kingston Field,
close to the junction of Kingston Farm Road and Westholme Close IP12 4BD,
or more precisely in What3Words clock watch piglets

In peace

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Mobile 07891 401420

TREE FOR PEACE *Woodbridge 2017*

Do you mind being a symbol,
you, whose self, so much your self,

signals to sky that you're there, ready
to help the weather?

Should I, perhaps, call you 'city' since
you host colonies of creatures?

Fungi, mosses, creepers and winged
migrants lodge deep in your skin.

Your roots are like urban motorways
for countless lives to travel,

and your branches
are live with birds.

But you speak a language
all your own,

and teacher of such shared delight,
now we understand how peace may grow

from the gracious spaces
of your silence.

Kate Foley

October 2017