

RIP Dallington Forest 'PoW' Tree

Our PoW Tree is fallen. Known locally as the 'PoW Tree' this was a veteran pollarded Beech tree, probably around 250 years old. Much of the interior of the trunk's base had been hollowed-out by fungi, and the opinion of an experienced arborist was that the trunk would fail catastrophically within the next few years – he was right.



Sometime between 11th and 17th December this veteran tree succumbed to time, rot and the elements.

The tree got its name from graffiti carved on its trunk some 3 m off the ground (now on the ground). The inscription (presumably by a prisoner of war from Cologne, Germany) reads: -

TB
KÖLN
1946
P.O.W.

There was a German Prisoner of War Working Camp GPWW 145 situated at Normanhurst Court, Battle, less than 10 miles away, continuing to hold prisoners until 1948.

I understand that the Normanhurst PoW camp supplied labour to the Gypsum Mines at Mountfield and, at the time, much of Dallington Forest was under the management of the Mine. It is not inconceivable that parties of PoWs would have been employed as foresters and, perhaps during a lunch break, one of them climbed the tree to leave his indelible mark for the next 72 years.

Now that the graffiti is at ground level, wouldn't it be wonderful to have a bark rubbing done of the inscription that could be framed and displayed together with information about the tree and the inscriber in the Brightling and Dallington Village Halls?

Help from amateur (or professional) archivist and historians would be very welcome to research such records as exist of the Normanhurst Court PoW camp, its occupants and the Gypsum Mine and its management so that we can add more of the human dimension to the history of this tree.

If you can help please contact Doug Edworthy, Brightling & Dallington Tree Warden at treewarden@dallington.org.uk

Doug Edworthy
Tree Warden, Brightling & Dallington Parishes
Dallington Forest Project