

# OUR VILLAGE TREES: 1

The first mention in SAL of the trees in our village is within Mick Clist's Nature Notes of September 1975, on the devastating spread of Dutch Elm Disease. Tragically this disease was due to logs being imported illegally, without being de-barked. As Roderick Nicholson explained, a bark beetle carries fungal spores from one elm to another and this fungus blocks the sap flow within the tree. Steeple Aston lost all its elms, notably at Grange Park, during the summer of 1976.

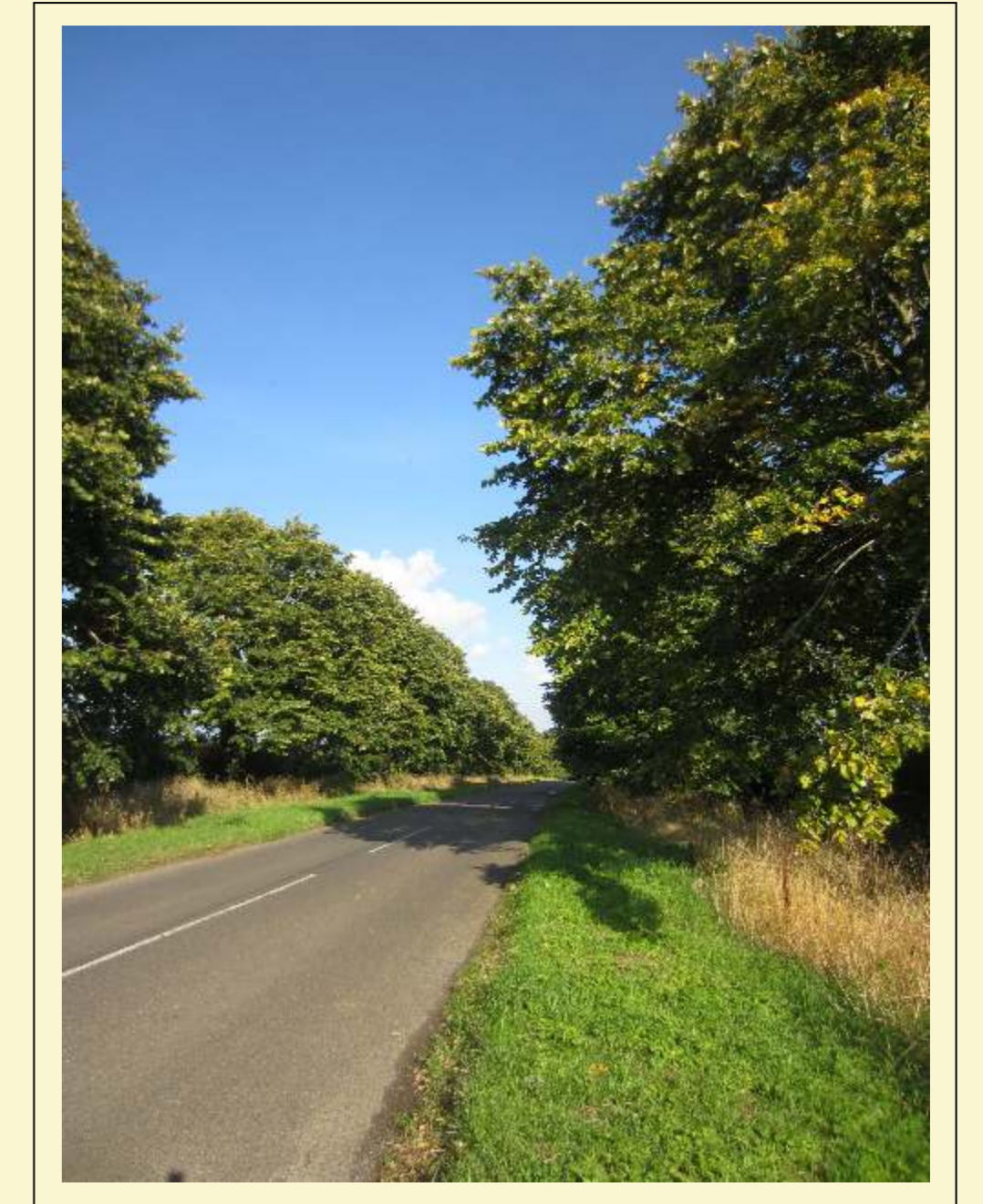
With the elms being wiped out and many beech trees also being lost through the drought of 1976 a 'tree committee' was set up, spearheaded by Paul O'Sullivan and Roderick Nicholson. The committee hoped to plant 250 trees and needed to raise £840. In 1977 their plans won the first prize of £100 awarded by the Campaign to Protect Rural England and there was also a grant from the Countryside commission. Donations from the village included contributions from the Jubilee Fund, the church fete and the Horticultural Society as well as individual gifts, and importantly, voluntary labour. The planting was ready to go ahead by the end of the year. Many varieties of trees were selected, planted, tended and replaced over the following months and indeed years.



*An elm tree in good health, not to be seen today.*



*Beech trees were planted from Nizewell Head to meet up with The Beeches Hill. Sadly, during the 1978 drought, many perished despite watering parties being organised. The recommendation was to apply 5 gallons per tree once a fortnight.*



*The Silver Limes were planted in the Spring of 1978 to commemorate the Queen's Silver Jubilee. Many have had to be replaced but with much care and expertise they form the avenue to our village today.*

**Jubilee trees**

Mr Paul O'Sullivan, chairman of the Steeple Aston Tree Planting Committee, plants the first of over 100 trees to commemorate the Queen's Silver Jubilee in the village.

The first few young trees were planted on Thursday.

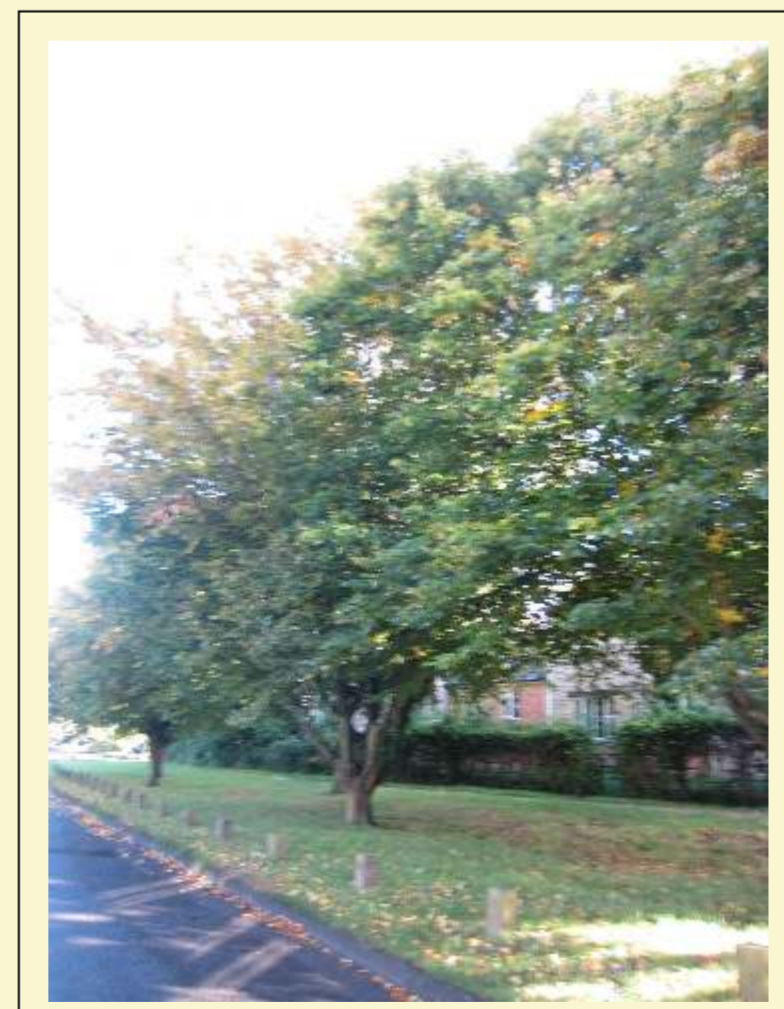
on the roadside near the White Lion public house. The village jubilee committee and tree planting committee worked together to raise money to buy the trees. They will all be planted in the village - mainly in the South Street and Heyford Road areas.

A prize of £100 was recently awarded to the village by the Council for the Protection of Rural England, for one of the best tree planting plans.

Of this, £50 was spent on the trees, and £50 will be kept until the tree-planting scheme is well under way.

*29<sup>th</sup> December 1977. Hornbeams and Whitebeams were planted from the War Memorial towards the White Lion.*

*Both young and old turned out to help. 80 - 90 people completed the planting in an hour.*



*And just look how they've grown. As they were planted before the days of the Lawrence Fields development their eventual height did not have to be taken into consideration. One hornbeam in particular is excellent for climbing. Children's voices can often be heard within its foliage.*



*As part of the Spring 1978 planting plan, 54 trees were planted on the school's top field. Only one withered and died. The photo above shows the field in the early '70s with the school sheep mowing the grass and a sparse row of trees beyond. The one below shows the spinney today. This feature has been a great asset to the school, especially as the curriculum for reception and infant classes now has to include "Forest School" for young children to study woodland areas. The vast majority of schools have to hire buses to achieve this.*

