

August 2019



**Figure 1: *Magnolia obovata* leaf**

Along with mowing, strimming and weeding this month, we continued with ‘unestablished checks’ in section 29 to the right of the concert field. Trees of note in this area are the *Acer pentaphyllum*, *Magnolia obovata* and *Abies nordmanniana*. The first is extremely rare and limited to four small populations in the Sichuan province of China, and three of these are threatened by either dam or highway construction. The skeletal skins of decaying *M. obovata* leaves were a striking find and while it is classed as ‘of least concern’, its mixed forest habitat is in decline in its range from the Russian Kuril islands to Japan.

At the start of the month I helped Mitch at Forestry England's sites in Thames Chase with the brush cutting of a fire break between recently planted woodland and residential areas. Covering almost 10,000 hectares over 47 sites, Thames Chase is an important network of multi-purpose (mostly broad leaf) forest in one of the most densely populated areas of the country. Since its establishment in 1990, 1.3

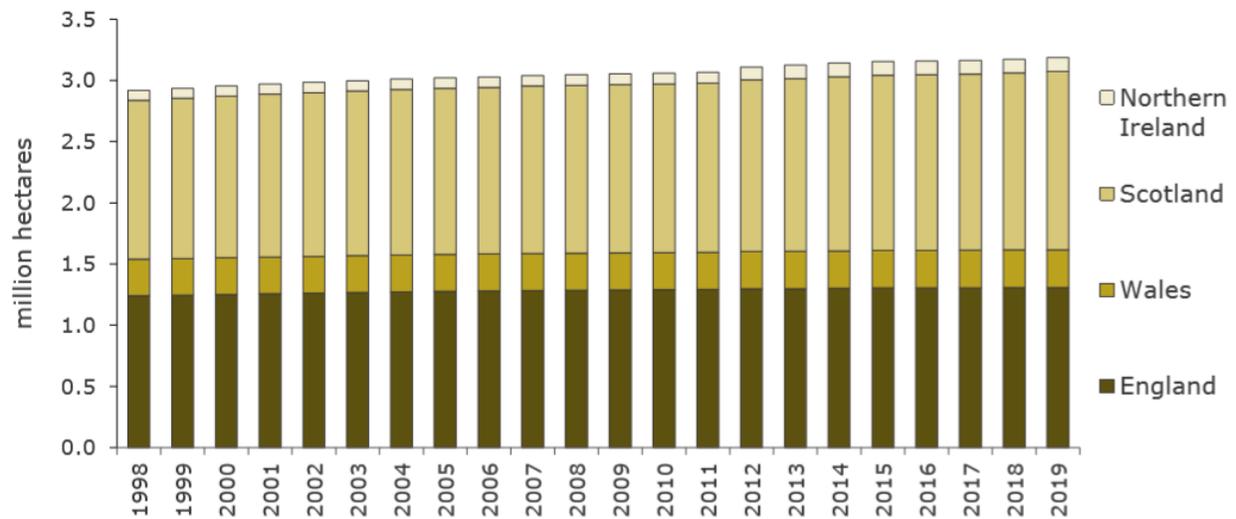


**Figure 2: Before brush-cutting**



**Figure 3: Fire-break cleared**

million trees have been planted increasing woodland from 8% to 12% of the total area with the aim of 30% by 2030. Forestry England plays a vital role in land acquisition with the land reclamation sector an



**Figure 4: Area of woodland, 1998-2019 Source: Forestry Commission, Forestry England, Scottish Forestry, Forestry and Land Scotland, Natural Resource Wales, Forest Service, National Forest Inventory**

important source to help achieve these goals. The area we were working on was once landfill but was planted with trees by the Forestry Commission; it is now a busy hub of recreational activity and biodiversity. Areas such as Thames Chase are vital if England is to achieve its goal of increasing woodland cover from the current 10% to 13% by 2060 especially as it has risen by only half a per cent since 1998.



**Figure 5: Phil laying cardboard mulch**

while remaining within in Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) parameters. This ensures that Forestry England continues to produce sustainable timber.

Meanwhile, in the Bedgebury Pinetum Visitor Centre beds we started underlaying mulch with cardboard collected from around the site. As well as being great for in-house recycling, it will also act as a stronger weed suppressor therefore lessening the amount of maintenance required.

In August I also attended a tariffing course in Cannock to learn the methods of measuring the volume of standing and roadside timber. Battling through brambles to sample plots using clinometers, girth tapes and relosopes, we assessed diameter at breast height and top height of pine. Later, through some heavy arithmetic we were able to get an accurate gauge of the amount of timber present and therefore how much could be harvested