MULBERRY

Vicky Schilling bursary

Final Report

Peter Coles

2021-2023

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Special thanks also to David Shreeve, Director and co-founder of the Conservation Foundation, who has continued to support Morus Londinium, the project we started together in 2016, despite the absence of funding since 2018. Several of TROBI's mulberry entries originated from the public via this project – and one of my tasks has been to verify as many as I could. This vast work continues (there are bout 1000 entries to verify).

To all those associated with TROBI, who know so much more about trees, ancient and modern, than I do, I hope you will forgive any errors or omissions. The Vicky Schilling Bursary has enabled me to range wider than I might have in recording old Mulberry trees, and has encouraged me to be more comprehensive in my note taking – I'm even learning to draw trees! The work isn't finished, and updating TROBI's mulberry entries will continue to be part of my routine going forward.

Preface

I think I'd never knowingly encountered a mulberry tree until I moved into a rented flat in Oxford in my twenties and discovered one in the garden by the back door. The next encounter was twenty years later in the Ardèche region of southern France – a solitary, black-fruited mulberry on a bend in a mountain road, left over from centuries of silkworm cultivation. Another 15 years went by until I came across my first ancient Mulberry in the UK. I was teaching a workshop on the 'urban biosphere' at Goldsmiths, University of London, planning a guided walk for graduate students around Deptford, south-east London. That's when I discovered the Sayes Court Black Mulberry, collapsed and caged like a giant octopus in a little park, surrounded by housing estates and brownfield sites, a short distance from the Thames. I wanted to know why it was there.

My research on the history of this tree led to the discovery of others and, five years later, in 2016 – in collaboration with the Conservation Foundation and support from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) – the *Morus Londinium* project was born, to research, document and preserve London's mulberry tree heritage. With members of the public sending in details of mulberry trees, we mapped around 400 trees in a couple of years.

When, in 2018, the HLF funding ran out. I kept the project going as a volunteer, with modest proceeds from guided walks and talks and web hosting donated by the Conservation Foundation. The Vicky Schilling Bursary, then, has been a very timely lifeline for the past two years in terms of finding and recording new mulberry trees with character. Recording for TROBI has added a rigour which was sometimes lacking in some of the Morus Londinium records, which were often contributed by citizens with little or no experience.

As well as verifying mulberry trees already in the Tree Register, the Bursary has enabled me to get back on the road, searching for unrecorded old mulberries, and verifying some that I'd only seen in photos, or heard about by word of mouth. It has also given me the opportunity to range beyond the M25 and, importantly, to photograph these trees. As a long-standing tree photographer, one of my other contributions to TROBI, with the aid of the Bursary, has been to add a visual record of as many *Morus* entries as possible, using my personal archive as well as making new photos. This is a task I will continue into the future.

Executive Summary

Mulberries (the *Morus* species) arrived in the British Isles (at least as seeds) with the Romans (AD 43-410). There was a second, limited 'wave' in the Middle Ages, with Black mulberries (*Morus nigra*) grown for shade and medicinal purposes in the infirmary gardens of monasteries. The watershed for the introduction of the species, though, was in the 17th century, following a project by the Stuart King, James VI & I, to pioneer a home-grown silk industry. This required importing and planting tens of thousands of mulberry trees to feed silkworms.

The project failed, but has left a legacy of trees, some of which survive in the gardens of Elizabethan and Jacobean houses today – as well as some Cambridge and Oxford Colleges that bought into James I's project and planted mulberries for silk (see Annexe).

The Charlton House mulberry (photographed here in 2023) probably dates to around 1611 as an ornamental tree

By the 18th century, mulberries had become readily available in tree nurseries. As a result, several 250-300 year-old trees, often maidens with low branches extending in all directions, can be found, such as those hidden in the gardens of regency houses in Chiswick and Strand-on-the-Green.

This majestic Black mulberry belonging to College House, is one of several of similar dimensions on Chiswick Mall (right), and the only one visible from the street, (recorded in 2022).

The species received a further boost as a fashionable garden tree for the new Victorian

urban middle classes, with the publication of landscape gardener John Claudius Loudon's influential *The Suburban Gardener* (1838).

Most of the veteran mulberries in Britain are tucked out of sight – like this fine old mulberry hidden in a private garden in Sidcup, recorded with the aid of the Bursary in December 2021.

Medieval mulberries?

While no Roman mulberries survive, there is always a hope of finding phoenix regenerations or scions of mulberries that can trace their origins back to medieval monasteries, mostly destroyed or seized in the reign of Henry VIII. The private orchard behind Syon House – a former 15th c Bridgettine Abbey – is one such example, discussed in Chapter 5, with a couple of extraordinary trees that may date, if not from monastery times, then perhaps from William Turner's stint as gardener around 1548. The Bursary enabled me to return several times to this unique (private) site, which belongs to the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland, documenting it in some detail as part of a continuing project to trace the true origin of these trees and to preserve the orchard.

A corner of the 400 year-old private mulberry orchard at Syon House

Like other truly old Black mulberries, these tangled, massively layering, dendrological wonders can be hard to record in a meaningful way. Height and girth no longer have the same linear relationship to age as for a maiden or pollard. I have probably spent as much time clambering between the splayed stems and branches of collapsed and layering old mulberry trees than taking conventional girth and height measurements.

The Cambridge University mulberries

Thanks to the Bursary, I was able to establish the likely origin of ancient mulberries in Cambridge University colleges. Four of them – Christ's, Jesus, Corpus Christi and Emmanuel – bought 300 mulberry saplings each from King James VI & I's agents, who were promoting his (short-lived) silkworm project. Accompanied by seasoned recorder David Alderman and local historian Nick Chrimes, we were able to record these trees for TROBI. I was also, subsequently, able to return at different times of the year to photograph them and research their provenance in the College archives. With the lower stem(s) of Christ's (or *Milton's*) mulberry buried in a high mount since the 1850s, it is not possible to determine its girth. However, with the aid of the Bursary I was able to explore handwritten accounts in the College archives and trace its origin to 1609 or thereabouts, as are the collapsed trees in Jesus and Corpus Christi.

Author's sketch of the Milton mulberry at Christ's College (2022)

Another Bursary discovery was that nearby Pembroke College also purchased mulberries in 1609, which also had a mounded sole survivor until it died and was replaced with a scion in the 1970s (see Annexe).

A few favourites

With the aid of the Bursary I was able to drive out to a couple of old Mulberries I'd read about that had belonged to famous people – Charles Darwin at **Down House** (Kent) and William Morris at **Kelmscott Manor** (Oxfordshire). Both trees are leaning, but have not yet keeled over, as they will one day. Both are being well looked after and both are beautiful trees in early decline. Darwin's tree has been described by his grandchildren and drawn by one of them, the woodcut artist Gwen Raverat. Meanwhile, a bonus of my visit to Kelmscott Manor was the discovery of an unrecorded mature White mulberry (*M. alba*), one of the few mature examples of the species I have found.

Down House mulberry

Kelmscott Manor mulberry

Another favourite has to be a 'champion' by default, even though it is not yet a century old. The **Kensington Roof Garden Mulberry**, planted around 1938, is unashamedly urban and (I think) the highest, if not the only roof garden mulberry, possibly anywhere in Britain. It's setting, 100 feet above Kensington High Street, next to a little stream and around the corner from a mini-replica of the Alhambra Gardens, is priceless. Unfortunately the Roof Garden has remained closed to the public since 2018, so I had to get special permission to visit.

A few new discoveries

Finding a 'new' old Mulberry is a rare delight. Paul Wood – street-tree guru, friend and co-founder of the Urban Tree Festival (along with myself, Andrew Stuck and Mel Sutton) – put me on to two really splendid veteran Black Mulberries. Both are probably early 19th or late 18th century. The first is on the edge of a car park at **St John's Abbey Gate** in Colchester: multi-stemmed, layering and straining to escape from its mound and metal fence. Not easy, as usual, to take any meaningful measurements and quite a challenge to photograph.

Finally, even as I was writing this report, I travelled out to **West Ham Park** to see and record another Paul Wood recommendation. I spent a good hour straddling its drooping branches, measuring and trying to find the best angle to photograph it from.

West Ham park mulberry recorded in 2023 – possibly early 19th c.

There are of course many others, especially those outside the M25, that the Bursary has enabled me to travel to. Deserving a mention is another collapsed (though not so old) *M. nigra* in the Grove Deer Park at **Magdalen College, Oxford** – which had escaped my attention during previous surveys of Oxford mulberries. Another breakthrough, long on my list but inaccessible, was to be invited to see remains of 'Tudor mulberry trees' that were said to still stand in what were once the grounds of King Henry VIII's manor in **Cheyne Mews**, Chelsea. It was an anti-climax though, as they'd all been grubbed out to make way for a tennis court. All that remains is a single phoenix stem, regularly crown-reduced and competing with the mesh fence (see p.56).

Part of my original plan for the Bursary was to explore East Anglia's mulberries. I was rather slow in getting any further than Cambridge, but in 2022 and this year (2023) I finally made it – not only to Colchester, but also to nearby Sudbury, which boasts a fine sprawling mulberry at **Gainsborough's House** and a very nice 19th century tree in **Belle Vue Park**, down the road. I will be continuing to explore this part of the country, though without the luxury of the Bursary, but will be adding my finds to TROBI, even though I'm handing on the Vicky Schilling baton.

Chapter 1. The search for ancient mulberries

When we think of Mulberry trees (genus *Morus*) in the British Isles we are likely to have in mind the Black Mulberry (*Morus nigra*). This is by far the most common species in the UK, although 'common' is a misnomer for a tree that is, statistically, rare here. First Introduced 2,000 years ago, the Black Mulberry rarely self-seeds and does not hybridize. Almost all mature trees were deliberately planted and those over 250 years old (when the White Mulberry – *Morus alba* – first began to appear in botanic gardens) will inevitably be Black.

*Stump of a 2,000 year-old Ogasawara mulberry (*M. boninensis*) in Japan*

While trees in the *Morus* genus can be long-lived – there are living specimens of *Morus boninensis* over 1,000 years old in the Ogasawara Islands of Japan and relics of trees twice that age – Britain's mulberries (*sp*) will rarely be over 400 years old, for multiple reasons. That said, Black mulberries in early maturity tend to look older than their years and have fooled many a tree recorder, including TROBI's co-founder, Alan Mitchell, himself, who, in 1967 noted that what turned out to be a 64-year-old *M. nigra* in East Bergholt Place, Manningtree, Suffolk, had all the characteristics of a 300 year-old tree (remeasured in 2023 by David Alderman as having a gIrth of 246 cm at 0.5m – the tree is now 120 years old).

Roman mulberries

M. nigra has been in cultivation for so long that it is not possible to be sure where it originated, and no specimens are found growing wild today. Most authors believe its original home was in the former Persian Empire, including modern day Iran, Syria and Turkey, the Caucasus and around the Caspian Sea. If not indigenous, it has been naturalised in central and southern Italy for well over 2000 years. The species was described in detail by the Roman natural philosopher, Pliny the Elder (AD 23-79), and was already established around Naples in the 1st century AD. Indeed, it was the Romans who first introduced the Black Mulberry to England in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, at the beginning of their four-hundred-year occupation.

Although Mulberries were a favourite garden tree in temperate Rome, we have no firm proof that Roman colonisers planted and grew Mulberry trees in Britain, as we only have archaeobotanical evidence of (mineralised) *M. nigra* seeds found at various sites, including Londinium's New Fresh Wharf, part of the Roman port next to the first (wooden) bridge over the Thames – where St Magnus the Martyr church stands today – and at Silchester

(Hampshire). It should be remembered that the 'Romans' who occupied Britain had mixed origins, including Syrians and North Africans, who may have been familiar with the Mulberry at home.

If Black Mulberry trees were cultivated in Roman times, it would have been for their fruit, shade, ornamental beauty, and reputed medicinal value. England was a lot warmer then than now, of course. Elsewhere in Roman-occupied Europe there is some support for the popular idea that mulberries were sometimes grown in garrisons to sustain troops, but this is not the case, as far as we know, in England. Rather, mulberries would have been a luxury for a rich few, living in villas in or near urban areas.

We also have no evidence that any Mulberry trees planted by the Romans continued to be propagated after they left in 410. This is in contrast to other tree species they introduced, like walnuts, sweet chestnut and figs. This makes it even less likely that descendants of any original Roman mulberries will be found here – but who knows?

Medieval mulberries

The Middle Ages are indeed Dark when it comes to mulberries. There are references to *Morbeam* in Anglo-Saxon literature, *murrey* (a purple colour) in Old English, and to the Mulberry in records of medieval monasteries, both here and in France, where they were grown in infirmary gardens, although there was some confusion between the blackberry and the mulberry in medieval records.The Dissolution of the Monasteries (1536-41) by King Henry VIII and his Chief Minister, Thomas Cromwell, interrupted the continuity of these gardens and compromised hopes of finding medieval mulberries on these sites today. As we shall see, Syon House, a former 15th century Bridgettine monastery, may be one of the exceptions.

We know that at least one Black Mulberry tree was growing in Greenwich Palace (Placentia) in Elizabeth I's reign (1558-1603), as she had a 'fair seat' made to fit around its trunk. The Elizabethan poet Thomas Moffett wrote a poem about *The Silkwormes and their Flies* (1599), in which he mentions mulberries (for silk) and, of course, Shakespeare refers to them in a couple of his plays (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* [1595] and *Coriolanus* [1607]) and had one at his home in Stratford-upon-Avon, where a scion still grows today.

In a search for ancient mulberries for TROBI, then, we might hold out some hope of finding 16th and even 15th century trees.

Local residents, for example, claim that a collapsed, layering tree in Groton, Suffolk (left) was planted around 1550. There is a similar, possibly even older, recumbent *M. nigra* in a private garden in nearby Edwardstone, which I measured with a girth of 280 cm in 2018.

The White Mulberry

White Mulberry trees (*Morus alba*) are still relatively rare in Britain, though are increasingly being planted as street and ornamental trees. This is often a surprise to visitors from the USA where the species is considered an invasive, alien weed, threatening the native Red Mulberry (*Morus rubra*) with extinction through hybridization and colonization of its traditional habitat. It was first introduced to Virginia in the mid-17th century to support a colonial silk industry under James I and his successors.

Morus alba is native to East Asia (China, Korea, Japan and throughout the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains) and has been cultivated in China for its leaves – to feed silkworms – at least since late Neolithic times (around 2700 BC). The 'secret of silk' finally reached Europe via Central Asia and sea routes 500 years before the White Mulberry – the natural host of the wild *Bombyx* silkworm – was first planted around the Mediterranean, in the early 15th century. Before then, and contrary to 'wrong mulberry' myths, the European and medieval Persian raw silk industries used the leaves of local Black Mulberry trees (native or introduced) to feed silkworms.

White mulberries – of which there are dozens of varieties and cultivars[1] – grow quickly and can better tolerate being stripped of their leaves every year to feed silkworms. Although most taxa, paradoxically, have black fruit (only a few have pink/white berries), these tend not to drop and create a purple mess, like the fruit of *M. nigra*. Some urban councils will only plant males as street trees, as they are nice to look at but bear no fruit.

The only genuinely old White Mulberry I have seen is the splendid specimen in the Oxford Botanic Garden, thought to have been planted when the Garden was rearranged in the 1780s. For this reason, although I have recorded White Mulberries in this study, and TROBI has nearly 200 entries in its internal database, this species has not been my main focus – and I have not expected to find any very old or unusually large examples.

Morus alba *in the Oxford Botanic Garden, the oldest specimen in Britain?*

Interestingly, where we have documentary evidence that White Mulberries were (or at least should have been) planted in England for sericulture, alongside Black, in the 17th and 18th centuries (and therefore could expect to find ancient specimens today), only *M. nigra* have survived. This suggests that either White Mulberries are less long-lived here (and have

[1] See Tom Christian and Peter Coles: revised *Morus* entry for Trees and Shrubs Online: https://www.treesandshrubsonline.org/articles/morus/

simply died of old age), or that they were less valued and grubbed out – or, improbably, that there was a French conspiracy to supply the 'wrong' (i.e. Black) species to scupper James I's venture(see below).

Mulberry watershed

As is well known, a few years after coming to the English throne in 1603, King James VI & I (hereafter James I) tried to create the conditions for producing raw silk in the British Isles. His inspiration was Henri IV of France, who was promoting a massive expansion of mulberry sericulture (producing raw silk thread from silkworms fed on mulberry leaves), championed by the celebrated Huguenot agronomist, Olivier de Serres. Previously based on Black mulberries grown in terraces in the Cévennes, Ardèche, Comtat Venaisan and as far north as the Loire Valley, by the early 17th century it was the White Mulberry that was being planted in vast numbers. Some 15,000 were planted in the Tuileries gardens of the Louvre Palace in Paris, as well as in palaces around the city and, of course in regions where Black mulberries were already growing (a large area centred on the silk-throwing and weaving city of Lyon).

James I appointed a state official, William Stallenge, to oversee the task of starting an English silk industry to rival Henri IV's. Hundreds of thousands of mulberry saplings were apparently imported (the quantity may have been exaggerated) from France and the Netherlands to be planted on the estates of wealthy landowners, as well as Cambridge and Oxford Colleges. The royal palaces (St James's, Greenwich, Theobald's, Oatlands), as well as Charlton House, set the example, with extensive Mulberry Gardens.

(Left) 17th c Black mulberry in Jesus College, Cambridge

As we also know, the project failed within James's reign on English soil (but not in Virginia), although Charles II did try to give it new impetus in the late 17th century. This is probably not, as is so often claimed, because William Stallenge imported the "wrong mulberries" (*M. nigra*), as he had patents to import and plant only White Mulberries. Some sceptics say the French suppliers tricked him and sold *M. nigra* saplings – but even if true this is unlikely to be the reason for the failure of the project. Indeed, silkworms will readily feed on the leaves of the Black Mulberry (and even lettuce at a pinch), and this species, as we have ample proof around us, grows well in our cool, damp climate – perhaps better than *M. alba*.

More likely, it is the fickle silkworm, *Bombyx mori* that failed to thrive in the Little Ice Age (14th-19th centuries) in Europe, when the Thames froze over multiple times – including in 1608 when James I sent out his letter requesting landowners to plant mulberries to feed silkworms. If silkworms don't hatch just when the first young mulberry leaves appear, they will probably die. They will also die if too cold, or if they are fed wet leaves. English landowners and their labourers had no experience of raising silkworms, let alone cultivating plantations of mulberry trees and harvesting their leaves twice a day. Little wonder the venture flopped.

The failure of the project did, though, leave a legacy of Black Mulberry trees throughout the country, several of which survive today. As John-Claudius Loudon wrote in 1838:

> *"There is scarcely an old garden or gentleman's seat throughout the country, which can be traced back to the seventeenth century, in which a mulberry tree is not to be found."*

This offers a vital clue on where to look for potential champion mulberry trees. Mulberries became fashionable in 17th c society, so there's a good chance that a Jacobean (or earlier) mansion will have a mulberry tree – and a good chance that, if it does, an old tree could plausibly be 17th century, provided that other signs are present. The corollary of this is that, unless an old mulberry has a Jacobean (or earlier) connection, it's unlikely to be that old.

Black Mulberry in the grounds of Charlton House, completed in 1611

Victorian boom

The 18th and particularly the 19th centuries saw a burgeoning of overseas exploration, with naturalists discovering new species and sending samples to be grown in nurseries, arboreta and botanic gardens in the British Isles. Several of these sites (like Kew) now have fine examples of *Morus* species, including the more exotic species like *M. cathayana*, *M. mongolica*, *M. rubra* and *M. papyrifera* (now reclassified as *Broussonetia papyrifera*).

The Victorian era also saw other forms of burgeoning – of the middle class, on the one hand and of urban sprawl on the other, with the expansion of public railways and the creation of suburbia, with its houses and large gardens. From a TROBI recorder's viewpoint, this is quite a fertile vein for exploration.

With a rising demand for family housing, the owners of large estates were content to sell off parcels of land for development. Sometimes, these had already old or at least mature trees, including mulberries. All of Chelsea's old mulberries fall into this category, for example, some with historic connections to the 16th c.

M. nigra*: sole survivor (?) of 2,000 White and Black Mulberries in the Raw Silk Company's silk farm (1720-23) in what used to be Chelsea Park, sold off in the early 19th c for development.*

Another example would be the three or four old Black Mulberries in Streatham Park, all once within the perimeter of the Thrale family's 18th c estate.

One of three (originally four) aligned Black mulberries within the perimeter of the now developed 18th century Streatham Park estate of the Thrale family mansion.

In time, the first generation of very large mansions built on these large estates (or farmland) were further sold off as parcels for new suburban houses, of varying sizes. The majority of today's veteran mulberries – even those that have collapsed and started layering – are going to be 19th century, notably Victorian, or Edwardian.

Loudon's suburban garden guide

In 1838 John Claudius Loudon published his *Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion*, which became a kind of bible for the middle class amateur horticulturalist and 'landowner', even if the 'land' was a 90-foot garden. Snobbery just oozes off the page – it's not even masked – but it does give us valuable insight into why so many (relatively speaking) of today's veteran mulberries are found in the gardens of 19th century private houses.

Loudon's classification of villas and suburban houses and their gardens

"First-rate Gardens: […] all those which have a lawn and pleasure-ground, and also a park or farm, […] the extent of the grounds may be from ten acres upwards.
Second-rate gardens: […] those in which the house stands at some distance from the entrance gate, but to which there is no park or farm attached. These residences have a pleasure ground, a walled kitchen garden, and stable offices; And their extent may be from 2 acres upwards.
Third rate gardens: such as have the house at some distance from the entrance gate but in which the lawn, pleasure ground, and kitchen garden are combined; And they may be an acre or more in extent.
Fourth rate gardens: those in which the house forms part of a street or row; and their extent may be from one perch to an acre.

The first three of these classes may be considered as villa gardens and the gardens of street houses and cottage gardens are included in the fourth.

In Chapter III of his *Companion* Loudon gives his recommendations for trees to be planted in the front and rear gardens of different sizes of property. Surprisingly, the Black Mulberry – which by the mid-19th century could easily be found in large nurseries, like Loddiges in Hackney – features as one of his trees of choice. He only mentions the White Mulberry in an annexe on sericulture experiments for large estates.

M. nigra *in the kitchen garden of Kenwood House, which Loudon gives as an example of a typical 'mansion'*

For a *fourth-rate house* (i.e. on a street with a little front garden and a long and narrow rear garden) says Loudon, "place a few low-flowering trees, or fruit trees, placing them along the

centre of the lawn, that they may not interfere with the walks, along the lawn side of which clothes-lines will probably occasionally be placed." The tree nearest the house, he continues, should be a double-blossomed hawthorn, then *Pirus spectabilis* (Siberian crab). Third is a perfumed cherry or almond or cotoneaster. Finally, *"the next tree may be a mulberry, which thrives and bears abundantly in the very heart of London, and which should always be planted on grass; because, as the fruit drops the moment it is ripe, it can be picked up clean for use, which it cannot if it falls on dug ground or gravel.*"

For a *second-rate house* the Black Mulberry is listed as 185th out of 218 tree species Loudon recommends, to be planted around the paddock, alongside Beech, many kinds of Oak and, interestingly, *Broussonetia papyrifera*.

M. nigra *(left) on the site of a Victorian London villa in St John's Wood, London (right), now replaced by the flats visible behind the tree*

Loudon may have boosted a fashion in Victorian middle class society for planting mulberries. However, Black mulberries are quite slow-growing and take around 15 years before they produce fruit.

Allan Mitchell was convinced that Victorians often planted mulberries as *truncheons* – sawn lengths of living branches about a metre long taken from a mature tree. These would grow much faster, but also age more rapidly, looking like centenarians when they were forty years old. This, he explained could be a significant deception for the ancient mulberry tree recorder (see the author's article in the TROBI Newsletter, 2023, included here as an annexe).

20th century mulberries

Many of the old-looking Black Mulberries in urban areas are likely to be late Victorian or 20th century. The row of Black Mulberries against the west wall of Kensington Gardens are

examples, (as is the row of much younger White Mulberries opposite them). The Middle Temple Mulberries in Fountain Court (London) are probably early Edwardian.

Black Mulberry, Trinity College, Oxford

The Black Mulberry in SW London's Kensington Roof Garden dates from the 1930s. The three Black Mulberries in St James's Park might be of similar age. Balliol College, Oxford boasts a 1608/9 *M. nigra* relic, but also has at least two scions of it, one planted by Queen Mary in 1921.

Black mulberry scion in Balliol College Oxford, planted in 1921, a scion of a 17th c tree

Disappeared mulberries

In the past decade I have seen a number of venerable Black Mulberry trees disappear from the Greater London area where I live. Some have succumbed through development, despite Tree Preservation Orders and public protest, others through senescence, perhaps aided by

clambering children. A. D. Webster, in his *London Trees* (1920), records a number of veteran mulberry trees (*M. nigra*) that would have been 100-200 years old at the time and 200-300 years old today, i.e. planted in the early 1700s. Most of these have now disappeared, but photos exist of some of them.

Waterlow Park

> *"The fine Mulberry Tree, though old and decrepit, is yet making a brave stand for existence, and should with care exist for many a year. […] The old Mulberry tree, which is semi-recumbent, is in a healthy state, the curiously irregular stem being about 2 1/2 feet in diameter and the branch spread 27 feet.*

Vauxhall Park

> *[…] the irregular shaped stem of [the Mulberry], girth, 6'5" at 2 feet from the ground. It has a good spreading head, the main stem, which is 30 feet having been divided into two trunks at about a height of 4 feet.*

Ruskin Park.

> *There are quite a number of ancient mulberry trees, one of the largest being 40 feet in height, with a stem girthing 6'7" at a yard from the ground.*

Finsbury Circus

> *Some of the largest and healthiest Mulberry trees in the city are those in Finsbury Circus, the stems of which are unusually clean, one of the largest girthing 39 inches at a yard up, the branch spread extending to 27 feet.*

Arbour Square.

> *Amongst the most remarkable trees in this eastern garden are two 90-year-old specimens of the Mulberry, the larger being about 30 feet in height, 32 feet in spread of branches, and 3'2" in girth of stem at 3 feet from the ground.*

Mildmay Park

Here is one of the largest and by far the healthiest and farthest spreading of London, Mulberry Trees. It is of giant proportions, the stem girthing, at 3 feet and 5 feet from ground level, 6'4" in 6'8", respectively, the branch spread being 60 feet and the height, 30 feet.

Tavistock Place

Here is a mulberry that was planted by Charles Dickens when he lived in 19A, Tavistock Place, the house at present, being the offices of the theosophical society. This interesting tree is now 32 feet high. The branch spread being 27 feet. Stem girths, 2'7" at a yard from the ground, and is of irregular thickness, the girth at 6 feet, owing to stem protuberances, being greater than that recorded – a trait common to the mulberry. Several years ago, the tree was partially uprooted, but it was again, placed in as erect a position as possible and supported by a stout prop.

Dean's Yard, Westminster

In the grounds of No. 36, there is a Mulberry of goodly dimensions, though growing in a rather dark and cramped position. The stem, which is leaning somewhat and supported by an iron post, girths 37 inches at a yard from ground level, while the branches have a spread of 30 feet in diameter. This tree may be seen from Great Smith Street; in fact, some of the branches had to be removed in order that the bus traffic there should not be interfered with.

Chapter 2. *Morus* in the TROBI database

Morus in the Tree Register

In Summer 2021 at the beginning of my tenure of the Bursary, the TROBI Excel (unpublished) database contained 914 entries under the *Morus* genus. Not all of these (820) had girth measurements. *Morus* therefore represented less than one quarter of one percent (0.29%) of the total 84,473 trees listed,. *Morus*, an introduced genus in the British Isles, is therefore by no means common here.

Of the total (published and unpublished) *Morus* entries, just under half are *Morus nigra*. This proportion is mirrored in the online 'Champion' database, which lists 261 entries under '*Morus*', of which 141 (54%) are *Morus nigra* (the Black Mulberry). This compares to 46 *M. alba* (White Mulberry), with the remainder comprising *M. alba* varieties and cultivars (notably *pendula*, *venosa*, *multicaulis*, *platanifolia*, *pyramidalis*, *laciniata* and *macrophyla*), and three *Broussonetia papyrifera*, formerly known as the Paper Mulberry. There are also 7 *Morus indica*, 4 *M. mongolica*, and 5 *M. cathayana*.

Height

The relationship between height, girth and age of Black mulberries is not simple. And even recording these parameters can be a challenge, as other recorders will know.

As Black Mulberries move into middle age, they invariably lean over. Their heavy, lower limbs tend to aggravate the lean, eventually drooping and trailing along the ground. As the tree moves into old age, it will often fall over completely, continuing to grow horizontally. This makes height (of the now vertical stems from former branches) a poor indicator of age in *M. nigra*.

Collapsed and layering Black mulberry at Gainsborough's House, Sudbury (Suffolk), spread about 16m. Possibly dates to the mid- to late 18th century.

Secondary branches off the main branches grow skywards and eventually form new stems by layering. When their connection to the parent root system is eventually broken, they are able to live on as a clone. This can be seen in some of the 400 year-old trees in Syon Park, and at Groton (Suffolk) which have the appearance of dense groves (see chapter 4).

Girth

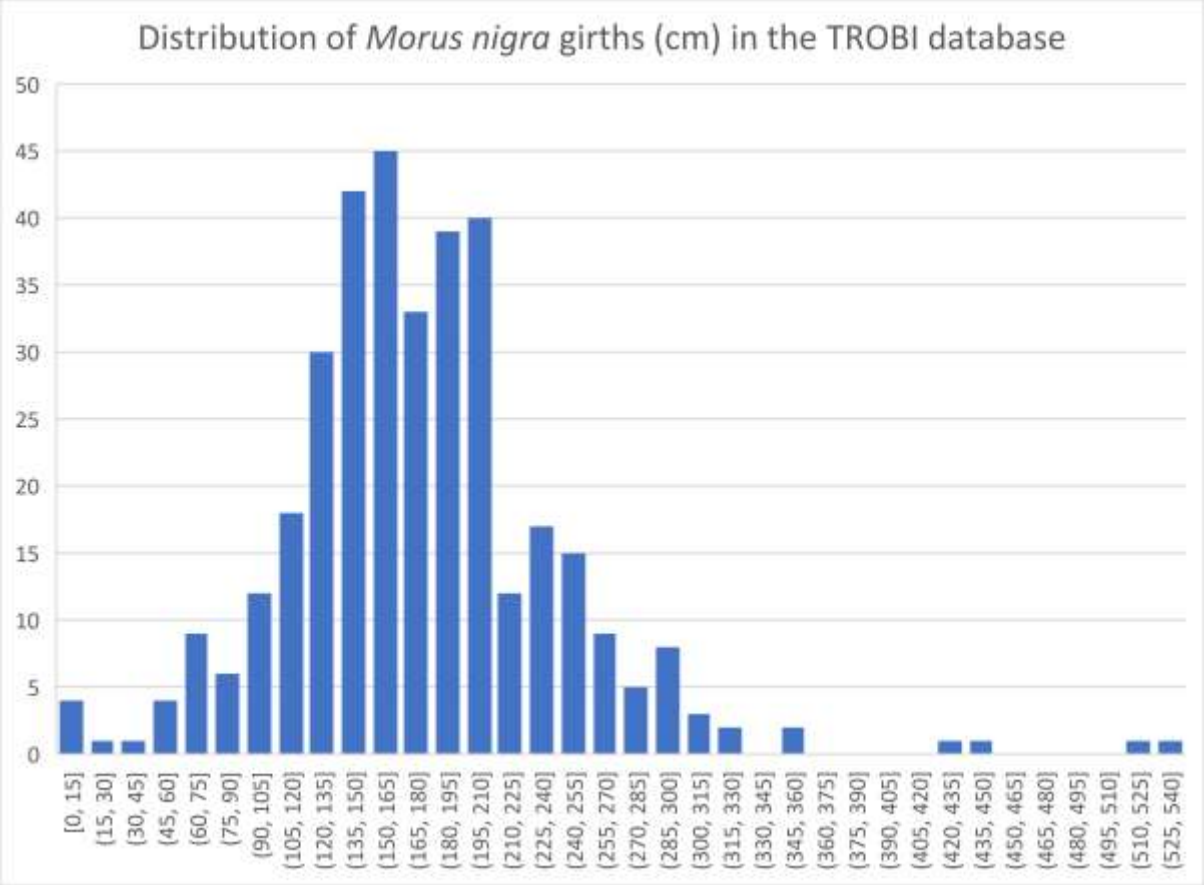
This tendency for old Mulberries to collapse also disturbs the simple relationship between annual ring increments (i.e. girth) on a single upright stem and age of the tree. The tree's energy, directed at establishing and maintaining a vigorous crown, is essentially dissipated between a horizontal main stem and several layering vertical stems. It can be meaningful to record the girth of the horizontal bole, at say 1.5 metres from the root plate, while formulae exist for estimating the single stem equivalent of multi-stemmed trees. I have noted that some recorders measure all the stems and record these girths, a practice I will adopt in future but have not always applied to the trees added to the database.

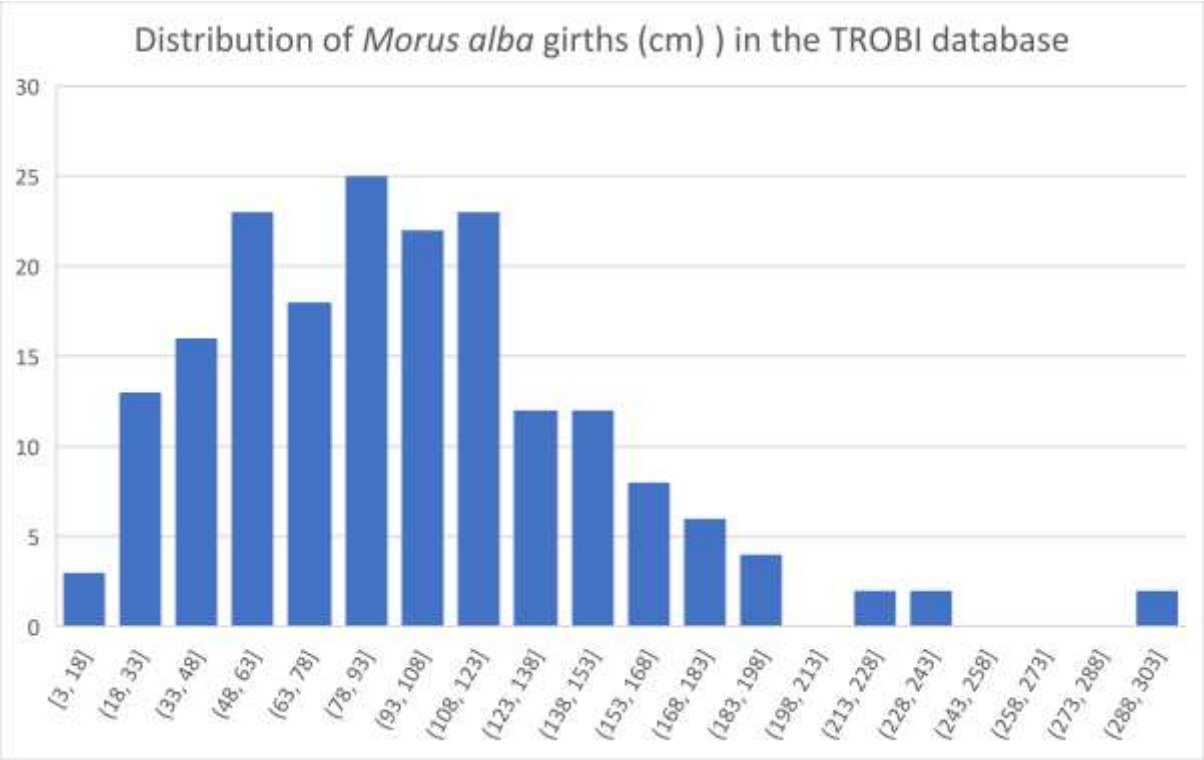
The largest girth *M. nigra* in the TROBI database, for example, is the so-called 'Shakespeare' mulberry at New Place, Stratford-upon-Avon, recorded as 1120 cm @ 0.13 m (i.e. close to the ground). This is a scion of a tree felled in 1750. Meanwhile, the 500 cm girths in the Register are for collapsed and multi-stemmed trees. The records for nine veteran *M.nigra* in the private orchard of Syon House, with documentary claims (for some) to 1604, show that crown spread and a single-stemmed equivalent girth might be reasonable indicators of age in recumbent, layering trees.

The relative scarcity of ancient maiden mulberries does rather put the genus in a special category regarding champion status (perhaps along with *Catalpa* which has the same tendency to lean and collapse).

Alan Mitchell devoted part of his classic (1985) *Complete Guide to Trees of Britain and Northern Europe* entry for Morus to the problem of ageing mulberry trees (see the author's article in the 2023 TROBI Newsletter, reproduced here in the Annexe).

The following two histograms show the distribution of Mulberry girths of trees in the TROBI database, using an arbitrary 15 cm interval, chosen as it provided about the right 'grain'.





Spread

Another useful measure of age can be the tree's crown spread, which might be 16 metres or more for a tree that is 9-12 metres high.

Age?

Guides to determining the age of veteran trees use calculations extrapolated from the average ring width once the species has reached maturity. One of the tasks – which needs to be developed for trees already in the database – is to try to use context – maps, documents, archival material – to corroborate the likely age of collapsed trees and to look for the most meaningful parameter (height, girth(s), spread, to use for comparative purposes.

Looking at the histograms above, it will be seen that the modal range of girths for *M. nigra* is 120-210 cm, while that of *M. alba* is both less pronounced and narrower (48-125 cm). Apart from the smaller sample size, this reflects the observation that *M.alba* in Britain tend to be in early maturity or mature, while most *M. nigra* in the Register are mature to late-mature (100-200 years old). This fits with Alan Mitchell's argument that most veteran Black Mulberries are 19th century, with a peak towards the late 19th to early 20th century. Mulberries with a girth of over 250 cm are relatively infrequent and likely to be associated with sites with an unbroken provenance dating to the 18th and 17th centuries.

Reference resources

A number of useful technical papers have been published on measuring and estimating the age of veteran trees of various species, such as:

MITCHELL, A. F., SCHILLING, V. E. AND WHITE, J.E.J. (1994).
Champion trees of the British Isles. Forestry Commission Technical Paper 7.Forestry Commission, Edinburgh.

TROBI: https://www.treeregister.org/more/measuring-trees/

Chapter 3. Existing Morus records verified and updated

The following are summaries of updates / verifications of 34 existing records in the 2021-22 TROBI Excel spreadsheet, in numerical order of the Register (spreadsheet) ID. I have also added photographs of champion Mulberries to the Register, where I have them, directly via the TROBI website. I have not kept a record of these, but they will be attributed to me as author.

Preston Manor walled garden (East Sussex)

ID 15628

Morus nigra

In the walled garden of Preston Manor, a former manor house in Preston village, now a part of the wider Brighton & Hove area. A private residence until 1932 when it was given to the Brighton Corporation by its longest serving family, the Thomas-Stanfords. It is now a museum and exhibition venue. The structure of the manor was built in the late 1700s. However, parts of its architecture date back much further, to around the 1200s.

Single-stemmed maiden.
The 2021 record had no details.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
15628	TQ3030906357	M.nigra	11 m	188	1m	PU	+	2022		PRC

Clissold Park Stoke Newington

ID 18312. *Morus nigra*

Black mulberry near to the children's play area, on the path to Clissold House and near the railings of the Old Church. Ivy on the stem.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
18312	TQ3282086462		13	162	0.72	PU		2023		PRC

Beckenham Place Park

ID 23336

Morus nigra

Near tennis courts. Maiden with burrs and single 1.5m bole. Taped under burrs in 2021 (Peter Coles). House built in 1724, became a school in 1902, given to LCC in 1927. There was an orchard here in 18th c.

(2021 entry had no data)

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
23336	TQ3800870810		12	220	1.5	PU		2021	1800s	PRC

Lucas Gardens, Camberwell

ID 25037

M. nigra

Near playground. Steve Waters taped as 182 in 2010. Leaning 25 deg. Side branch propped at 6m. Healed wound on side of lean. Recent crown reduction. 1 main stem 3 branches. (Peter Coles 2022).

On the site of Camberwell House Lunatic Asylum (opened 1846). Two other veteran *M. nigra* are in the community garden on the opposite side of Streatham Road, almost certainly contemporary and part of the grounds of the 19th c "Lunatic asylum".

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
25037	TQ3334076576		11	189	0.9	PU		2022	Early 19th?	PRC

Brockwell Park Tudor Garden

ID 33354

M. nigra

This tree was felled in 2022 after a storm brought it down. The present Brockwell Hall was built between 1811-13 as the home of glass merchant John Blades. The walled garden was originally the kitchen garden of the Tudor Brockwell Hall nearer to Norwood Road, which was demolished when Blades bought it. London County Council took over the house and land in 1891. J J Sexby laid out a formal English Garden. The mulberry probably dates from then, (around 1901), but could be 100 years older. There could have been a mulberry in the Tudor garden, though not this one.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
33354	TQ 3150474055		8?			PU		2022	1901	PRC

Kelmscott Manor, Lechlade

SU25072 9888

ID 102135

M. nigra

The home of artist, designer and social critic William Morris (1834-96) and the setting for his Utopian village on the Thames in *News from Nowhere*.
Limbs propped and crown braced. A lot of ivy on the main trunk, which is leaning at 30 deg. The house was built in 1600 and a new wing added around 1665. Seems like a late 18th tree.

Verified PC Oct 2022.

The false-colour infrared photo (above) shows leaf vigour while revealing the structure of the tree. There is a much younger *M. alba* opposite in the orchard.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
102135	SU25072 98888		8	252	1	PU/PR		2022	1660	PRC

Syon Park, Brentford

M. nigra
ID 102136
1967 entry: "*S. of lake*." No data given or grid reference.

Not sure which tree this refers to so not followed up. There are currently 9 ancient (by *Morus* standards) *M. nigra* at Syon. (Peter Coles 2023). See section on new entries and special feature on Syon's late medieval mulberry orchard in this report.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
102136	?		?	?						?

Syon Park, Brentford

M. nigra
ID: 169959
TQ17457 76761
TROBI Historic Girth & Height County Champion of Greater London

TROBI entry: *"Said to have been planted by Turner in 1548; 'a wreck' by 1913 (E & H). Perhaps one of the regenerating plants in the Duke's Garden in 2013."* The recorder is given as J C Loudon.
Comment by PC in 2023: Not sure which of the nine veteran *M. nigra* belonging to Syon's old mulberry orchard this refers to. Could it be the fenced-in tree in the water meadow, easily visible from the house (facing north) by the river? This has recently been cleared of invasive brambles and elder. Several possibly older, layering trees in the nearby mulberry orchard would also fit this description. [see section on Syon's mulberries under 'new entries'] The 240 cm girth was taped at 0.9 m from the root plate on the largest fallen stem.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
169959			7		1.5	PR		1837	1548	J C Loudon
	TQ17457 76761		*12*	*240*	*0.9*	*PR*		*2023*	*1604/1649*	*PRC*

Chelsea Physic Garden

M. nigra

ID. 102167

TQ 27683 77799

A *M. nigra* was grubbed out to make way for an air-raid shelter in WW II. It could have been the recumbent, propped tree in the photograph. Another *M. nigra* was damaged in the 1987 hurricane. In 2021 there was a maiden, early maturity *M. nigra* near to the restaurant and members' entrance. This tree was felled in 2022 and no stump left for phoenix regeneration. The reason is unknown. The garden no longer has a *M. nigra* (TBC) but has a Weeping White Mulberry (*M. alba pendula*) maybe 20-30 years old.

1987

2016

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
102167			9	126				1978		
102167	TQ 27683 77799			Gone		PU		2022		PRC

Lesnes Abbey,

Belvedere Greater London (Kent)
ID: 131823
TQ4788678858

Described by Steve Walters in 2012 as a “Leaning ancient tree N of ruins.” Re-measured November 2021 by Peter Coles. Leaning and propped 'Y' shaped tree N of ruins of 13th c abbey. Possibly 1880s, but could be 18th c. Now protected by a low wooden fence. Maps suggest it was originally growing near to the 19th c farmhouse, itself built to replace the 15th-16th c Abbot's Lodging that had been used as a farmhouse for centuries. The 19th c farmhouse was demolished by the time the site was gifted to London County Council in 1933. A plaque inside the enclosure around the tree gives incorrect information, claiming a connection with silk and James I. There is no evidence for this and it was probably grown for its fruit and shade. This tree featured in a TROBI Newsletter article in 2022 by Peter Coles (see annexe).

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
131823	TQ4788678858							2012		Steve Waters
131823	TQ4788678858		5.5	225	1.5	PU		2022		Peter Coles

Charlton House

ID: 139840

M. nigra

Described in the 2010 TROBI entry as: "*'Shattered' in 1920. The tree still exists in bush form by the toilets outside the front of the park (rumoured to have been planted in 1608), and is one of the Tree Council's '50 Great British Trees'.*"

The 1920 'shattered' reference is from Webster ('London Trees'), in which a girth of 262 cm (8'6") is given and a height of 6 metres (20 feet). Remeasured by PRC in 2023. Appears to have a split bole with two stems, one producing a third layered stem. It is semi-recumbent and propped by the surrounding cast iron railings. Some old publications refer to 'two trees'.

The tree is likely to be contemporary with the adjacent house which was completed in 1611 for Adam Newton, tutor to Prince Henry (son of James I). Research suggests that this tree could have been in one corner of a rectangular ornamental garden. A very similar garden layout (by John Tradescant, Elder) can still be seen at Hatfield House, which also has an original *M. nigra* pollard in one corner. Charlton House Park could have been the site of one of James I's mulberry plantations (for silk). Several mulberries (sp) were auctioned in 1821 (presumably as timber), some said to be already old at the time. The present mulberry is one of the 50 *Great Trees of London* and is often said to be the oldest in London (those at Syon are almost certainly older).

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
139840	TQ41507778		? (6 m)	? (262)		PU		2010	(1608)	(Webster 1920)
139840	TQ41507778					PU		2023	1611	PRC

Stoke Newington

Mildmay Conference Hall

Newington Green
ID 139841
TQ3284485364
M. nigra

The original TROBI entry is derived from data given by Webster in 1920. The tree stood in front of the Mildmay Conference Hall, built in 1870. Webster calls it a "grand old specimen" and suggests it may have been a survivor from the early 17th century. From photos it was certainly more than 70 years old in 1920, so would have predated the Conference Hall. From the photo it appears to be split and hollow. Its girth in 1920 suggest a mid-18th c tree. It's uncertain when it was lost, but most likely in WWII, around 1941. There is no trace of the tree today – but nearby Canonbury Tower does have a recumbent *M. nigra* and there is an old sprawling mulberry in the rectory garden of St Mary's, Stoke Newington, also not far away.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
139841			11	192	1			1920	1800s	(Webster)
	TQ3284485364		(gone)							

Christ's College Cambridge

Milton's Mulberry
ID 181619
TL45155857

In the Fellows' Garden with restricted public access.
Original TROBI comment: *An ancient mulberry associated with John Milton. Now with several stems emerging from a mound built up in the 19th century to help support them. Jacqueline Fortrey 2016.*

Revisited 2022 (David Alderman and Peter Coles). No meaningful girth measurements possible because of the mound and the multiple stems, emerging from a buried bole.
Was a leaning propped, unmounded, single-stemmed tree in the early 1850s. The mound was added around 1855 and is therefore probably eccentric, with the main stem to one side. TROBI Newsletter (2023) published a detailed history of this tree and the practice of mounding mulberries, written by Peter Coles.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
ID 181619	TL45155857			200		PR		2016		Jacqueline Fortrey
			12			PR		2022	1609	PRC / DA

Down House

Downe / Orpington / Biggin Hill
M. nigra
ID 182017
TQ43157 61133

The 2018 TROBI entry: "*Old propped mulberry by house that Darwin's children used to play in (i.e. full-grown by 1842). Slanting burry bole. Moruslondinium.org in 2018. Badly retrenching in 2018.*"

New entry 2023: Home of naturalist Charles Darwin, whose children played on the tree (He moved here in 1842 when it was already mature and reached up to the 1st floor nursery window). Taped below fork. Leaning, propped. Hollow, filled with concrete in 1960s. Retrenching. Lost a large limb in 2020. Head Gardener has pegged a lower branch to encourage layering and is propagating from cuttings.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
182017			10	250				2018		
182017	TQ4315761133		7.5	219	1	O		2023	1800	Peter Coles

Keats House

Hampstead, London
ID 186908
TQ2710985683

2018 TROBI entry: "*'Mulberry in Keat's garden, 250 years' (J H Wilks, notes for 'Trees of the British Isles', sic). Keats House museum, Keats Grove, Belsize Park. Collapsed, and supported by brick pillars. David Humphrey 2018. Shortlisted for Tree of the Year. One of 70 trees*

chosen to form 'The Queen's Green Canopy' in 2022."
New entry: Recumbent, vigorous tree in the poet John Keats's garden. Estimated to be 250 years old by J H Wilks, notes for 'Trees of the British Isles', 1972). David Humphries 2018; shortlisted for Tree of the Year. Additional note (PC): The house was built 1814-15. Unless it predated the house, the tree would still have been a sapling when Keats wrote his *Odes* there in 1819. Girth estimated about 200 cm Peter C in 2021. Appearance fits with age of about 220 years now.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
186908	TQ2710985683			54				2018		
	TQ2710985683		805	200 est		O	++	2021	1816?	PRC

Greenwich Park, London

Cricket Pitch
ID 191191
TQ3904576931
M. nigra

SE of reservoir on edge of playing field. Steve Waters 2008. revisited 2017 by Peter Coles : (By path NW of cricket pitch). A hollow pollard (2017), which has now been felled

(2020/1), decaying stump in 2022.
Felled 2021. Taped in 2008 by Steve Waters as 185@1.1 and in 2016 by DA. Stump girth 192@0.7 (PC) Rough ring count by DA and PC = 100-125. Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
191191	TQ3904576931			185	1.1	PU		2008		
			0.7	192	0.7	PU		2023	1920	PRC

Chelsea, Battersea Bridge Gardens

ID 270826
TQ26899 77470
M. nigra

Original entry: *Battersea Bridge Gardens, Cheyne Walk; railed in. New stems from an old base. Moruslondinium.org in 2020.*

Update 2023: Battersea Bridge Gardens, Cheyne Walk. Behind railings by main road. Phoenix tree regenerating from old bole. Taped at base. 3 stems and vestige of another. One stem 142 another 132 taped near to old bole (gives calculated single stem circumference of 192 cm). Shows on 18th c sketch of planned Moravian site. Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
270826	TQ2689977470		10	200	1.6	++		2021		
	TQ2689977470		10	248	0.2	PU		2022	18th c	Peter Coles

West Square, Southwark

M. nigra

TROBI 2019: *One of three mulberries in West Square; supine. Girth estimated by OJ from photos; 41cm girth at the base reported by Michal Mixa in 2019 is clearly wrong.*

2023 Update: SW of three surviving Black mulberries of 4 planted around 1800 in West Square. 2 main stems, leaning, propped. Girth measured by PC on one stem at 1.30m. Base about twice this i.e. >200cm. Now leaning at 33 deg following windthrow in 1987 storm. Inclined height 8 m. Seven younger (1991) *M. alba* also in West Square. See following chapter on new entries for the two other trees.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
271647	TQ3162179061			126		++		2019		OJ
	TQ2689977470		6.7	130	0.2	PU		2023	18th c	Peter Coles

Hatherley Road, Sidcup

ID 277819
TQ4626171976
M. nigra

Leaning, hollowing, single stem Black Mulberry branching at head-height. One large branch propped. Some crown reduction / pollarding . Taped below burr at 1m20 (Peter Coles 1/12/2021). Site developed in 1870s. Visible over the fence from footpath. Crown diameter 10-12 m.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
277819	TQ4627071987		7	270				2020		Andrew Lockstone
	TQ4626171976		8.4	237	1.2	PR		2021	1870	Peter Coles

Bethnal Green, London Chest Hospital

ID 277834
TQ4626171976
M. nigra
Veteran, heritage

2020 TROBI entry: *Bonner Road, on the site of Bonner's Hall. Old hospital grounds; liable to be translocated. Moruslondinium.org*

Update: Former London Chest Hospital, Bonner Road, on the site of Bishop Bonner's 16th c London's Palace. Hit by incendiary bomb 1941, which damaged the crown. The tree was apparently then pollarded. The crown we see today is post-war regrowth (i.e. 80 years) - 2 large limbs (one propped) and one central, vigorous, slim one. Hollow trunk split at 50 cm. Shallow roots (in 4 m soil). Was targeted for translocation by previous developers in 2015 but reprieved by judicial review after public campaign. A care plan now in place c/o arboriculturist, Richard Curtis (Aspect PLC) for the current developers. Taped at ground level. Peter Coles May 2023.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
277834	TQ3527083310		6	200				2020		Peter Coles
	TQ3537783335		9	196	0.2	PR		2023	1858?	Peter Coles

City of London, Inner Temple Garden

ID 277836

M. nigra

Mature tree with 2 equal stems from 1m in Inner Temple Gardens (open 12.30-3 pm weekdays), by Paper Building (built 1610) in the centre of a flower garden. Visible from railings of Benchers Walk. Alicia Amherst [*London Parks and Gardens*] mentions "mulberries" in Benchers Garden (its former name) in 17th c. Girth estimated 2021 Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
277836	TQ3131980932		9.34	150	0.5	PR		2021		
	TQ3131980932		8.4	170	0.5	PR		2021		Peter Coles

City of London, Middle Temple Garden

ID 277837

M. nigra

TROBI entry *Three were planted in Fountain Court, Middle Temple, on 20th June 1887 for Queen Victoria's Jubilee. Two survive since the 1950s. Leaning and propped.*

Southern of two surviving in Fountain Court, Middle Temple since 1950s, from 4 planted for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee (after 20th June 1897). Leaning and propped. Fruit well in July-August. Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
277837	TQ311880978		5	144	1.25	PR	+	2021	1887	PRC
277837	TQ3118 80978		5	146	1.6	PR	+	2022	1897	PRC

St Ann's Hospital, Haringey

ID 277845
M. nigra

W side of garden of Mulberry House. Leaning, propped and burred. Peter C.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
277845	TQ3240788612		7.7	136	1	PU	+	2021		PRC
							+			PRC

Cambridge University: Corpus Christi College

ID 277849
TL4489058202
M. nigra

A split, multi-stemmed tree with hollow base in the Bursar's Garden, in a raised bed surrounded by a low wall. Said to date from 1609. David Alderman & Peter Coles 2022.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
ID 277849	TL4489058202		6	199 / 203 base 265			++	2022	1609	DA and PRC

Cambridge University: Jesus College

ID 277850
M. nigra

On a small mound in the garden, propped and layering. Said to date from around 1608. What looks like a layered scion nearby. Peter Coles & David Alderman

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
277850	TL4522258828		6	131	0.8	PR		2022	1609	DA / PRC

Chiswick House, Hounslow

Kitchen Garden.
ID 277907
TQ2097977803
Heritage *M. nigra*

In the kitchen garden of Chiswick House, north of the conservatory. Open to the public Tuesdays and Thursdays 1.30-3.30 pm. Likely to be one of "two large mulberry trees" mentioned in deeds of transfer of 1812
In early 2021 a large limb snapped and was resting on the ground. It is still connected to the main stem. The garden team are seeking advice on how to prop it.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
277907	TQ2097977803		7.5	202	0.7	PR	+	2021	1812	PRC

Hogarth's House

Hounslow
ID 277908
TQ2123777894
Heritage *M. nigra*

Branches on props. Perhaps from a 1670s orchard,
Crown dia = 10.5 m
Some pruning in 2020 to balance and stabilise. Taped by Peter Coles 3/8/2021

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
277908	TQ2123777894		6.3	202	1.24	PU		2021	1670	PRC

Norfolk House

Chiswick Mall
ID 277909
TQ 21792 78004
M. nigra

Garden in Chiswick Mall belonging to twinned houses from the early 19th c. Adjacent to an equally old spreading *M nigra* in the next (W) garden. Taped under first branch by Peter Coles.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
277908	TQ2123777894		13	300	0.7	PR		2020	1800	PRC

Island House

Chiswick Mall
Hounslow
ID 277910
TQ217978081
M. nigra

At the end of a garden in Chiswick Mall, next to a 3m girth tree in the adjacent garden. Short decayed bole with long spreading branches to east and west. Others located in gardens of houses along the Mall are of similar girth.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
277910	TQ217978081			270	0.7	PR		2020	1800	PRC

Chelsea, Moravian Burial Ground

277917

TQ2679677608

SE corner of Moravian burial ground, Milman's Street. Possibly a scion of an older tree as there are archival references to a mulberry on this site in the 18th century. On the site of Thomas More's 15th c estate and next to a Tudor brick wall. Peter Coles 2022.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
277917	TQ2679677671		5.9	111	1.1	PU	+	2022	20th c	PRC

Chelsea, Allen Hall

ID 277918

Heritage

M. nigra

In enclosed courtyard to the south, only accessible through the property. Split trunk, crown stems braced with chains. Taped below fork. Plaque says planted by Thomas More in 16th c, but likely a 1900's planting (scion?) when this was a convent. On site of More's house though. An equally old – or older - tree in rear garden by the pond.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
277918	TQ2687477671		7.6	162	0.6	PR		2021	1900?	PRC

Booth Hall Memorial College, Camberwell

ID 277926
TQ3295776063
M nigra

Centre of lawn in courtyard of William Booth Salvation Army College (built 1929), 6+ vertical stems layering from large, collapsed once multi-stemmed bole that was leaning and felled to a stump. Original tree probably in garden of a Victorian villa on the site. Girth of largest new stem = 87 cm. Single stem equivalent girth based on 6 x 87 cm = 210 cm

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
277926	TQ3295776063		5	Est 210		PR		2021	1870	PRC

The Glebe, Blackheath

277933
TQ3934875965
M. nigra

On grass by Prendergast Road flats, on the site of The Glebe (1870s mansion). Hollowing multi-stemmed. One horizontal + 3 erect stems (one lopped) from common bole. One stem girth 125 cm. Base girth aprox 240 cm at ground level. One fallen limb. Already large tree in 1950s. Alkanet, elder, ivy, lesser celandine around base. Peter Coles 2021

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
277933	TQ3295776063		8	240	0.2		+++	2021	1870	PRC

Morden College, Blackheath

Clerk's Garden
277937
TQ 40334 76389
M. nigra

In Clerk's walled garden, to right of main entrance to Morden College campus. One previously propped limb dropped and was removed. Clematis growing on trunk. Short slightly slanting bole with young pollard growth above this. Taped Peter Coles 2022.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
277937	TQ4033476389		7	250	0.5	PR		2022		PRC

Streatham Rookery Garden

277941

Rookery Gardens Community Garden. Sprawling across a wide area. Broken, decaying main fragment. Crown spread 6m. Advanced hollowing at top; base solid; phoenix regeneration. PRC
Arboricultural survey: girths of 100, 30, 40 and 20 cm = est single-stem dia 95 cm = girth of 298 cm.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
277941	TQ3095770824		4	298			++++	2021	1800s	PRC

Chapter 4. Mulberry: New records 2021-23

Chiswick Mall, College House

M. nigra

College House, visible from street. Girth estimated. 3-4 large lower branches. Of similar girth to others in the street dating to early 19th / late 18th c.
PRC

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2176078007		13	250	1.2	PR		2022	1800?	Peter C

Chiswick, 2 Strand-on-the-Green

M. nigra

House dates to 1658. Recumbent pollard, leaning until 2021 when it fell over in a very wet summer. Upper branches removed. Roots still attached and new canopy forming. Ring count on one removed branch - 70 years. There was a change of ownership in 1788 = a plausible date for the tree (Peter Coles 2022).

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ1971477529		10	196	0.7	PR	+++	2022	18th c	PRC

Chiswick House, Paxton House

M. nigra

Collapsed Black Mulberry in the garden of Paxton House, which was once part of the Chiswick House kitchen garden. The tree is supported by a wooden fence and is therefore also visible from the adjacent gardener's yard of Chiswick House. Likely to be one (or a scion) of 'two large mulberry trees' mentioned in deeds of transfer of Moreton Hall in 1812; the other is in the kitchen garden of Chiswick House.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2106977778		7.5	150	210	PR		2021	Before 1812	PRC

Camden, Belsize Terrace

Morus nigra

Next to wall of house on corner of Belsize Terrace and Belsize Avenue. Squat pollard on site of former Belsize Manor House, (built 1690, demolished 1853). Ivy and burrs make taping difficult. Suffered from drought in 2022 but flourishing in 2023. Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2692984908		7	297	1.6	PU		2023	19th c?	Peter C

Golders Hill Park

M. nigra

East (uphill) of café by the disabled carpark and park entrance. Recumbent, multiple stems layering. Probably dates from the Victorian Mansion House (used as restaurant until destroyed by a bomb in 1940) which was roughly where the carpark is.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2595087009					PU		2023	1900?	Peter C

Greenwich Park, Queen's Orchard

M. nigra

On a mound in the walled Queen's Orchard near the Maze Hill entrance to the Park (NE corner of the park). Open to the public at restricted hours. A collapsed spreading tree that has had several large limbs removed over the years. Foxes live among the roots. Wildflowers and bramble cohabit the mound. The Head Gardener is supervising eradication of Knotweed.

There are records of a 200-year-old *M nigra* near here already in the 19th c, so the tree could be 1600s, though archaeological surveys put it as a 19th c planting. Could be a collapsed scion of a disappeared older tree, now itself layering?

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ3901377791		9			PU		2023	1600s / 1800s?	Peter C

Greenwich Park, Flower Garden

M. nigra

Inside Flower Garden NW end just inside gate. Leaning, supported with a wooden prop. PC

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ3931377238		6.8	107	105	PU		2023		Peter C

Greenwich Park, Flower Garden

M. nigra

In Flower Garden. Mature maiden.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ3930177179		13	148	0.75	PU		2023		Peter C

Greenwich Park, Flower Garden

M. nigra

In Flower Garden, by the fence. Mature maiden.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ3926476981		8.5	105	1	PU		2023		Peter C

Greenwich, Trinity Hospital Garden

Thames Path

M. nigra

Visible from Thames Path. No access. Girth estimated. Peter C

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ3715573795		9	120 est	1.5	PR	+	2021		PRC

Middle Temple, Fountain Court

Morus nigra

Northerly of two surviving Black Mulberries in Fountain Court, Middle Temple, from four planted to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee (20th June 1897). Leaning and propped. Fruits well in July-August. See previous chapter (updates of existing trees) for the record of the other tree. Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ3111480985		6	90	1	PR/PU		2023	1900	Peter C

Regent's Park, Inner Circle

Morus nigra

Black Mulberry. In the Inner Circle, on a lawn north of the Regent's Bar café. Upright maiden dividing into 4 main stems from about 0.5m. Taped beneath divide.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2825582576		8.4	152	0.5	PU		2021		PRC

Regent's Park, Inner Circle

Morus nigra

In his 1920 *Trees of London*, Webster referred to a Mulberry that might be the old tree we find today, hidden in bushes by the Rose Garden, near to Chester Gate, on the site of what used to be the RBS nursery: "*In the grounds of the Royal Botanic Society, there is a Mulberry tree of goodly proportions that has borne heavy crops of fruit during recent years. It has a wide-spreading head of healthy foliage measuring 36 feet [11 m], the trunk being 3'9" [114.3 cm] in circumference.*"

What we see today is a collapsed, layering tree, with broken and lopped main stems and branches, which could easily be over 150 years old. A girth of 114 cm in 1920 might date it to around 1824-38 when Jenkins' horticultural tree nursery was being developed (the RBS took over in 1839). The girth measurement here is of one accessible stem. Single stem equivalent could be around 180 cm.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
281519	TQ2823382565		8.4	140	0.9	PU		2021		PRC

Chelsea, Cheyne Walk

M. nigra

Notable tree next to tennis court in a private garden of a house on Oakley Gardens. On site of Henry VIII's 1540s Manor House. Possibly a scion / phoenix regeneration from one of several *M nigra* apparently growing here in the 16th c according to a plaque on Cheyne Walk. These were grubbed out to make way for the tennis court in the 1960s according to a neighbour. Leaning, regularly pollarded because of cramped space (?), many burrs.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2736377742		8	120	1.5	PR		2022		PRC

Chelsea, Elm Park Gardens

M. nigra

Recumbent, layering black mulberry in communal back garden of flats. Sole survivor (?) of 2,000 mulberry trees (1000 white 1000 black) planted in Chelsea Park in 1720 for a silk farm (which had already failed by 1723). The trees were grubbed out in 1875 when the main house was demolished and the Park developed (1878-85). Taped near to base.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2675378159		7.2	162	0.62	PR		2022	1720	PRC

Chelsea, Allen Hall

M. nigra

Allen Hall seminary, Beaufort Street. By pond in rear garden to NW. Straight hollow maiden, split and exposed on side facing the house. Looks as old / older than the tree claimed to be Thomas More's (see chapter 1).

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2684277692		8	158	0.9	PR		2022	1900?	Peter C

Kensington Palace Gardens

M. nigra

One of a row of mature *M nigra* of equal age (<100 years?) by the east wall of Kensington Gardens opposite a row of younger *M alba*.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2584579896		8.4	152	0.6	PU	+	2023		PRC

Kensington Roof Garden

M. nigra

By the stream and pond in the Woodland area of the roof garden of the former Derry and Toms department store on Kensington High Street (London). One of the 500 plants and shrubs planted between 1936, when the garden was created and 1938, when it opened to the public. Not a huge tree but unique. The garden was inspired by a sister garden in New York and also the Alhambra Gardens in S outhern Spain.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2559879537		10	104	1.2	PU/PR		2022	1937	PRC

St Ann's Hospital, Harringay

Morus nigra

In garden of adolescent team building. Visible from hospital street but not accessible. Peter C

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ3237788674		6.5	95 est		PR		2021	1950?	PRC

Southwark, West Square NE

NE of three Black mulberries planted around 1800 in West Square. Leaning 23 deg since 1987 storm, propped, 2 main stems. Inclined height 7.0 m. Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ3159879056		6.4	156	1.5	PU		2023	1800	PRC

Southwark, West Square SE

M. nigra

SE of three Black mulberries planted around 1800 in West Square. Leaning 31 deg since 1987 storm. Propped, one limb layering. 2 main stems.

Wound from lost limb. Cavity. Inclined height 7.5 m. Peter Coles.

7 x young (1991?) *M. alba* in West Square too

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2952179718		6.5	160	1.2	PU		2023	1800	PRC

Streatham Park, Mulberry Close

Upright pollard. Scars of lopped branches. On lawn outside flats built on the site of a Victorian house, itself built on the site of the 18th c Thrale mansion demolished and sold for development in 19th c. A contemporary *M nigra* to the east behind the flats was felled a few years ago (ground level stump visible).
Other contemporary *M. nigra* in nearby streets / gardens also likely to be from the Thrale mansion estate.
The presence of 4 mulberries, aligned and near to one another prior to development reinforces a common original location.
Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2922771744		9	174	1	PR		2022	18th c	PRC

Streatham Park, Ullathorne Road

M. nigra

An old and typically gnarled black mulberry, with three stems from a thick base covered in ivy. Blown over in a gust of wind 2020. Possibly once part of the 18th c Streatham Park Estate. Massive crown development after the fall, but shaded by conifers.
PC 2022

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2925471571		9	120		PR		2022	19th or 18th	Peter C

Camberwell, Myatt's Fields Park

M. nigra

Maiden north-east of the sports pen (SE of bandstand) on the path parallel with Knatchbull Road. Possibly planted around 1888, when the park was laid out by Fanny Wilkinson. A local remembers the tree 60-70 years ago (i.e 1950s-60s). Taped below burrs.
Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ3186176644		10.5	87	0.97	PU		2022	1890	PRC

Lambeth, Loughborough Park

On lawn by path near entrance from Loughborough Rd. The leaning trunk split in August 2021 under weight of one large limb (girth 45 cm). Supported on the ground and still connected to root system. Bole taped at ground level. Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ3177475420		6.4	195	1	PU		2022	1800s	PRC

Westminster, Buckingham Palace

M. nigra

Twin stem. In gardens not far from gardeners' sheds. Plaque says scion of James I 1609 mulberry garden though this was not the location of what we know of that garden. Taped one stem. Base >3 m Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2901779293		12	150	0.5	PR		2022		PRC

Kenwood House, Highgate

M. nigra

By path in kitchen garden of Adams-designed 18th c Kenwood House mansion. Two main stems from short bole now split. Propped. Lost a limb in 2021. Estate changed hands in 1927, a possible date for planting, though girth suggests a 19th c tree. Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2736387494		10	220	0.8	PU	+++	2022	1927	PRC

Westminster, Hyde Park Corner, The Lodge Cafe

Morus nigra

On a small lawn on N side of The Lodge café at Hyde Park Corner. The bole has split and been braced with a bolt. (False-colour infrared photograph).

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2829979880		9	210	1.5	PU		2022		PRC

Westminster, Hyde Park Corner, The Lodge Cafe

Morus nigra

On the terrace of The Lodge café at Hyde Park Corner. Very cramped but doing well.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2830779875		9	150	1.5	PU		2022		PRC

Ladywell Fields

M. nigra

In Iona Close orchard, Girth estimated. Part collapsed. Was in garden of 62 Ravensbourne Park. Closed off - to become a community garden. Peter C

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ3883178170		10	150	1	PR		2022		PRC

Stratford, West Ham Park

M. nigra

In ornamental garden. Large layering tree with 16 m diameter crown spread. 3 main stems, two large trailing low branches (90 cm girth), 1 propped and layering into new stems. One stem has old sawn wound and has lost two upper fragments. Propped. Wood chip mulch. Garden laid out in 1780s.Taped below burrs and the division into multiple stems.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ4022084049		8.5	232	0.6	PU		2023	1780	PRC

Kennington, Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park

M. nigra

In the gardeners' yard, squeezed between the streetside wall and tennis courts. Leaning slightly. Has suffered some crown damage in recent high winds. Girth taped below first branches and between two wounds.

GMH Park is on the site of the former Bethlem Hospital. The tree might date to the 1800s when the adjacent West Square Gardens mulberries were planted, as the girth is similar.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ3156679205		9	198	1	PR		2023	1900	PRC

Clapham, The Landor pub

M. nigra

In the rear courtyard of the Landor pub, which dates to the 18th century. One limb has been removed. In a very cramped space, but healthy. Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ3033875780		9	200	1	PU		2022		PRC

Cambridge University Botanic Garden

TL4562257141

Morus nigra

Mature but not old *M. nigra* on lawn in Cambridge University Botanic Garden south of the Garden Kitchen café. Peter C

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TL4562257141		8			PU				PRC

Cambridge University: Emmanuel College

TL4529758402

M. nigra

Mature but not old top graft. Peter Coles & David Alderman 2022

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TL4529758402		9.5	172	1	PU PR		2022	1970s	DA+PRC

Cambridge University, Pembroke College

The Orchard

TL4495158098

M. nigra

Three stems from a short bole on a mound in the Orchard. A scion planted in 1977 from a decayed, recumbent veteran mulberry associated with 16th c Elizabethan poet Edmund Spenser that was removed. Archives suggest the original tree was a 1609 planting. Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TL4495158098		9.5	118	0.6	PR		2023	1977	PRC

Colchester (Essex), St John's Abbey Gate

TL9977724716

M. nigra

Black Mulberry, multi-stemmed phoenix layering from a now horizontal bole. Taped near base of collapsed stem. Spread aprox 12 m. On a raised island by gate to carpark near St John's Abbey Gate (probably at original ground level but carpark dug out). Partly protected by an iron fence and stone bank. On the site of an 11th century Benedictine Abbey.

Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TL9977724716		10	170	1	PU		2023		PRC

Sudbury (Suffolk) Gainsborough's House

M. nigra

Behind house in which artist Thomas Gainsborough was born. Multi-stem, collapsed, layering. Hollow main stem. Taped on horizontal original bole. House 15th c. An orchard existed here in 1792. Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TL9721841294		4.3	250		PU/PR		2023	1700s?	PRC

Sudbury (Suffolk) Belle Vue Park

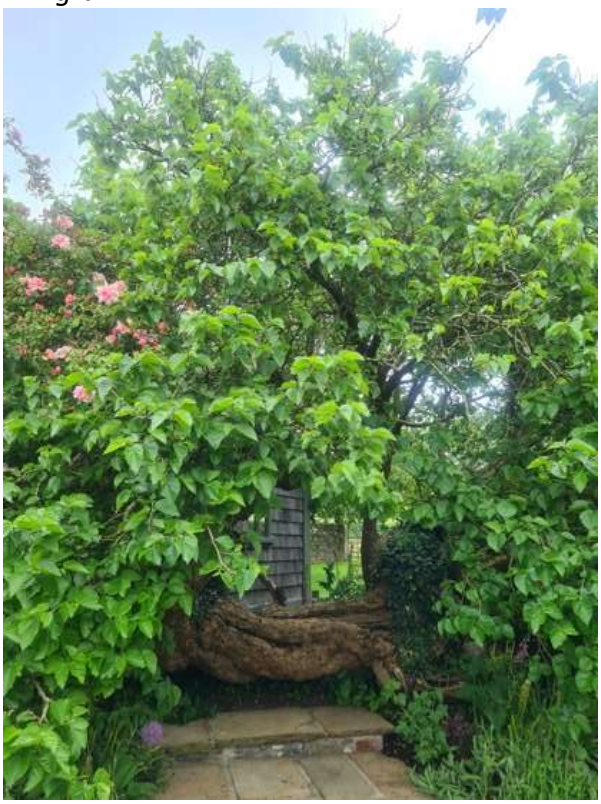
M. nigra

Twisted, leaning, propped Black Mulberry. Lost several limbs. Hollow, with aerial roots and bracket fungus inside trunk. Moss in water pockets. Mansion built in 1870s. Now empty and part of a public park. Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TL8778641206		7.2	181	1.5	PU	+	2023	1870	PRC

Pangdean Old Barn, Brighton, E Sussex

M. nigra



In walled garden of Pangdean Old Barn. The barn dates to 1720. Main stem split, twisted and now growing horizontally. Other lower branches layering in a tangle over 5m+ radius area. Healthy and well cared for. Taped just above split on main stem and girth is 169 further along. Base girth 317 cm. The collapsed crown covers a wide area 5m+ dia. The venue is available for weddings etc and the tree is then visible / accessible.
PC

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2938412357		11	260		PR		2022	18th c	PRC

Oxford University, Magdalen College

M. nigra

In the private Grove Deer Park, visible from Addison's Walk by the Cherwell. Recumbent, (windthrow) browsed by deer.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	SP5217806332			236	1.4	PR		2023	19th c?	PRC

Morus alba

Barnet / Camden, Golders Hill Park

Morus alba

Reclining, supported by crown (windthrow?) but healthy and produces white fruit. Taped on reclining stem 1.5 m from root bole. Climbed on by children.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2566186944			118	1.5	PU		2023		Peter C

Golders Hill Park

Morus alba

Young maiden White Mulberry, by path to west of playground. Some crown retrenchment?.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2559886752		9			PU		2023	>2000	Peter C

Westminster, St James's Park

Morus alba

White mulberry. On hillock near bridge over lake next to *B papyrifera* and 3x *M nigra*. White fruit, weeping aspect, maiden. Peter Coles 2022

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ2952179718		12	148	1.43	PU		2022		PRC

Westminster, Hyde Park Corner Wellington Memorial

Morus alba platanifolia

By Wellington Memorial. Inclined at 11 deg. Inclined height 7.5 m. Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
			7.4	110	1.5	PU		2022		PRC

Blackheath, Morden College

Morus alba

White Mulberry planted 1968/9 in a walled garden south of the chapel.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ4034976372		7	160	1.5	PR		2022	1973	PRC

Kelmscott Manor

Morus alba

Morus alba in the orchard adjacent to a veteran *M. nigra* by the house.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	SU2507398896		12	143	1	PU/PR		2022		PRC

Morus mongolica

Cambridge University Botanic Garden

Morus mongolica

In shade of a tall Zelkova and opposite a *Broussonetia papyrifera* and *B. kazinoki*. David Alderman & Peter Coles 2022.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TL4533057052		12	158	1.2	PU	+	2023		DA+PC

Chapter 5: The ancient Mulberry orchard at Syon House[2]

Syon House, in Isleworth, on the Thames in SW London, (opposite Kew Gardens), is the ancestral home of the 12th Duke and Duchess of Northumberland and has been in the Percy family since 1594.

To the rear (west and north-west) of the house, nine veteran Black Mulberries may be found in the private grounds of the Duke and Duchess. Thanks to Syon's Head Gardener, Topher Martyn, I have been able to record and photograph these trees several times since 2016. In May 2023 I was joined by archaeologist and historian, Laurie Elvin (one of the Syon Abbey Research Associates, which carried out major archaeological digs in the grounds 1998-2018). Laurie determined GPS coordinates for each of the nine surviving trees in the mulberry orchard, including defining their crown spread, and was able to geolocate them with respect to historical maps. A full account of our survey, carried out over a 7-year period, is being prepared for publication and will not be included here.

The house and grounds are situated on the site of Syon Abbey, a Bridgettine monastery for men and women built in 1431. The abbey was closed in 1539 during the Dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII. After the Dissolution the estate was granted to Edward Seymour, 1st Duke of Somerset and Lord Protector to the young Edward VI. Somerset demolished most of its buildings in the late 1540s and built a new house in the Renaissance style on the site. When Somerset was executed for treason in 1552, the house and estate passed back to the Crown under Queen Mary (who briefly restored the monastery there) and then to Elizabeth I, who granted a lease to Henry Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland, in 1594. In 1604 James I granted him the freehold, which the Percy family retain to this day.

[2] With thanks to the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland. The details presented here are not for general reproduction without permission.

From the mid-16th century to the mid-18th century the grounds were further landscaped, with a formal, walled garden to the west and south. The 16th c landscaping was carried out under the direction of the botanist William Turner, Somerset's physician, later remodelled by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown.
Turner is often credited with introducing the first Black mulberries to England, but this seems to be because he mentions them in his "Names of Plantes" (1548/9). There is no evidence, however, for any mulberries at Syon at that date, or that the monastery had mulberries. Turner may have planted some though, so the date may be reliable.

Archives in the Percy family (9th Earl of Northumberland) record the purchase of 10 mulberry trees and 6 quince trees in March 1604 (the year before the Earl was sent to the Tower (where he lived in style for the next 17 years), accused of involvement in the Gunpowder Plot. Forty years later in 1645 there is another bill for 6 mulberry trees and, in 1646, another six were purchased. If all survived, this would mean as many as 22 mulberry trees growing at Syon, up to 10 (the 1603 order) could be 420 years old.

Some Mulberries in the orchard are certainly very old, having layered massively. Two may have been mounded as the main stem(s) began to collapse. Today, the central bole of these trees has almost disappeared, leaving a ring of mature stems A solitary tree is shown in old images as leaning over and propped up, which could be the tree in the water meadow, once part of the formal walled garden.

Henry Philips records having seen very old mulberry trees at Syon in the early 19th century[3] where the orchard is today: "The interior of these trees is so entirely decayed, that the timber has so far returned to its native earth that it will crumble in the hand; yet its branches, that are supported by props, are so well nourished by means of the bark, that the fruit and the foliage appear as luxuriant as those of the youngest trees." This description suggests a tree that could have been 200 years old at the time, and so date to the first decade of the 17th century, for which we have archival support. Philips thinks they could date back to 1548, during William Turner's time as physician to Lord Protector Somerset, but extensive documentary research by John Adams and Stuart Forbes[4] finds no support for this and no mention of mulberries at Syon by Turner.

[3] Henry Philips (1821) *Pomarium Britannicum* p.255.
[4] John Adams and Stuart Forbes (2015), *The Syon Abbey Herbal* .

Mulberry in unknown- location in Syon Park in 1907	*Mulberry in Syon Park (Loudon, 1844)*

Syon Park 1

#1 of 9 In the water meadow behind the house, in a wooden fenced enclosure. A recumbent multi-stemmed phoenix spread over a wide area with two polar opposite new crowns. The garden team have recently removed the brambles, nettles and elder that had severely invaded the tree.
An 'outlier' relative to the orchard, its location corresponds to a kink in the wall of the 16th c formal garden /1607 "Cherrie Garden". PRC

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ1745776761		7	210	1.3	PR	+++++	2023	17th c	PRC

Syon Park 2

#2 of 9 Tagged No 755. Leaning maiden by tennis court inside the private medieval orchard, has lost several limbs. Root plate lifted slightly. Heartwood decay. Within the site of the "Newe Orcharde" (1607) PRC.

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ1743176840		7.6	201	1.5	PR	+	2023	17th c	PRC

Syon Park 3

#3 of 9 Extensively layering phoenix tree inside the private orchard. Looks like the Loch Ness monster. N of the tennis court. Hard to distinguish the original bole. The girth is for the first of the new layering stems. Within the site of the “Newe Orcharde” (1607)

One sawn stem measures 70 cm diameter (220 cm girth) PRC

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ1742076879		7	120	1.5	PR		2023	17th c?	Peter Coles

Syon Park 4

#4 of 9. Maiden with fork at 60 cm. Taped below fork. Heartwood decay. One limb fractured.

Within the site of the "Newe Orcharde" (1607) Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ1740276850		11	225	0.6	PR		2023		Peter C

Syon Park 5

#5 of 9. Pollard? in private orchard at rear of the house on N side of the shed by tennis court. One layering limb 123 cm girth. Leaning at 15 degrees.

Near to site of wall between Cherrie Garden and Newe Orcharde (1607) PRC

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ1740576833		7.64	211	0.9	PR		2023		Peter C

Syon Park 6

#6 of 9. In private orchard at rear of the house. Leaning 20 deg. Many burrs. Next to shed, tennis court and pond. Drooping, layering lower branches. On site of 1607 “Cherrie Garden”. Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ1741476814		10	210	1	PR		2023	17th c	PRC

Brentford, Syon Park 7

Private mulberry orchard
M. nigra
Heritage / champion?

#7 of 9. Probably the oldest *M. nigra* in the orchard (early 17th c or even 16th) on a mound. On site of 1607 "Cherrie Garden". Phoenix tree with mature layered stems. One 152 cm @ 1.20, another 194 @ 1.50. [single stem equivalent for these two = 78.4 diameter = 246.3 girth]. Total spread diameter aprox. 19-30 m (Several layered stems overlap with an adjacent tree (#8), which may be a phoenix scion of this one]. Peter Coles

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ1738376829		10.3	246	1.5	PR		2023	1604	PRC

Syon Park 8

#8 of 9. Possibly a layered very old phoenix from the adjacent ancient tree #7. Layering from a short, thick bole. On the edge of the orchard by a path. Potential connections to the parent in the form of snaking branches along the ground. Near to site of wall between Cherrie Orcharde and Newe Orcharde (1607) PRC

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ1738476850		9.5	157	1	PR		2023		Peter C

Syon Park 9

#9 of 9. Forked and split - taped below fork. Upright. Probably a scion / layered phoenix regrowth of adjacent tree #8. Near to site of wall between Cherrie Orcharde and Newe Orcharde (1607) PRC

ID	Grid		Height	Girth	@	Access		Date	Planted	Recorder
	TQ1738776836		9	101	0.47	PR		2023		Peter C

Annexes

***Morus nigra* research**

Peter Coles

The mulberry at Lesnes Abbey in the London Borough of Bexley

The veteran Lesnes Abbey mulberry has to be one of the Capital's most photogenic trees, on a mound flanked by the ruins of a 12th century monastery and nestled beneath ancient woodland. But the old farmhouse it once belonged to has disappeared without trace.

The Lesnes Abbey mulberry (Photo © Peter Coles)

The Lesnes Abbey mulberry has inherited an enviable pedigree, simply by its location. Standing in the shadows of what remains of the dormitory and refectory walls of a ruined 12th century Augustinian abbey, one would be forgiven for thinking this impressive old black mulberry has the credentials of a really ancient tree.

Looking north-west, with remains of the dormitory walls (Photo © Peter Coles)

The formulae for calculating the age of an old tree are quite complex, as trees grow quickly when young and more slowly with age, depending on soil and sunlight. But after looking at hundreds of old mulberries I've found that an *average* increase in girth of about 1 cm per year (over several decades) gives a reasonable 'ball park' estimate. Signs of hollowing and dropped branches are other clues to a veteran tree – which the leaning Lesnes mulberry shows. With a girth ('waist measurement') of just over two metres (225 cm), this rule of thumb would suggest the tree was planted around 200-250 years ago.

After searching in the Bexley and Kent archives, it seems that the mulberry tree does indeed probably date to the late 18th or early 19th century, when the Abbey ruins had not yet been excavated. Back then, the visible remains of the abbey were just a few bits of rubble and remnants of walls poking up in a field.

Dominating the site was an impressive farmhouse, with some of the abbey's original walls requisitioned for outbuildings and to enclose an orchard. The tree would therefore have been part of a farm, with no direct connection to the workings of the medieval abbey (already in ruins for 200 years by then).

No evidence

An information display by the tree – installed some years after I first visited it in 2013 – claims that it dates back to the early 17th century, as part of James I's (failed) attempt to foster English sericulture – rearing silkworms to produce silk thread. But this is unlikely, not least because there is no evidence of any silkworm houses nearby or any history of sericulture here. A 400-year-old mulberry would likely be completely hollow and possibly lying horizontally (as this one will be before the end of this century).

The search for a heritage link to James I's silk venture is understandable. After all the Stuart king did import thousands of mulberry saplings in the decade after he took the throne in 1603, some of which survive today. But the Lesnes tree has a cultural link with a much older tradition of growing black mulberries for their nutritious, juicy, and famously fragile fruit – notably in monastery and medieval gardens.

The Abbey

Lesnes Abbey was founded in 1178 by Richard de Lucie, who was Chief Justicier (a bit like Prime Minister) to Henry II. De Lucie apparently felt bad for not doing more to prevent the murder of Thomas Beckett at the altar of Canterbury Cathedral. Indeed, Lesnes Abbey is on one leg of the Pilgrim's Way Southwark Cathedral to to St Thomas's shrine in Canterbury amd the abbey church was dedicated to St Mary and St Thomas the Martyr.

An imposing structure, Lesnes (or Lessness) Abbey was nevertheless one of the 'smaller' monasteries which were supressed by Cardinal Wolsey in 1524-5, to fund a new college – Cardinal College – in Oxford. This was a decade before his nemesis, Henry VIII, dissolved the monasteries (1536-4) to mark his rift with the Catholic church and the Pope – and fill his coffers with plunder.

Typically, supressed monastery buildings were first weakened so that they would collapse and anything valuable, including stones from the walls, salvaged for construction projects, such as roads and mansions.

Over the following centuries, the remaining parts of walls, doorways, pillars and pulpits gradually got buried and overgrown, with just a few ruins poking up like bits of shipwreck, until the site was eventually excavated in 1909-13

One of the monastery buildings did survive intact until 1845, though. This was the Abbott's Lodging – an early 16th century brick and timber building, nestled in the angle formed by the dormitory (*dorter*), its latrines (*reredorter*), and the refectory (*frater*) at the north-west of the site. Ralph Sadler (Henry VIII's Chief Minister) lived here with his family for a while, until he sold the property.

A post-war postcard showing the Y-shaped mulberry, already starting to lean

Victorian farmhouse

The mulberry we see today was therefore undoubtedly planted by one of the farming families who lived in the imposing house on the site of the former Abbot's Lodging. If the tree was planted in or shortly after 1845, when a new farmhouse replaced the Tudor one, it would be around 177 years old. But it could be older – perhaps planted in the 1750s?

The mulberry in 2021 (photo © Peter Coles)

Since the 1530s, it is the timber and brick Abbot's Lodging and subsequent Victorian farmhouse that dominated the site, so it is both a pity that it does not have a more prominent place in the information displays, for it is this association, and not the Abbey itself, that surely marks its origin. That said, we will never know if the Abbey's infirmary also had a mulberry as part of its infirmary garden, as was often the case, but it wasn't the present tree. All parts of the black mulberry have medicinal uses that have been known for thousands of years.

Abbot's Thorn

Interestingly, an 1855 guide to Erith mentions the so-called 'Abbot's Thorn' on the Abbey site: a tree 'of great age' measuring 6'6" (198 cm) around the trunk, with two stems, and having a crown circumference of 60 feet (18.2 metres). It's not easy to confuse a thorn with a mulberry, but who knows?

North wall of the 'frater' (refectory) showing the rebuilt farmhouse. The mulberry is beyond the wall to the left of the house. [British Library]

The mulberry in 2021 (photo © Peter Coles)

Morus nigra research

Peter Coles[5]

Cambridge's mounded mulberries

Hidden deep within the secluded gardens of Christ's College, Cambridge is surely one of the most unusual ancient trees in the country – the so-called 'Milton Mulberry', named after the poet John Milton, who was a student there in the early 17th century. Unlike most ancient trees, which still have a recognisable stem and branches (albeit hollow, split, or even horizontal), this supposedly 400-year-old Black mulberry (*Morus nigra*) looks more like a giant, ivy-covered molehill, with branches poking out at all angles, supported by wooden props. A short distance away is a mini version of the tree, also mounded, but without the props.

The 'Milton Mulberry' in Fellows' Garden, Christ's College, Cambridge
[Photo: Peter Coles]

A mini clone of the Milton mulberry stands a few yards away

The late Alan Mitchell, co-founder of TROBI (Tree Register of the British Isles), refers to the Christ's college mulberry tree in his classic *Complete Guide to Trees of Britain and Northern Europe* (1985 edition) regarding the impossibility of determining its age using conventional girth measurement: "some […] trees with reputed early connections, like that under which Milton wrote *Lycidas* in Cambridge, have been mounded, leaving nothing significant to measure and so giving little away."

[5] Vicky Schilling Bursary holder 2021-22, Co-founder Morus Londinium, author *Mulberry* (Reaktion Books 2019)

This is very much the situation that faced TROBI's David Alderman, local Cambridge historian, Nick Chrimes, and the author when we visited Christ's and several other Cambridge colleges – Emmanuel, Jesus, and Corpus Christi – last summer to record their ancient mulberry trees. I followed up before Christmas with a visit to Pembroke College to record its so-called 'Spenser' mulberry (after the Elizabethan poet Edmund Spenser). As Alan Mitchell realised, a reader's pass for library archives is sometimes more useful than a tape measure and rangefinder to determine the age of an old mulberry.

Seventeenth century mulberries?

The Cambridge college mulberries all claim to have links back to the early 17th century, when King James I (who reigned 1603-25) attempted to start a domestic silk industry. Its success depended on the availability of mulberry leaves to feed the silkworms. Even though the Romans had introduced the Black mulberry in the 1st century AD (although we only have evidence of seeds, not trees), and medieval monasteries had them, James imported tens of thousands of mulberry saplings from France and the Netherlands to make his sericulture project a reality. He then commissioned a certain François de Verton, Sieur de la Forest to convince landowners to plant them and start breeding silkworms.

It seems de Verton had some modest success in Cambridge. As historian Nick Chrimes found, in Spring 1609 Christ's six-monthly accounts for 1608-9 record: '*For mulbyrie plants at the kings appyntmt 300 – XVIIIs [18 shillings]*. Later that year the college accounts record: "*Item: to Troylus for setting mulberry plants and cleaning the library… 12d*". Troylus (or Troilus) Atkinson was Head Gardener at Christ's at the time.

Emmanuel and Jesus Colleges also joined in supporting the king's venture, both purchasing 300 mulberry saplings at the same time as Christ's, while Corpus Christi bought 100 for six shillings. Emmanuel College archives also record a further expense in 1612 for … *digging a fence dych and setting fourtie mulberry trees – xii s xd [12 shillings and 10 pence]*. All three colleges – along with Corpus Christi and Pembroke – still have mulberries today with pedigrees that claim links to the 17th century.

Black mulberry in Jesus College on a little mound

If the Milton mulberry is the sole survivor of a Christ's college foray into sericulture – and was therefore planted in 1609 – there is no record of what happened to the other trees, or if any silk was ever produced. Emmanuel, which does have evidence of an attempt at sericulture, also has no record of where their other 299 (+40) trees were planted, or what happened to them.

In a further twist, the original patent for importing mulberry trees, dated 1606, stipulates "*to bring in only the white mulberry and such as be plants of themselves, and not slips of others, and of one year's growth*." Although silkworms feed happily on the leaves of Black mulberries, the Corpus Christi archives significantly record that they paid six shillings to '*the Frenchman for a 100 of white mulbury settes'* [sic].

Black mulberry in the Bursar's Garden at Corpus Christi

This rather opens a can of worms regarding the links between Cambridge's veteran Black mulberries and James I's distribution of saplings in 1609. Could it be that both Black and White mulberries were planted, but only the Black have survived? Or were today's veteran Black mulberries planted at a later date? Or did de Verton sell Black mulberry saplings and pass them off as White? The species are fairly easy to distinguish, at least when in leaf – which wouldn't have been the case in the Spring.

Milton and the mulberry

While links to the Cambridge mulberries and the 1609 purchase seem strong – despite questions over the species – the association with Milton and the appearance of the mound need a bit more research. Fortunately, most of the virtual spadework has been done by the late Dr David E Coombe (1927-99), former Fellow and Honorary Garden Steward at Christ's College, laid out in an article in Christ's College Magazine (1987).

Dr Coombe's research revealed that, while there was evidence for the purchase and 'setting' of mulberries in 1609, the first reference connecting Milton to a mulberry was an article in the Cambridge Chronicle for 14 November 1795. This recorded that, on Friday 6th November that year, a violent storm blew down 'a large mulberry tree, which, according to tradition, was planted by the celebrated poet Milton.' An entrance in an East Anglian diary for 6 November 1795 confirms the storm: "*Remarkable high winds from 3 in the morn till 6. The Mill on Coindon Hill blown down. Many more mills blown down*.

20th century postcard showing the mulberry on its mound

Clearly, if Milton was born in 1608 and the mulberries were bought the following Spring, the poet couldn't have planted them. Even when he was a student 17 years later (1625-29), he might have sat in its (minimal) shade but would hardly have been given permission to plant any trees in the Fellows' Garden. Milton achieved fame in his own lifetime (he died in 1685), so the mulberry must have acquired its Milton 'moniker' sometime before 1795 and after he published the works for which he became famous: *Lycidas* was published in 1638 and *Paradise Lost* in 1667.

The mound

Sometime before 1795, then, the mulberry became associated with the already celebrated poet and evidently became something of a curiosity. But what about the mound? If the 1795 storm had uprooted the tree, had it been righted again and supported? If so, the mound was not the first intervention. Coombe discovered a reference from 1810 describing the tree (which would have been 200 years old at the time) as "much decayed from its age" and that "some of the scholars, with a degree of sentiment, […] have endeavoured to preserve the tree from further harm by covering the damaged parts with sheet lead."

In 1836 another violent storm apparently damaged the tree, but we have to wait until 1838 to find the earliest dated illustration of 'Milton's mulberry Tree', giving us a picture of how it had aged. Coombe found a dated etching by J.M. Ince showing the crown propped up with five poles, and including the sheet lead. In 1840 an article in the Cambridge Portfolio describes the tree as having "long been stuffed with a rich composition of manure." The tree was still un-mounded when Prince Albert (Queen Victoria's consort) visited in 1843. This is confirmed a decade or so later in a watercolour by British artist Richard Banks Harraden (1778-1862), again showing the tree leaning and propped, but still without the mound.

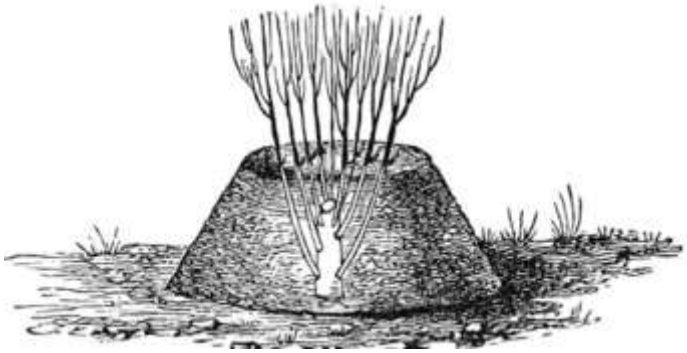
Watercolour by British artist Richard Banks Harraden (1778-1862) showing the leaning tree with props, but no mound. The tree is wrapped in lead sheeting. The likely date is not long before 1856.

The earliest illustration with the mound in place is a photograph from 1856 that shows the Head Gardener seated under the propped mulberry, now with what appears to be a recently-made mound. Next to him, seated on the ground, is the Under Gardener. “When the mound was made before 1856,” says Dr Coombe, “some or all of the lead first described in 1810 was left in situ. It can still be seen at the present day (1987) protruding from the very top of the mound among the creeping ivy.”

The 1856 photograph also shows a sapling near to the mounded mulberry, which appears on the 1886 1:500 OS map. This second mulberry, writes Dr Coombe, “must have been removed soon afterwards when it became clear that the old mounded-up tree was rejuvenated.” The present smaller mounded mulberry, nearer the wall by New Court, was planted around 1939.

A 19th century Cambridge fashion?

The Milton Mulberry is not the only mounded mulberry in Cambridge – there are others in Pembroke, Corpus Christi and Jesus colleges – but it is certainly the most spectacular. Mounding is a technique more often used to propagate shrubs by ‘layering’ (encouraging the buried stem to sucker). At Christ’s it has also been used to support a tree that has collapsed.



Mound layering
(*Dictionnaire encyclopédique Trousset*, Paris, 1886 – 1891

Mounding mulberries is not unique to Cambridge though – there is a collapsed, mounded Black mulberry in Queen’s Orchard, Greenwich Park, and some evidence of mounding around a collapsed, layering mulberry in the private orchard of Syon House. But it may be that the ‘pulling power’ of the Christ’s mulberry, in terms of celebrity, inspired competing colleges with ancient mulberries to mound theirs, too.

Spenser’s mulberry at Pembroke College

This certainly seems to be the case with the ‘Spenser mulberry’ in the Orchard of Pembroke College, named after the Elizabethan poet, Edmund Spenser, author of *The Fairie Queen*.

This original tree is fancifully said to have been planted by the poet in the 1530s and would therefore pre-date the Milton mulberry. According to the now retired Head Gardener, Nick Firman, the original, collapsed tree died in 1977. However, the College archives have no documentary record of that tree, or any early photographs, beyond a few references to it as being on (or in) a mound. There is, though, a ‘bird’s eye’ map in the College archives showing – in the exact spot where the mulberry stood – a sprawling, collapsed tree on a mound.

Detail from a birds eye view of Pembroke College showing the ancient 'Spenser' mulberry on a mound

After the old tree was grubbed out in 1977 it was replaced by a hardwood root cutting from that original. This was planted on top of a chest-high mound to perpetuate the appearance of the old tree, although Nick Firman explains (in a short YouTube video clip) that there was no horticultural need, and that it would have been 'better without the mound'.