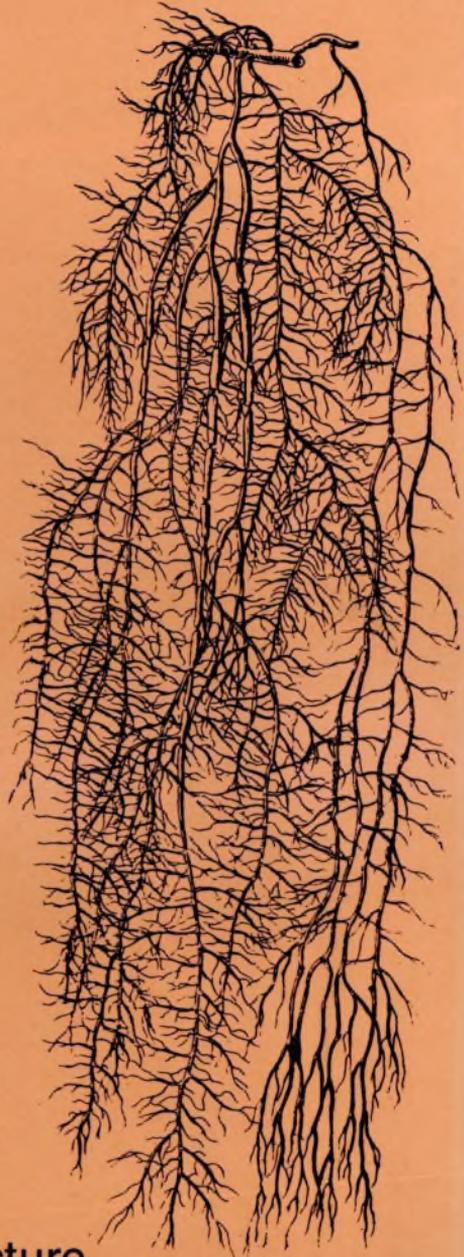


No. 64
Summer 1989

**BRITISH
LICHEN
SOCIETY
BULLETIN**



Edited by O. L. Gilbert
Dept. of Landscape Architecture,
The University, Sheffield S10 2TN

ANCIENT TREES AND THE GREAT STORM

My own observations entirely confirm those of Francis Rose (Bulletin 63). Contrary to much popular assertion, there can be no doubt that ancient trees withstood the storm of 16 October 1987 better than any other age-class. To add some examples: Pett's Wood, Chislehurst: the ancient boundary oaks stand, except where knocked over by other trees falling on them. Most of the other big (but not ancient) trees are uprooted.

Merstham-Hatch Park, Kent: the ancient hornbeams have withstood not only the storm itself but also many big hybrid poplars, planted between, collapsing on top of them. The few hornbeams uprooted are still alive. Staverton Park, Suffolk: the park, famous for its 4000 medieval pollard oaks, was right in the middle of the most devastating part of all the storm. For two miles around in all directions it is surrounded by Forestry Commission plantations of Corsican pine, which were levelled: nearly every tree - and they were big pines - was either snapped off or uprooted, except those at the edge. The medieval oaks and giant hollies are rather knocked about, but no serious harm has been done. Sotterley Park: there has been a lot of bough-breakage, but most of the ancient trees survive.

Many single ancient trees withstood the storm: for example, the Culford Oak and Haughley Oak (Suffolk) and the Alice-Holt Oak (Hants), though in areas of severe damage, did not lose a twig. Ancient woods in general suffered uprooting of coppice stools and bough-breaking of timber trees, but very few trees were actually killed by the storm. Irreversible harm has been done almost exclusively by well-meaning but ill-informed efforts at clearing up and replanting. The spectacular effects of the storm were chiefly on planted trees, especially young trees which had recently reached full size.

In general, lichens are no exception to the conclusion that the storm was good for wildlife. I much regret that conservation bodies did so little to point out its positive aspects; or to make use of the opportunities which it offered.

Oliver Rackham

FURTHER RECOLONISATION OF CHESHIRE BY EPIPHYTIC LICHENS

Since Usnea subfloridana first reappeared in Cheshire, in 1977, a great deal of recolonisation has taken place. Sulphur dioxide levels across the county now coincide with zones 6-7 on the scale of Hawksworth & Rose. These zones have become almost meaningless for the time being while lichen populations readjust to the more favourable atmosphere. Indeed it seems more appropriate to talk of recolonisation gradients rather than pollution gradients, for colonists seem to be sweeping in from the south-west.

In north-eastern parts of the county, many crack willows now support some or all of Parmelia sulcata.

P.glabratula, P.subaurifera, Hypogymnia physodes, H.tubulosa, Evernia prunastri, Ramalina farinacea and Usnea subfloridana. Parmelia subrudecta and P.revoluta have appeared in several sites, well-grown sorediate thalli of the latter up to 15cm across being found in 1989 within 15km of Manchester Town Hall at Hazel Grove. Both P.subrudecta and P.revoluta may dominate individual branches of willows in the centre of Cheshire.

A second gradient is that from willows onto other tree species. Members of the community listed for willows above are increasingly appearing on the bases of field trees, especially sycamore, ash and beech. In the south-west Evernia now occurs as well-grown thalli up to three metres or more up the trunks of exposed trees; smooth-barked young ash in particular often support Lecanora chlorotera and occasionally Lecidella elaeochroma; and twigs of clipped