



DUCKWORTHS
ARBORICULTURE LTD.

ARBORICULTURAL REPORT

TREE CONDITION SURVEY

ENGLISH MARTYRS CATHOLIC CHURCH
64 LIEBENROOD ROAD
READING
BERKSHIRE
RG30 2EB

CLIENT: GRAHAM FINCH

MAY 2026

Ref: 07023 / 2026

REPORT BY: SARAH DUCKWORTH

DipArb(RFS), TechCert(ArborA), M. Arbor.A, BA (Hons)
LANTRA Professional Tree Inspector

E: sarahcduckworth@hotmail.com
M: 07810 440546



Prepared by: Sarah Duckworth

Position: Arboricultural Consultant

Qualifications: DipArb(RFS),TechCert(ArborA),M. Arbor.A, BA (Hons),
LANTRA Professional Tree Inspector

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 INSTRUCTION

This Arboricultural Report has been commissioned by Graham Finch on behalf of The English Martyrs Catholic Church, Reading. I have been asked to provide a report on the condition of one Douglas Fir Tree (T1) growing within the grounds of the Church in light of recent branch failure.

This report is to specify any necessary remedial tree works to address identified hazards from the tree whilst acknowledging and respecting its significance to the amenity of the local area.

The report is for the sole use of the client and its reproduction or use by anyone else is forbidden unless written consent is given by the author.

1.2 INSPECTION INFORMATION

The tree was inspected on Monday 11th May 2026.

On the day of the survey the weather was bright and sunny. Visibility was satisfactory.

For the purposes of this survey all dimensions of the tree and its associated parts are measured using a laser measure or clinometer where possible. Where access is restricted, measurements have been visually estimated unless otherwise stated.

1.3 QUALIFICATIONS

Surveyor: Sarah Duckworth

- Royal Forestry Society's Professional Diploma
- Arboricultural Association's Technicians Certificate (with Distinction)
- LANTRA qualified Professional Tree Inspector
- Arboricultural Association Professional Member

1.4 INSURANCE

For your peace of mind, Duckworths Arboriculture Limited is insured with Hiscox Insurance:

- Public Liability £10,000,000
- Professional Indemnity £2,000,000

2. STATUTORY TREE PROTECTION

2.1 TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS

I have confirmed on the Reading Borough Council website that at the time of this report, T1 (Douglas Fir) is protected by Tree Preservation Order Ref. 51/06.

No works should be undertaken to protected trees without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority – exemptions apply.

2.2 CONSERVATION AREAS

English Martyrs Catholic Church is not within a Conservation Area.

3. GENERAL GUIDANCE

3.1 TREE WORK GOOD PRACTICE

Tree works should be undertaken in accordance with BS:3998 2010 'Tree Work Recommendations'.

When undertaking tree work, you are advised to use a properly qualified and experienced company who carry Public and Products Liability Insurance with a minimum of £2,000,000 cover and the relevant Employers Liability Insurance. A List of approved contractors is available from the Arboricultural Association – www.trees.org.uk.

3.2 PROTECTED SPECIES

In accordance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act - 1981, Conservation - Natural Habitats - Regulations 1994 and Countryside Rights of Way Act - 2000, you must consider the timing of tree work operations to avoid causing disturbance to any nesting or breeding birds or bat roosts that may be present.

It is an offence (subject to exceptions) to intentionally kill, injure, or take, possess, or trade in any wild animal listed, and prohibits interference with places used for shelter or protection, or intentionally disturbing animals occupying such places. Non-urgent major tree work should not be undertaken during the bird nesting or breeding season, which is considered to be from 1 March to 31 July. However, depending on seasonal temperatures, some birds continue breeding into August and September.

All wild birds, their young, their eggs and active nests are protected under law. It is an offence to damage a nest intentionally while it is in use or being built. Tree work where birds are nesting is highly likely to damage nests or cause them to be deserted.

3.3 FUNGAL DECAY

Douglas Fir can be colonised by decay-causing fungal pathogens some of which degrade wood around the roots or base of the tree. As some fungi fruit only annually, their presence may not be apparent in a seasonal tree survey.

The two most common seasonal decay fungi on Douglas Fir are *Phaeolus schweinitzii* and *Sparassis crispa*. Church members are advised to monitor the ground at the base of T1 (Douglas Fir) throughout the year. Any unusual fungal growths should be photographed and forwarded to a professional arborist for identification. The fungus growth should be left in situ to mature (for identification purposes).



Figure 1. Sample photos of fungal fruiting bodies of *Sparassis crispa* (left) and *Phaeolus schweinitzii* (right)

4. LIMITATIONS

4.1 SCOPE

T1 (Douglas Fir) has been looked at in detail using the 'Diagnosis of Ill Health in trees' and Inspecting Trees for Signs of Decay' methodologies described by R.G. Strouts and T.G. Winter¹.

My visual assessment is a non-invasive method of examining the health and structural condition of a tree. Non-invasive inspection equipment (plastic-headed mallet and metal probe) were used to make an assessment of the structural integrity at the base and trunk of the tree where the visual inspection identified the need. The lower trunk of the tree was tapped with a plastic-headed mallet to check for acoustic indication of internal decay. The differing sound intonation can often reveal some types of decay or hollow trunks.

The report is to identify visible defects on the tree and to specify any necessary remedial tree works which may be required to address identified hazards from the tree whilst acknowledging and respecting its significance to the local area as a protected tree.

The report refers to the condition of tree(s) and an assessment of the site on the days the evaluation was undertaken. The tree was assessed from ground level only and was not climbed.

4.2 CAVEATS

This report is not a structural report, and it does not consider the structural integrity of the property and its use as such is invalid.

It is the client's responsibility to ensure that this report covers all areas under the brief of the tree inspection and refer any concerns regarding this matter back to the Arboricultural Consultant.

The survey looks for defects which may make the failure of all or part of the tree foreseeable. The report then makes recommendations for remedial works which would reduce the probability of failure where the hazard presented poses an unacceptable risk to persons or property. The report is valid for normal weather conditions only. Healthy trees or parts of healthy trees may fail in normal weather situations, although the risk increases with storm conditions and, as the consequences of such weather events are unforeseeable, Sarah Duckworth (trading as Duckworth's Arboriculture Limited) cannot be held liable for any such failures.

Trees are dynamic living organisms subject to change, whose health and condition can be subject to significant change influenced by internal and external factors. The assessment, conclusions and recommendations from the report are based on the condition of the tree and surrounding ground conditions at the time of my visit. If the condition of the tree evidently changes or where tree(s) are subject to development or ground works within their rooting areas or extreme weather conditions, further inspection may be required.

This report is valid for two years from the survey date. Specifications for works are based on an assumed reinspection within two years. Further inspection is recommended prior to 11th May 2028.

Trees can never be guaranteed 100% safe. Regular inspections by competent and / or suitably qualified arboriculturists will help identify potential problems before they become acute.

¹ R.G Strouts & T.G. Winter, 'Diagnosis of Ill Health in Trees' Published for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, under license from the Controller of her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown Copyright 1994.



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5. ARBORICULTURAL INSPECTION DATA

Tree Ownership			Site Address					
Graham Finch			English Martyrs Catholic Church, 64 Liebenrood Road, Reading, RG30 2EB					
Tree Number		T1	Tree Species	Douglas Fir (<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>)			Age	Mature
Diameter:	770mm @1.5m	Height:	15m	Canopy spread	N: 6m	E: 6.6m	S: 7m	W: 6m

SITUATION:

Mature conifer growing within raised soft landscaped area to the rear of the church. The tree is 6m from the rear of the Church.

Low sleeper retaining wall 1.6m from base. Wooden landscape structures/edging around base. Paving slabs/ large, paved area within rooting area. Tree roots are visibly lifting the paving slabs.

BASE:

Base clear, Bark intact. Sound intonation even and satisfactory. No fungal fruiting bodies evident, no audible decay. No sign of root plate movement or instability.

STEM & UNIONS:

I have been advised that the tree was struck by lightning 10+ years ago. The tree has linear vertical scars on the east and west side of the lower trunk up to approximately 2m above ground level. Scars are 200mm wide at the base. Such scars can indicate a split / sheer of the internal wood fibres, however on this occasion, these vertical wounds are likely to have been caused by the lightning strike.

Single vertical stem. Excurrent form. Resinous exudates on trunk commensurate with the species.

CANOPY:

Feathered crown. Minor dead branches in crown. Branches evenly spaced in horizontal whorls up the length of the trunk.

Of the lowest whorl of branches 3m above ground level, one of the branches has split at the base and is resting on ground. Two others on south and southwest side have horizontal cracks along their bases which pre-empt failure. There are other split broken branches in upper crown resting on branches below.

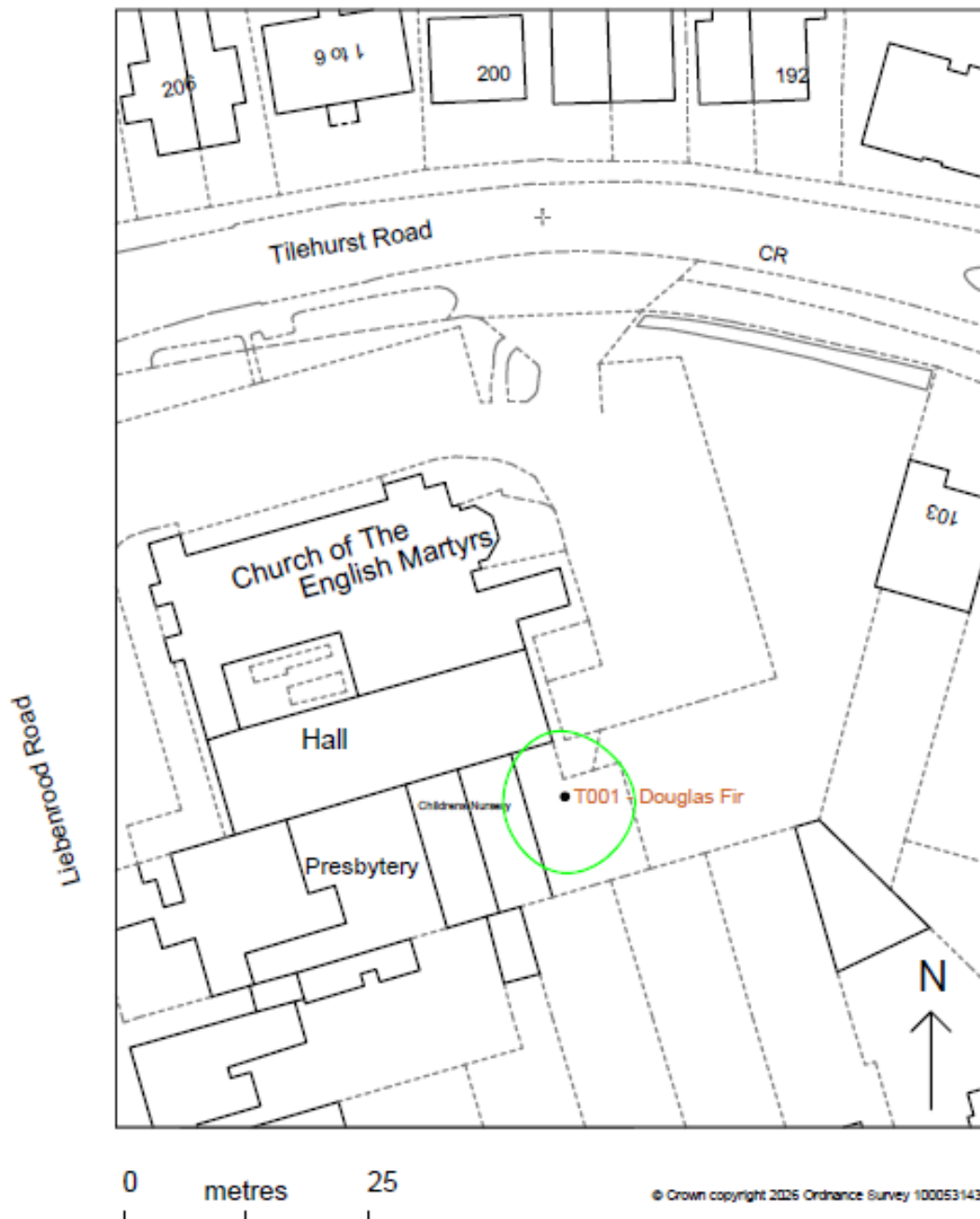
Needles dense and even. Low pendulous branches drooping to 1m above ground level over soft landscaped area and 2m over courtyard. Branch tips in direct contact with church building.

DISCUSSION:

T1 is predisposed to branch failure caused by sheering fibres at the base of many branches. Two branches have failed and at least three more in the lower canopy have visible cracks / bark scars suggesting cracks which will grow and potentially undermined the affected branch(es). Works are required to remove the defective and broken lower branches and to create reasonable clearance to the church building and above ground level. The tree should be monitored for any signs of splits forming on branches in the canopy where they may impact visitors / staff at the church.

Recommended Tree Works: 1) Remove lower whorl of branches which includes of 1x broken branch, 2x split branches and 1x branch with tips low over building / parking back to trunk. Branch diameters are approximately 100mm diameter. 2) Crown clean pruning out other dead/split broken branches higher in crown. 3) Reduce tips of single branch on west side of crown low over building by 2m to reduce weight & create reasonable clearance to building. Branch has a split forming at its base which indicates a point of future branch failure. 4) Crown lift to create 3-3.5m crown clearance over courtyard and 2.5m crown clearance over raised soft landscaped area for access / grounds maintenance. 5) Reduce tips of 2x branches on northwest and northeast side of crown by 1.5m to reduce weight & exposure following removal of lower whorl of branches & create reasonable clearance to church building.	Priority	Within 6 months
	Re-inspection due	24 Months
	Date	11 th May 2026

6. SITE PLAN



7. PHOTOS



Photo 1 – T1 (Douglas Fir)



Photo 2 – Linear splits in lower whorl of branches.



Photo 3 – Linear splits in lower whorl of branches.



Photo 4 – Lower whorl of branches to be removed.



Photo 5 – Lightning strike scars on lower trunk.



Photo 6 – Broken, hanging branch.



Photo 7 – Branches touching roof.



Photo 8 – Low crown over garden area