Simon Pryce Arboriculture

Report

Client:	**MrS J Meller**
Site:	**The Rydings, Courtenay Avenue, London, N6 4LP**
Subject:	**Inspection of trees near the house, updated report for the buildings insurers.**
Inspection date:	**15th July 2026**
Report date:	**16th August 2026**
Reference:	**26/031**
Author:	**Simon Pryce, BSc, FArborA, RCArborA, CBiol, FICFor**

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Institute of Chartered Foresters

1 Introduction

Instructions

1.1 This report has been prepared on the instructions of Mrs J Meller, the owner of The Rydings Courtenay Avenue, London, N6 4LP. I have been asked to inspect trees near the house, to assess possible insurance risks and to specify any necessary or appropriate work.

1.2 My first report on the trees, ref 04/070, was prepared in June 2004, on the instructions of Consulting Engineers Arthur J Ferryman and Associates, who were investigating subsidence in the house for the buildings insurers. That report specified works to some of the trees and other vegetation near the house in order to reduce any drying effect on the clay subsoil.

1.3 Since then the house has been stable and I have inspected the trees regularly in order to assess their condition, particularly any regrowth following pruning, and to update my recommendations. The original 2004 report was updated in 2007 and this has been done at about 2 year intervals, most recently in May 2023

Survey

1.4 This report is based on a survey on 15th July 2026 and updates the previous ones. Over the years some trees have been lost and others have grown large enough to warrant attention, but for clarity the same numbering system has been used as before. Numbers of retained trees are not reallocated and new trees have the number of the nearest existing tree followed by a letter, in order to keep them in sequence.

1.5 I have also inspected other trees in garden to assess their condition and any safety issues, covered in report reference 26/032. In 2023 I prepared a party wall report on trees growing along the south boundary in connection with building work at no.2, reference 23/025. That is not required this year but, these two surveys cover all the trees.

1.6 The trees are listed in the schedules with the individual reports and shown on the site plan, which is the same for both reports.

2 Background

2.1 The original damage is described fully in the reports of the various specialists involved in the 2004 investigation and consisted of cracking in parts of the original house, mainly around the front door. The investigation concluded that the main cause of this was two oaks growing near the front of the house, trees 1 and 15 in my reports.

2.2 The investigation also indicated that felling any of the larger, older trees might cause heave in the house or differential movement between the various parts, because the main section, which dates from the 1930s, has been extended to connect it to the garage. In view of this my first report gave options for pruning in case the engineers considered that the risk of damage from heave was unacceptably high. That approach has been taken and the only tree to be felled was a young oak near the drive, no.3, with all the other implicated trees being reduced and maintained by regular cutting of regrowth.

3 Trees

3.1 There has been little change in the trees near the house since the 2023 survey. The two large oaks, trees 1 and 15,were both reduced shortly before the survey and have grown back rapidly. They were reduced just above the earlier points, but the larger foliage volume will increase the risk to the house and next time they should be cut back to the original reduction points and then recut back them every 2 - 3 years in future. They have been developing pollard heads, or knuckles, at the original pollard points and the shoots are still relatively small, so it will not create large wounds.

3.2 Tree 10, a large oak on the boundary with no.2 and no.11, a similar tree just beyond the boundary fence in no.2 had both been declining, particularly tree 11, which is now in very poor condition. Tree 10 does not need urgent attention, but tree 11 deteriorated so badly it has been removed.

3.3 Since the original survey various trees have been felled for various reasons, including problems in Bracken Knoll caused by one of their own oak trees. In recent years several trees towards the far end of the garden have been felled for safety and since 2021 I have been surveying all the significant trees in the garden, to assess their health and any general risks. These are covered in a separate report, ref 26/032.

4 General comments

4.1 Roots of living trees dry the soil during the growing season and clay soils shrink when dried and swell as they rehydrate, which can lead to subsidence in nearby buildings if the foundations do not extend below the affected zone. This usually starts during dry summers and shows a seasonal cycle, with downward movement in summer followed by recovery through the winter when the weather is cooler and wetter and the vegetation inactive.

4.2 The size, age and vigour of an individual tree all influence its water consumption, but there is also variation between species. Oaks are naturally adapted for growth on clay, having deep, wide spreading roots and a strong ability to extract water, so are more often associated with subsidence than many other species. Most of the other trees are moderate or low risk species, although any healthy tree can affect foundations on clay soils.

4.3 Pruning to remove live foliage reduces water uptake. The small water absorbing roots die each winter, then new ones develop in spring and grow according to the tree's need, so reducing the crown and controlling new growth lessens the extent and water uptake of the root system. Healthy trees sprout after pruning, so regular recutting is essential. Heavy reduction can be harmful, but oaks tolerate pruning better than many other species, particularly regular pruning to former points.

5 Discussion

5.1 The first report dealt with damage that was triggered by the dry summer of 2003. Now the trees are being managed there have been no reported foundation problems, despite the summers of 2018 and 2022 being exceptionally dry. The main causes of the original damage were trees 1 and 15, although tree 1 is slightly smaller and farther from the house, but current climate changes confirm that hot, dry summers will occur more frequently in future. Therefore it is essential that the regular management continues and 1 and 15 should be taken back to the original reduction points again. Tree 5 was not implicated at the time, but has not been recut recently, so it has been sprouting vigorously and could affect Bracken Knoll or The Rydings if left to grow on.

5.2 The attached schedule contains updated comments and recommendations for work on the trees and other vegetation near the house. This is based on the available information and the results of the work carried out to date and will reduce any drying effect on the sub soil under the house significantly, although it might need to be reviewed if any problems recur.

Tree work

5.3 Any tree work should be carried out in accordance with BS3998: 2010, Recommendations for Treework, by an arboricultural contractor with appropriate third party and public liability insurance. The Arboricultural Association has a list of approved contractors, at https://www.trees.org.uk/ARB-Approved-Contractor-Directory .

5.4 Where trees or other woody plants are removed it is good practice to remove the stumps and main roots in order to prevent colonisation by honey fungus, which can spread into other plants, either killing them or decaying the structural roots while they are still alive, leading to them uprooting. That also makes them less likely to send up sucker shoots, which can be a problem in some species, particularly cherries.

Protected species

5.5 All bats and many birds are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994 and other legislation.

5.6 Tree work should not be undertaken during the nesting season (broadly March to August) unless a survey for nesting birds confirms that none are present. Bats and their roosts are protected and it is an offence to disturb or harm a bat, or to damage places used by bats for shelter. Trees should be inspected before any works start, and if the presence of bats is suspected, works must be stopped and advice sought from a qualified bat specialist.

Restrictions

5.7 Haringey Council's online map system shows that the garden is in Highgate Conservation Area, so the council must be given six weeks notice of any proposed felling or pruning of trees over 75mm diameter at 1.5m. They can allow this either by confirming in writing that they do not object or by letting the six weeks elapse without making a tree preservation order [TPO], which is the only way they can prevent work of which they do not approve.

5.8 Haringey's online map also shows that The Rydings and adjacent house are covered by TPOs. Parts of Courtenay Avenue are covered by the Borough of Hornsey Tree Preservation Order [TPO] no.1, 1954. However no other details are available, so it is not clear which trees might be covered, as the order would only apply to those growing when it was made. However the application process for conservation areas and TPOs is the same, so this makes little practical difference. The council have been allowing the work to date, so there is no reason to anticipate that they might not continue to do so, as there are good reasons for it.

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Tree no.	Species	Comments and recommendations in 2023	Updated comments and recommendations
The trees are described in order, starting in front of the house and going around clockwise. Asterisks in the first column denote those in other ownership. m/s = multiple stemmed.			
1	Oak	Looks as if it was cut back above the former reduction points last time so the crown is becoming larger and denser. • *Reduce back to original reduction points this year, recut every 2 years.*	No signs of work since 2023, crown much larger and denser. • *Reduce back to original reduction points this year, recut every 2 years.*
2	Yew / hawthorn group	Still sparse, but not causing problems. • *No work needed at present.*	Hawthorns are all gone now, the yews very sparse and declining rapidly, particularly those nearest to the entrance. Not a threat to the buildings, but will become unstable after they die. There are vigorous laurels growing up round them which can develop into a new hedge. • *Fell the yews. Plant new laurels to fill the gaps, then trim the entire row of laurels to form a new hedge.*
3	Oak	Removed in 2004	-
4 *	Oak	Removed after 2009	-
5 *	Oak	No signs of any recent pruning, regrowing shoots up to about 3m long. • *Reduce to former pruning points, then cut regrowth every 2 - 3 years.*	Still no signs of recent work, some dead wood in the crown, but growing back vigorously. • *Reduce to former pruning points, then cut regrowth every 2 - 3 years.*
6 *	Oak	No real change. Ivy still heavy, not particularly vigorous and well away from the houses.	Not very vigorous and is well away from the houses. Ivy starting to grow into the crown. • *Could be improved by cutting ivy but no work needed to safeguard the houses*
7	Oak	Uprooted in a storm after the 2009 survey	-
8	Cypress	Large healthy tree but not a significant threat to any of the buildings. • *No work needed.*	Little change since 2023, not a significant threat. • *No work needed.*
9	Oak	Die back has advanced slightly since 2021 but the tree is sound and healthy otherwise. • *No work needed at present*	Has become sparser since 2023, but is well away from the house. • *No work needed.*

Tree no.	Species	Comments and recommendations in 2023	Updated comments and recommendations
In the far right hand corner of the garden are assorted trees, mainly flowering cherries and other small to medium sized ornamental species, none of them close enough to be significant threats to the house.			
10	Oak	Not much change from last time, well away from the house. • *No work at present but monitor.*	Still sparse, but the lower foliage is reasonably healthy. • *No work needed to safeguard the house, but its health should be monitored.*
11 *?	Oak	Declining rapidly, safe life expectancy is severely limited. • *As before no work is needed to safeguard The Rydings, but the owner should get the tree checked, as it is becoming a safety hazard to both properties.*	Removed since 2023
12	Fern leafed beech	Just coming into leaf, bud growth is healthy, low risk species, well away from the house. • *No work needed at present.*	Upper foliage slightly sparse but no signs of die back or major dead wood. • *No work needed at present.*
12a	Sycamore	Removed	-
13	Hawthorn	Removed	-
14	Purple crab apple	Leans towards the road but still reasonably sound and healthy. • *No work needed at present.*	Being shaded and suppressed by a yew but reasonably healthy. • *No work needed.*
15	Oak	Has a nest hole in the trunk at about 5m but no signs of structurally significant decay. Like tree 1 the last reduction was not right back to the original points. • *Reduce back to original reduction points this year, recut every 2 years.*	Has grown on like tree 1. • *Reduce back to original reduction points this year, recut every 2 years.*
16	Copper beech	Low risk tree near the oak but not suppressed. Slight bulge at the graft point in the lower trunk but no signs of structural problems. • *No work needed to safeguard the house.*	Slightly one sided due to growing near the oak, but shade tolerant and not unduly suppressed. • *No work needed to safeguard the house.*

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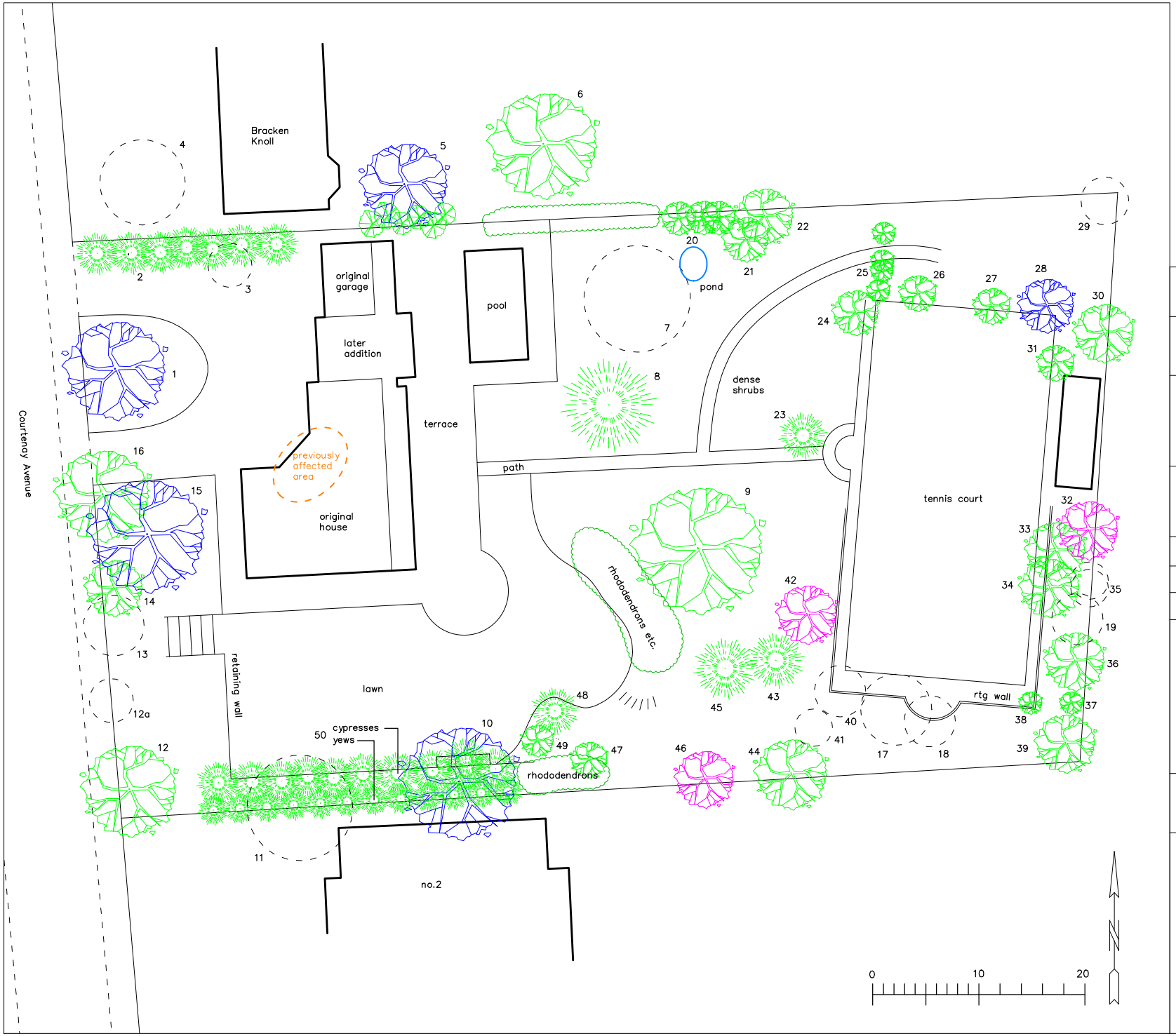

Simon Pryce Arboriculture

Client:
Mrs J Meller

Site:
The Rydings, Courtenay House,
London, N6 4LP

Title:
Tree survey

Date: 15th July 2026

Ref: 26/031+032 | Rev:

Scale: 1:500 at A4

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Original drawing:
Simon Pryce on OS Base plan

Trees are colour coded according to urgency

Red - High - urgent attention

Magenta - Moderate- address as work schedule allows

Blue - Low - address as necessary or appropriate

Green - minimal - no urgency

Grey - removed trees or stumps

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