



## NEWS RELEASE



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### Hear food foragers of yesteryear share their memories online

From nettle-root coffee to wild chestnuts for family bonfire nights, fascinating foraging tales from Second World War hedgerows have been brought to the web for the first time by environmental charity The Tree Council – and are now available to all.

Memories from across South East England, particularly **Hampshire, West Sussex** and the **Isle of Wight**, have been captured as sound recordings for a new [online oral archive](#). This is the culmination of The Tree Council's Hedgerow Harvest History project, backed by a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant of £97,300.

As well as hearing people's experiences in their own words, anyone who goes to the website can also pick up tips and inspiration for safe and sustainable foraging today.

The central aim of the two year project was to seek out the personal stories of people who gathered food from British hedgerows, particularly during the Second World War, and also to compare these with the foraging traditions of migrants from Eastern Europe. There are tales from cooks and herbalists as well as those who were champion apple scrumpers in childhood or are expert in identifying edible mushrooms – such as giant puffballs – and the various ways of eating them.

Tree Council Tree Wardens and other volunteers who have contributed to the project gathered at the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens near Romsey, Hampshire, to celebrate its completion. They included some who had recorded their stories for the sound archive and others who had interviewed them. There were also some who, backed by The Tree Council, had planted fruiting hedges or taken part in training to learn how best to look after them – all aimed at giving people in their communities opportunities to continue the foraging tradition.

Participants were able to sample food made from foraged ingredients and hear some of the project's findings from oral history expert Matthew Paskins who has played an important role throughout The Tree Council initiative, including training volunteer oral history recorders, analysing the recordings and setting them in context on the website.

Margaret Lipscombe from The Tree Council said: "Our Hedgerow Harvest History project has discovered some really interesting tales from the past, particularly from the Second World War when a lot of foraging was driven by thrift and necessity. It has also given an insight into today's foragers, whose priorities are often different.

"The foraging stories we have gathered are not simply about harvesting food for free. They also reveal aspects of childhood and family life, learning foraging skills and about nature from older generations, and cultivating allotments or gardens, as well as memories of struggle and improvisation.

The project also looks to the future and aims to introduce a new generation to the benefits and techniques of wild hedgerow foraging.

Margaret added: "When we embarked on this project our aim was to celebrate our heritage of wild food foraging, record the experiences of those involved and create a living archive to demonstrate to a new generation the value of wild hedgerow food.

“We have also been working with schools and others in local communities to promote traditional conservation skills through training events, including rejuvenating hedges and harvesting fruit. These, too, proved opportunities for new generations to learn from experienced foragers.”

Stuart McLeod, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South East, said: “It’s fantastic to hear these fascinating stories which provide a personal link to our hedgerow heritage as well as an interesting and perhaps surprising aspect of the Second World War. This project also inspires enthusiasm for an important part of our natural environment and we’re pleased to play a funding role.”

## **ENDS**

For further information and interviews, please contact:

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## **Notes to editors**

### **The Heritage Lottery Fund**

From the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife, we use National Lottery players' money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about. [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk).

### **The Tree Council and its Tree Warden Scheme**

The Tree Council is the UK’s lead charity for trees in all settings, urban and rural, promoting their importance in a changing environment. It works in partnership with communities, organisations and government to make trees matter to everyone, and is responsible for the annual community action programme that includes Seed Gathering Season, National Tree Week and Walk in the Woods month.

Fundamental to community action is the UK-wide volunteer Tree Warden Scheme which The Tree Council co-ordinates and manages. The 8,000 Tree Wardens form a national force of volunteers in local networks, dedicated to their communities’ trees – in town, city and countryside. They organise activities, fundraise, research and advise on trees and related topics.

To find out more go to [www.treecouncil.org.uk](http://www.treecouncil.org.uk)

### **Hedgerow Harvest**

The Hedgerow Harvest History project is part of The Tree Council’s Hedgerow Harvest initiative. This encourages people to gather and grow the free, healthy food on their doorstep and offers advice about what to grow and how to plant and maintain a productive hedge. It aims to build a network of hedgerow foragers who can inspire their neighbours, share their favourite recipes and carry out projects to plant productive hedges in their communities. [www.hedgerowharvest.org.uk](http://www.hedgerowharvest.org.uk)