

Women who *inspire* others in the arboriculture industry



Arboricultural
ASSOCIATION
Women in Arboriculture Group



Over 2019 and 2020, The Women in Arboriculture Group has featured a number of inspirational women within the arboricultural industry.

Our '12 Faces of Arb' features, took a look at 12 inspirational women who've chosen to make their living in this sometimes tough but always exciting industry.





EMMA SCHIAFFERT

Researcher

Since a young age trees have been a huge focus of my life, coming from a very green-fingered family. I knew I wanted to be outdoors as much as possible in my career and working in the tree industry made sense. As an arboricultural researcher, you'd probably expect that I work indoors in a laboratory with microscopes and a lab coat. While there are times that is what the position calls for, I also get to work outdoors for a good amount of the working week, sometimes inspecting trees for pests and disease issues or conducting research projects all over the country. I've worked in some of the royal gardens, attended conferences, have been to events such as the RHS flower shows, marched through London with a tree in my backpack for the Lord Mayors parade, and volunteered on projects such as war memorial tree plantings in Northern France.

The Bartlett Tree Research Laboratory in the UK was opened in 2001, and 11 years later I joined the company full time. As researchers, we regularly design, implement and monitor research trials, investigating new products and novel methods for improving tree health. With the increasing awareness of the persistence of pesticides and dangers to the environment, the need for organic and low impact treatments for trees are of greater importance than ever. The days of soil sterilants, and other toxic products are thankfully a thing of the past, and the industry is looking into more natural options for some of the more severe pests and pathogens affecting amenity trees. This is where my area of expertise is centred, as Bartlett has taught me to look down at the soil as much as looking up to the crown of trees.

A huge amount of a tree's health relies on soil characteristics and soil biology, and interactions between roots and microorganisms. At recent conferences several speakers and notable members of the industry have stated as much as 90% of all tree issues are a result from problems underground. This is why I've chosen to focus my research on alternatives for improving often poor soil conditions in urban environments for a happy harmony between tree and microbes.

Technical support for our arborists is also a large part of the role as a researcher. The arborists who manage our clients' trees advise them on the most up to date and efficient methods for keeping their trees in good health. The most exciting role is receiving diagnostic samples at the lab, and using techniques such as microscopy, chlorophyll fluorescence analysis, and other lab tests to investigate and report back the cause of the issues effecting the tree. This is what I prefer doing because it allows me to become a detective and research further into the wonderful interactions between trees, their environment and pathogens.

I've also been incredibly fortunate to travel internationally with work, venturing to places like the USA, the Netherlands, Italy, Ireland and France. I started working in this job after studying horticulture and once I'd spent some time as a summer student in the industry I never looked back! I love my job and this is a great industry to be part of, especially with a greater appreciation of the environment in recent times.

Trees are so incredibly important to our existence, from the paper we write on to the furniture we shop for, from the food we eat to the air we breathe. I am so proud to be working to protect and preserve these amazing organisms. It's so important to be content in the work that you do, and I've found arboriculture a highly rewarding industry to be working in.



EMMA SCHAFFERT

Researcher





MANDY MAYNARD

Business Relationship Manager

Just in time for the coldest week of the year so far, at the end of January, Mandy decided to pack up her desk and pick up her chainsaw to complete her Lantra Awards 5-Day Chainsaw Maintenance, Cross Cutting, Felling and Processing trees up to 200mm course.

Despite the sub-zero temperatures Mandy quickly got involved, along with her colleague and partner in crime Sean Duffy. Read all about her week out in the field;

Day 1

"Our first day kicked off in the classroom at 8:30am. It's important you learn and know all about the tools that are used in the industry before actually using them yourself. We learnt how to strip and rebuild a chainsaw and sharpen the saw. We were also taught the ten safety features of a chainsaw, along with health and safety, and emergency procedures. The classroom day was the coldest day out of the lot because you aren't as active as when you're out in the woods. Part of you just wants to get out there and get going, but at the same time you really appreciate just how powerful the tools you are using are, and the risks associated with them. By 3:30pm we had finished our day 1 and were ready to get cutting in day two."

Day 2

"We started day 2 in Cheadle Woods, in Stoke-on-Trent which was only half an hour from our Training Provider. It was a bitterly cold start to the day with temperatures struggling to rise over -2 degrees. Our Instructor, Steve Hulme taught us about the dangers of the woods, and what was expected of us. We observed some demonstrations of felling and how-to warm start and cold start a chainsaw, before discussing two felling techniques. It was then time to get stuck in ourselves. We learned and practiced snedding, clearing the brash, how to cross cut a tree, and how to stack logs. A thoroughly enjoyable day despite the freezing cold weather, where we were taught lots of new things in the world of arboriculture! Hats off to anyone who has to tackle such a challenging job in such testing conditions."

Day 3

"Day 3 kicked off in the classroom, where we reviewed everything we had learned in the past couple of days. We spent a bit of time reminding ourselves of the safety of the chainsaw, felling techniques as well as tension and compression. Once we were ready to go, we sharpened our chainsaws and headed back into the woods. We learned two more felling techniques and practiced, practiced, practiced! It's hard work and really takes it out of you, but at the same time very rewarding. We always made sure we left the woods in a suitable state for any others that may visit. There is so much to think about, it is certainly both mentally and physically demanding."

Day 4

"Day 4, and we get started off in the classroom. A quick equipment-check and we were back off to the forest for more fun! After three days of the course I really felt I knew what I was doing, and my confidence had grown a lot. We practiced all that we had learned and gained new knowledge on how to inspect a tree and know the best surgery for it, whether it needed a spear cut, a fell, or a forward fell. It was a day of work and practice."



Day 5

"Before I knew it, it was the last day of our course. It started with a quick questions and answer session, which was the perfect opportunity to show off what I had learned as well as ask any questions. I asked some final questions around the maintenance of the chainsaw, and then off we went back into Cheadle Woods to practice anything else we felt less confident doing. For me that was snedding, so the last day was a great chance for me to master that skill. It was minus degrees and hammering it down with snow, but inside the forest it felt like we were in some kind of tropical-winter climate."

"The smell of the trees and the fir was phenomenal, it was amazing to work in such a beautiful environment. By the end of the week, I didn't even know my own name! My elbows hurt, I found muscles I was never even aware I had, and I loved every minute of the whole experience."

"When asked by the Instructor how many trees I thought I could fell in a day I thought at a push I could sink at least six over an eight-hour shift. My respect went through the roof when I found out that Forestry contractors get through 80 trees in an eight-hour shift! Respect all the way!"

"I would like to personally thank our Provider Partners Countryside Training and Tree Management for accommodating us, Steve Hulme for instructing the course so brilliantly, Brampton Valley Training for providing our helmets, STIHL for all of our equipment and Haix for the comfy chainsaw boots!"

"All that was left to do was my assessment and I passed!"

Thank you to everyone involved!



MANDY MAYNARD
Business Relationship Manager



COLLEEN O'SULLIVAN

Tree Officer

London Borough of Camden

I've been working as a tree officer in London for about seven years now, but I have spent my whole working career in and around trees. Starting in 1999 I worked in garden centres after school and on breaks from university. After earning a degree in Humanities I remained working in horticulture, eventually moving to Oregon, where I spent 5 years working in landscape maintenance. Having earned a few horticultural qualifications there, I was always envious of colleagues who had a background and education with trees. Forward to 2009 when I began my own arboricultural focused educational journey when I became an ISA certified arborist and enrolled in an urban forestry class. In 2010 I made the jump from Oregon to Preston, UK to earn an MSc Urban Forestry and Arboriculture at Myerscough College. I have gone on since to become an ISA certified municipal specialist, ISA TRAQ qualified and earn a graduate certificate in Agroforestry.





COLLEEN O'SULLIVAN

Tree Officer

London Borough of Camden

In 2011 I was lucky enough to get a job at London Borough of Camden as a Tree Officer, which had a reputation for being at the forefront of good practice in urban forest management thanks to a talented tree and parks team. Growing up, I had no idea that such a job existed as a possibility. My work varies dramatically and that's what I like the most about it.

Some days I'm commenting on new national tree policies and others I am responding to a fallen limb on the highway. From Spring to Autumn I carry out tree inspections on council owned trees across the borough. In the winter, I'm more office bound with database clean-ups or website updates to do, which end up providing more in-depth data on the borough's trees to the general public on the Council's website.

In addition to my main tree officer role, I also sit on the London Tree Officers Association (LTOA) executive committee, a position I have held for the last 4½ years. It has given me the chance to get involved in so much more at a city level and national level than I ever thought I would. The LTOA has been one of the best things about becoming a tree officer. Not only do I get to regularly work on working parties with some of the most dedicated, thoughtful and interesting people, I also go to seminars and have field trips with other tree officers and tree professionals. I have had the opportunity so far to travel to Italy, Spain and several places across Britain as part of the association. It has given me a wide appreciation of the breadth and depth arboriculture entails. Recently the LTOA agreed for me to become the tree officer representative on the Arboricultural Association's Women in Arboriculture working party. This has further introduced me to a whole new group of people who work in varied roles across the field.

I would encourage anyone who has an interest in plants, trees or the environment to look at arboriculture as a career option, particularly in urban areas. The interface between nature and man-made is at its most critical in urban areas and with it provides an opportunity for arboricultural professionals to have a big impact on city environments present and future. Tree officers are at the forefront of this.



TRACY CLARKE

Tree Consultant

Tracy Clarke Tree Consultancy

I have worked as an arboriculturist for over twenty years. I consider myself fortunate to have worked closely in my career with some very enthusiastic arboriculturists, are great thinkers and doers who have supported and believed in me, and I have also made a point of fully embracing all new opportunities that come my way in my career so that I can continue to challenge myself.

I now run my own arboricultural consultancy business in Essex. I set this up in 2017 after having worked for a private consultancy for the previous thirteen years. The move was a huge leap of faith, with lots of important things at risk, but once I made the decision, I got firmly stuck into planning the change. For quite some time I had already been keeping a note book which was the centre of all my ideas, my worries, my plans and lists of things I needed to do and during my working days on the road I listened to lots of podcasts about the success of others in their businesses to inspire me and give me confidence that it was the right thing to do.





Two years on and I have never been without any work to do and in fact within my first year I have another full time consultant working in the business, who brings a wealth of experience with him, especially in ancient and veteran trees, so we'll see where that might take us, and the prospects are very exciting. As a business we provide a variety of arboricultural consultancy services and some landscaping services, we even climb trees to carry out aerial inspections from time to time!

Owning my own business enables me to do all the things I know and love; my work is varied and interesting. Building a business needs commitment and courage, I have learned lots of new skills, passed new qualifications and continue to work with other professionals who are interesting and creative. Ultimately in running my business I feel in control and involved in all the things I want to be to drive the business direction forward.

Above all else the one thing that stands out most to me, is the support of others from within the industry and my professional circles, I really couldn't have done it without them, they were there for me to help make the transition smooth, and because of that I will strive to be that support for others trying to do the same.

My advice to anyone wanting to do this, is to plan it well and go for it, I've had the full support of my family, and whilst it might be occasionally uncomfortable and at times a bit scary, this is when we grow as people!

TRACY CLARKE

Tree Consultant

Tracy Clarke Tree Consultancy



GEORGI ENNIS

Climbing Arborist

I'm 20 years old and I've been working in the Arb industry for 3 years. Whilst working as a sub-contractor, I have become more competent with climbing as I work for many companies with different tools and teams with many years of experience. I've also branched out into carving which I enjoy as it is creative. Recently, I was asked by a company to come and talk to a girl school leaver who was interested in getting into the Arb industry. We tried rope climbing and demonstrated rigging operations – I think she enjoyed the experience.

Originally, I wanted to be a Horticulturalist/Botanist so I studied at Merrist Wood College where I completed a Level 3 City and Guilds Diploma in General Horticulture. After that, I worked in a prestigious plant nursery which supplies rhododendrons and azaleas to the Queen and Royal Household. Whilst working for the nursery, I helped build a display for Chelsea Flower Show which won a gold medal. I wanted to specialise more in trees and so I returned to studying at Merrist Wood College for another two years whilst completing a Level 3 City and Guilds Diploma in Forestry plus Arboriculture and a Level 3 City and Guilds Extended Diploma in Forestry and Arboriculture.

In the past year I have been travelling and working as a sub-contractor to numerous companies in the UK, Scotland and Sweden as a climber and carver as well as attending the annual Women's Arb Camp which is held in a different country each year.

What do you love about trees?

There is so much I enjoy about working with trees. I love the seasonal changes, I love their complex biomechanics and how they react to changes in their environments. I love the history that can revolve around a single veteran tree that has witnessed great battles, social change and possibly even seen the life of a famous author writing stories under their shade. They provide so much for us; food, medicine, the oxygen we breathe. They probably hold the key to cure so many diseases which we are still unable to solve. They are the longest living organisms on this planet and form their own live museum for all to see for free. They are truly humbling to the soul.

I like the fact that everyone loves to teach or learn new skills. In general, people in this community want to develop either on the science side or the practical climbing/working side. It's always nice trying something new and finding things that work better when you're climbing and working. The community of women arborists, tree officers, scientists etc. are amazing. You never feel overwhelmed, it's always an enjoyable and educational environment.



The specialist set of skills needed to undertake tree work of any kind puts you through mental and physical agility as well as team work and good communication. Any one of these factors can be challenging but having to do all four with a team that you may have only just met, is something else. In our line of work, we have an ever changing office with a great view and an awesome workforce.

What's the biggest challenge you've faced so far?

The most unsettling situation I've had was with colleagues in the work place being inappropriate to the point of harassment, eventually my only option in this scenario was to leave. Being a young, female often has its challenges as for one, veteran tree surgeons may assume I don't have much experience as I'm fresh out of college. To change their minds, I try and show them new techniques and discuss up to date thinking in the industry.

Any plans for the future?

So, starting in September 2019, I have been offered a place at Kew Gardens in London to complete a Specialist Certificate in Arboriculture which is a year-long course. From here I might stay at Kew and take a further course which could be another move towards taking a doctorate. I could also come back into the industry and become a Tree Officer or Surveyor but for now, I'm just working and improving my experience.

What advice would you give someone looking to work in arboriculture or change career?

There is so much more to arb than just 'cutting trees' – It's such a flexible sector that anyone could find their niche within this industry and be happy for life – I know I have. Support each other and we will all have a great working life within this industry.

As with any male orientated industry, women can receive unwanted attention. If this becomes a constant problem, report it to your manager who will deal with the situation.

With the advantage of new climbing kit such as the rope wrench and chicane, it makes climbing trees much easier for anyone including women who might doubt their own strengths. There is also advancement in PPE designed specifically for women such as chainsaw trousers.

I'd like to thank everyone who supports me in the industry and those who have taught me key skills and broadened my knowledge to get me to where I am today. I am looking forward to seeing where my future takes me within the Arb industry.

GEORGI ENNIS
Climbing Arborist





MICHELLE RYAN

Consultant

Article by:
Mark Chester,
Consulting Arborist
Society.

In 2017, a group of arborists, members of the Arboricultural Association's Education and Training Committee were meeting to discuss activities when the matter of the upcoming International Women's Day was raised. Was the association doing anything to mark the occasion? And if not, could they do something? Emma Hall, who is part of the team at the Arboricultural Association, had a quick chat with Stewart Wardrop, the association's Chief Executive. Would he endorse this? Stewart's 'can-do' approach meant endorsement and the start of a journey. A new group, women in Arboriculture, was formed, with Michelle Ryan as Chair. I was keen to find out more of her journey.

Like so many of us, Michelle left school with little idea of what she wanted to do. Having grown up in the urban setting of Bradford in West Yorkshire, the idea of a career working with trees was not on the horizon. Instead, Michelle explored a variety of roles including, like some of the candidates on The Apprentice, trying professional ironing! Then came a turn at gardening, and an appreciation for plants began. She was encouraged to take a BTEC National Diploma in Horticulture. This included a module in arboriculture, and soon she was hooked. National Diploma completed, it was off to Myerscough College for the BSc in Arboriculture.

Michelle relished the technical elements of the course. The earlier modules were shared with Foundation students, and contained practical elements, including climbing and use of a chainsaw. These were enjoyable for her, although of less importance than the theory. One aspect was notable; at the start of the course, of the twenty or so students, there were only two female representative Michelle and Jo Hamilton. Both completed the course, along with seven men.

Michelle also remembers attending her first Arboricultural Association Amenity Arboriculture Conference, and there being only five or six female faces among the audience of 400! It was, she recalls, daunting. Having graduated, the lack of funds and no transport meant the need to generate funds was urgent and the first position was running an office for a firm of solicitors. However, once she could afford a car, she was applying for arboricultural positions. The position of Arboricultural Technician at Jonathan Cocking & Associates was being advertised and Michelle was appointed. She was now travelling the area, surveying trees for planning applications and safety assessments. She loved it.

A move to Cheshire, and working at a more senior level, came 18 months later, when she joined Tyler Grange. This time, she was the



sole specialist. Working for a firm of Landscape Architects and Ecologists, the focus was on planning, and so all of her time was spent on potential development sites. She enjoyed this, and also helping to develop the arboricultural unit. However, the appeal of working for a larger, was growing. She worked alongside specialists working for AECOM, and when an opening came, after 22 months with them, she applied. And was successful. She was now based in Hampshire.

Now, Michelle found herself working on planning applications, condition surveys for Transport for London, surveys for housing associations, and even surveying work for Highways England around Stonehenge. The work is varied, and there is much to be done. The arboricultural team has expanded from her and one colleague to eight. And there is work to keep the team busy. But Michelle loves it.

And in 2018, her submission to become a Professional Member of the Institute of Chartered Foresters was successful. Her Critical Analysis was based on persuading a client to retain trees ahead of submitting a planning application, rather than removing around 80% of the sites treestock in advance.

Keen to contribute, in 2017 Michelle joined the Education and Training Committee of the Arboricultural Association. Appreciating the challenges that women face entering our profession, she began working with the Association to form the new working group, which she was soon chairing. And juggling the demands that this makes. The group was launched at the 2018 ARB Show, and the response demonstrated both its need and support for it.

A team was assembled to support development work, and the pace has been frenetic. At the end of February 2019, a Forum was established to encourage discussions and dialogue. Michelle has also been to Myerscough College to attend a careers exhibition and meet students. The opportunity to mentor is also being explored.

One aspect of Michelle's journey intrigued me. Like me, she focused on the technical aspect of arboriculture. Practical arboriculture has a presence of those who are particularly competitive in physical work and the ability to climb well. At the National Tree Officer conference in Telford in November, delegates were addressed by a member of the Women in Arboriculture team who spoke of competing with men at the physical work. What were Michelle's views on this?

Michelle is remarkably refreshing and candid. She knows what she is good at (technical arboriculture) and where her strengths are. Climbing is not a strength. She focuses on her strengths, and excelling at them. She also recognises that, armed with a degree in arboriculture from Myerscough College and having recently attained Chartership, she will meet others whose knowledge and credentials are greater. This is a part of life, and she accepts it. Her focus is to do what she can, and enjoy her work.

The ability to develop a team, and do something worthwhile, is within her strengths. Michelle is determined to encourage more women in to arboriculture, to raise its profile among the next generation, and to provide those making the first tentative steps with a smile and a warm welcome. Her view is that if you love working with trees, there should be a career opportunity for you.

I look forward to seeing the fruits of Michelle's labour, and to regularly feature updates on her work.



FRANCESCA MURLEY

Utility Arborist

I have always been an outdoors sort of girl; growing up I was always outside, knee deep in the dirt, surrounded by horses, livestock and wildlife, and never took to the idea of a career that would keep me inside.

I'm 24 years old and came into the industry January 2019 as an apprentice for a company which works predominantly in the Utility sector. We ensure that the lines stay clear and that there are no trees near the vicinity zones. I am a part of a 16 strong team, am the only female, and have never enjoyed getting up so much in the early hours of the morning to get to work, which I really think speaks volumes!

A few years ago, I had a job on a livestock farm. During the colder months, I would be out with my boss and his son, and watched them carry out tree work with awe, thinking 'yeah, I could do this...I WANT to do this.' My parents and I spent a lot of time contacting different employers to ask how you could get into Arboriculture and everyone came back with "go get your tickets, then come back to me", which at the time, wasn't possible with my personal circumstances. A few months later, while scrolling through a jobsite I found a pop up for an apprenticeship in Arb, went for it and applied. I heard back quickly, had my interviews and 8 months later, with a few tickets under my belt, I am head over heels in love with the industry.

Working with a large group of men can have its challenges but mostly I have found myself with a sense of belonging; like I have 15 brothers who have my back and am surrounded with nothing but support and encouragement.

Utility has taught me a lot. We are always under the watchful eye of the Network, which means that our work is always completed complying to Health and safety regulations, and paperwork is in depth and thorough. Our vehicles are always loaded up with the correct PPE and equipment, and we are guided by our team leaders who all have varying years of experience and knowledge and are all regularly alcohol and drug tested in accordance with the Networks have a zero-tolerance policy.

I recently attended the Women's Arb Camp (WAC for short) and had an amazing time meeting 50 other women working in similar environments to myself. We spent 5 days in beautiful Finland, climbing, learning, and progressing. I can't wait for the opportunity to possibly

join them again next year and truly believe that I have gained some lifelong friends from the experience.

The Utility sector has received a lot of negative opinions for quite some time, and was often seen as being tree butchery, but in more recent years it has really proven itself to be something that requires skill and perseverance. To have a tree in front of you, that is breaching the vicinity and live zones, with a minimum clearance required, and to be able to do it without leaving a half-decimated tree is a challenge, and one that all our guys can do. In order for us to carry out Utility works, we have all been required to complete a series of additional qualifications, known as Utility suite, or UA which consists of several different exams, all of different levels ranging from basic electrical knowledge to felling, climbing and surveying around the Network. Our company takes great pride in being Arb Association Approved, with the Approved contractor accreditation awarded in 2014 and then the recently created Utility Arb Approved accreditation in 2018. I asked my manager why we go to such lengths and he explained that having this accreditation sets the bar for the level of excellence that we wish the company to achieve, and I am incredibly proud to be a part of this.



FRANCESCA MURLEY

Utility Arborist





KIRSTY McNICOL

Training Manager

I have been in the industry for the last 13 years, with my current position being Training & LOLER Manager. I come from a non-arb background, with previous jobs including aromatherapist, administrator and adult learning tutor. From my initial role as a contract administrator on a national tree cutting contract, I have worked hard to develop and build my knowledge of the industry and have moved up through various roles.

Having set up and then managed Hi-Line's HR & Training department for several years (and having interviewed probably more potential arborists than most people will do!) I then moved into my current position. As well as my role managing Hi-Line Training I am part of the Senior Management Team at Hi-Line and am also a member of the Arb Association Media & Communications Committee.

My love & knowledge of trees and the industry has grown and developed and, as well as lots of informal learning, over the past few years I have studied for my Level 2 Arboriculture and other qualifications. Being given the opportunity to focus on developing Hi-Line Training as an independent training and LOLER provider has enabled me to use lots of the different skills I have gained to date and I am fortunate that no two days really look the same. I could be viewing potential training sites, discussing training with candidates/businesses, scheduling courses & LOLER inspections, doing my departments invoicing and admin work, ordering or issuing climbing kit, managing my teams diaries, producing social media posts, delivering training, working at shows/exhibitions, giving talks to organisations/schools, developing new courses or working on site feeding the chipper whilst we tidy our training woodlands! Occasionally, and not what I'd ever expected to be doing in my job, you may also see me carrying chainsaws into prisons to give workshops on working in arboriculture or shopping for large quantities of fake blood and other weird items for our arb-focused first aid +f courses!!

I am thankful that my managing director has believed in me enough (or just given into my nagging!) to let me pursue my idea of developing Hi-Line Training as an independent training provider, and for the people around me who have taught me so much about, and supported me in, this industry.

Working in arboriculture and around trees gives you the opportunity to work in some amazing locations with your work environment continually evolving and changing.

So many of the arb community have an incredible passion for their jobs, which is infectious, and you can gain so much knowledge and



experience from those around you. Whether in person, or via social media, most people are happy to share their skills and experience with others, be it help with tree or fungi id or advice on a new working technique or piece of equipment. What starts as a job often quickly turns into a bit of an obsession!

As my team will tell you my head is continually filled with plans / ideas!

Continuing to develop and establish Hi-Line Training as a high quality, forward thinking training provider, not only in the South West but across the UK, is of course high on my list.

I am passionate about promoting arboriculture to young people and in schools/colleges and in showing the varied career opportunities available working with trees. I believe strongly in outdoor based learning and am currently studying for my Forest School Leader qualifications, with the plan being to run tree-focused forest school sessions for all ages from toddlers upwards.

Following the success of our "arborist experience days", for ex-military personnel considering a career within the industry, we are now opening these days up to anyone thinking of a new career in arb.

My background as a qualified massage therapist has led me to research injury prevention/management for climbers and how the equipment being used can impact on this. Since taking over the management of Hi-Line's LOLER inspection programme (we have over 500 kits a year in for inspection!), and the purchasing and issuing of the companies climbing kit equipment, myself and our LOLER inspector have reviewed the kit we issue our climbers and looked at how we can promote more ergonomic work practices. As well as implementing changes such as issuing Petzl Zigzags to Hi-Line's climbers, we are also in the development stage of workshops focusing on injury prevention/management for arborists, which is exciting.

For someone looking for a career in arb my advice would be to go for it. Research the area in which you want to work and see if there are any trainee/apprenticeship positions or Level 2/3 arb courses available. There are many routes into the industry so pick the one which is most suited to you. Choose high quality and relevant training and avoid spending money on qualifications you won't need initially. Most employers would prefer you to have a high standard in the basic qualifications rather than have lots of qualifications but not be that great at any of them! Even before starting your training or new job start learning about trees – go to a local park or arboretum for a walk with a basic tree ID book and just look around. You'll soon be hooked!

Don't be put off. If arboriculture is something that interests you then give it a try. There are a wide range of careers in our industry and many amazing people to work with and learn from. Yes, it is a male dominated industry. Yes, it can be frustrating as there are still some smaller-minded people with outdated views and attitudes within it, but you will find this everywhere. Fortunately, there are also lots of encouraging and talented people (male and female) who you will work with and who will support and teach you. Speak to women working in the industry, a good start would be the Women in Arb group, and discover what jobs they do and why they love them. Focus on the skills you have and can bring to the industry, believe in yourself and work on being the best you can be.



ELLEN THURMAN-CARVEY

Nursery Sales Manager

My journey into the tree world

Making the decision of the direction in which your career is going to go is a tough one, one I am not sure any of us are ready to make at the time we end up doing it; predominantly with very little experience of life or work. For me, I had finished university and was ready to earn a wage for a while. I studied Environmental Sciences at Southampton University, it was a great undergraduate degree, which I thoroughly enjoyed. The pathway I had taken had exposed me to a huge range of topics, any I could have decided to pursue; from Green Politics to Environmental Law to Environmental Economics. I was the definition of a jack of all trades and master of none when I finished and had no idea in which direction to head.

So, I joined an environmental recruitment agency and did some temping locally until Keith Sacre, the Sales Director at Barcham Trees and a life-time friend to my family, approached me to see if I fancied helping with an Environmental project Barcham were embarking on. It was going to be good for my CV and help out Barcham, so I started working for Barcham on a consultative basis, with very little expectation. In time, Keith recognised I fitted in well with the people I was working with and when an opportunity arose for me to join the sales team, he offered the role to me. I was a little hesitant, as I knew nothing about trees, but I could see the benefit of having some more experience and thought it was worth a go.... I started with Barcham on the Sales team in May 2005 and since then have been exposed to a whole new world and industry which I simply did not know existed and I am sure many young people still do not know exists.

During my time with the business I have done some more studying, supported by Barcham, completing both a Foundation Degree in Arboriculture with Myerscough and a Masters in Business Administration with the Open University. These courses have helped to equip me with additional skills that have been useful to my role as it has developed.

Initially starting in general sales, I have been a part of many interesting and unique initiatives at Barcham, from attending the Chelsea Flower Show for the first time to helping to plan and deliver our first Ecommerce website, to getting a planting team up and running. As my experience of the business increased and the needs of the business changed, my focus became providing a more comprehensive experience to our retail customers, which I very much enjoyed. This allowed me to start to run a small team and a component of the business on my own, which was a great stepping stone to the more general role that I have now.

As our business grew over the years, so did our Sales team and Keith's involvement in the wider industry, which has essentially formulated an enhanced role for him at Barcham, and therefore the opportunity for me to step into the Sales Director role in the autumn of 2017. On a day to day basis I now manage the Sales operation at Barcham, with a diverse sales team that are dedicated to both our customers and our business. We have a great mix of experience, knowledge and enthusiasm which helps us to deliver the high standard of products and customer service that we are all very proud of.

I really did not know how interested I would be in trees when I embarked upon this journey with Barcham, but the more I have learnt the more I have wanted to know. I have found trees fascinating and the long and poignant impact they have on the landscape, the urban environment and indeed the entire planet makes for rewarding work on a day to day basis for all of us at Barcham Trees.

I find immense satisfaction in developing ideas and people, from customers, to our team and our business and am fortunate enough to be working for a company that has a positively forward-thinking approach. We have a great team at Barcham and much to look forward to in the coming years as the business continues to grow and evolve.



ELLEN THURMAN-CARVEY Nursery Sales Manager





CATHERINE NUTTGENS

Community Forestry Manager

I started out in voluntary sector building dens and lighting fires with children and young people through Forest School projects. I moved to the public sector and led on a number of Woodland Heritage projects and then trained as a Tree Officer – a post that I have had for 5 years. Very recently I took up the post of Community Forestry Manager, which involves coordinating the planting of a lot of trees in Sheffield.

There aren't many places on earth more joyous than a British bluebell woodland on a sunny morning in early May. Trees are so many things to people. They are a fixed point in the landscape, our history, a playground, a source of food, an educational tool, a place of calm, a home for nature, a provider of shade, a cause to rally round, and the answer to the Climate Crisis according to the zeitgeist. Through the years I have been lucky to be able to witness some of the positive effects that trees have on people, and I am now in a position to enable people to have a positive effect on trees.

"I have never worked with a friendlier and more welcoming bunch of people than the arb community. I was worried that when I moved across from Woodland Heritage it would be all banter and blokeishness. It isn't, it's more like boffins and bakers (there are often some very fine apple pies in our office). Also, where else will six people jostle round a phone showing a photo of some fungus?"

The range of knowledge and skills that the industry requires really makes it special. What other industry can ask for a knowledge of Tort Law, good upper body strength, and the ability to decipher the acoustics when wood is hit with a nylon hammer? Whatever you are good at, there is probably a niche in Arb for you.

What is one of the biggest challenges you've faced in arboriculture and how/what helped you overcome it?



Starting as Community Forestry Manager in the middle of planting season is a challenge. I have a lot of trees to get in the ground, and so much more to do! Trees are big on the agenda nationally at the moment, and even more so in Sheffield, so I need to work hard to get things right. I'll tell you whether I overcome the challenge or not in May! I think we are getting there though. I am very glad I have great colleagues to support me.

I am motivated by a passion for trees and working with people to make things better understood and enjoyed. I think it would be interesting to be involved in strategy around managing the Urban Forest for nature, climate and people. The public and politicians are focussed on trees more now than ever before, and this provides us with an opportunity to educate, so that decisions made are well informed.

As a Tree Officer I used to say to my friends "I look at trees all day and then I write about them. Sometimes I listen to the birds. What's not to like?" Perhaps a bit of an over simplification. I've also neglected to mention the General Public, who, even in Sheffield (would you believe it!), almost always want trees cut down and I have to tell them no. But out of jobs that a person can have, Arboriculture is definitely one of the better ones for job satisfaction and wellbeing.

It won't be a man's industry if lots of women come and work in it, so come and join us! Initiatives like Women in Arb mean that there are enough women to provide support and advice if there are difficulties, but I have found Arb to be surprisingly more welcoming than other traditionally gender diverse jobs. There are lots of opportunities to volunteer with a local authority, contractor or consultant, so try it out and see what you think!

CATHERINE NUTTGENS
Community Forestry Manager



Arboricultural ASSOCIATION

Women in Arboriculture Group

The Women in Arboriculture Group aims to support and champion females in the tree care industry while collaborating to encourage a culture change and greater diversity. The group welcomes views, ideas and constructive comments from anyone in the industry.

www.trees.org.uk/wia

Arboricultural Association,
The Malthouse, Stroud Green,
Standish, Stonehouse,
Gloucestershire GL10 3DL

☎ **+44 (0)1242 522152**
– option 1

✉ membership@trees.org.uk

www.trees.org.uk