

The Carlton Alder

The common alder tree (*Alnus glutinosa*) growing on the bank of the small field pond by the railway in the Carlton Charity Lands turns out to be among the largest alder trees known in Britain. The tree comprises one main trunk with three smaller trunks and one more recent trunk all arising from a single stool. There are numerous shoots growing up from the base of the tree, as well as many epicormic growths on the trunks. The tree does not look as though it was coppiced in the past, but appears to have a growth form which throws up numerous basal shoots which sometimes survive and grow up into additional trunks.

The single trunk, measured where it is narrowest at 20cm above ground level, has a circumference of 477cm and a calculated diameter of 151.8cm. At 1.5m above ground level the tree comprises five stems with circumferences of 264, 118, 103, 90 and 46cm respectively. The tree is estimated to be 13.5m high.

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According to printed sources, the alder with the thickest trunk is an ancient wild tree at Dundonnell, with a single stem 170cm in diameter. The tallest alder, at 28m, is at Old Roar Ghyll, East Sussex. Of course, both of these trees will probably have grown a bit since they were measured. The on-line ancient tree inventory records 226 alder trees in England with a girth of more than 470cm, but none of these trees is in Leicestershire.

Location	Trunk diameter cm	height m	Date	Source
Geltsdale, Cumbria	245	13	2002	1
Dundonnell, Highlands	170		1986	1
Reenadinna, Kerry	187	19.5	2000	1
Auchengavin Farm, Argyll	182	13.5	1999	1
Squerryes Park, Kent	166	21	1995	1
Painswick Lodge, Glos	150		1999	1
Tretower Court, Powys	145	14	1995	1
Cowden, Kent	139	18	2000	1
Flitwick manor, Beds	139	21	1997	1
Sandling Park, Kent	118	26	<1974	2
Old Roar Ghyll, E Sussex	50	28	2001	1

Chris Peat

Sources: 1 – *Champion Trees of Britain & Ireland*, Ed O Johnson 2003. Whittet Books, Suffolk. 2 – *A Field Guide to the Trees of Britain and Northern Europe*, A Mitchell 1974. Collins, London. ISBN 0 00 212035 6.