

The Native Black Poplar in Norfolk

Patsy Dallas



2007

Abbreviations used in the text

FB	Field Boundary
NCC	Norfolk County Council
NRO	Norfolk Record Office
OS	Ordnance Survey
PB	Parish Boundary
UEA	University of East Anglia
1 st ed. OS	First Edition Ordnance Survey, 6 inch to a mile, maps

Note – Locations are referred to in the text by parish followed by the NCC reference number, e.g. **Setchey (01)**. All such references in this report refer to locations rather than individual trees, as several of the seventy-eight sites contain more than one black poplar.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Dr. Tom Williamson for reading and commenting on a draft of this report. Also to the staff of the Norfolk Records Office for their cooperation. Landowners and local residents at various locations provided valuable information about the status of individual black poplars. The Norfolk Emap Explorer website was used extensively during the preparation of the database and is a valuable resource for any such research¹.

Cover Photo: Black poplar (Graeme Cresswell).

Contents

Historical Sources and Methodology	Page 2
Locations and Topography	Page 4
Black Poplars and Industry	Page 11
Bibliography	Page 13
Appendix 1: Alterations to original table	Page 14
Appendix 2: Transcripts of Manuscript Sources	Page 15

¹ <http://www.historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk/Emap/EMapExplorer>

Historical Sources and Methodology

Documentary research was carried out for all the locations of black poplars in Norfolk, as recorded in the table and map provided by NCC Countryside Department. The table is based on a survey done by E.V.Rogers in 1992 (Rogers, 1993), with later additions and losses recorded during the ensuing years. In order to establish basic information about the general vicinity of the poplars, all tree locations were traced on the current A1 edition of the 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey maps of Norfolk. This process revealed that some of the trees were in parishes other than those listed in the original table and that some of the grid references were in adjacent 100km squares to those indicated e.g. TM rather than TG. **Appendix 1** records differences from the original table, with regard to both the location and condition of individual trees. Field visits to thirty-eight of the locations revealed some minor and some more significant discrepancies with grid references. These are also included in **Appendix 1**, along with instances where the tree in question could not be located or has been removed since the table was compiled. All new grid references quoted in this report have been obtained using the OS *Get-a-map* website², on the maximum zoom screen, for greater accuracy. During field visits, readily accessible trees were photographed and measured, in addition local inhabitants supplied information about trees that had been windblown or had work, such as pollarding, carried out recently. One tree at **Saxlingham Green (50)** has been windblown since the original table was compiled and the tree at **Bawburgh (14)** has disintegrated and been replaced with a young black poplar.

Once exact locations had been established it was possible to trace the history of the sites using a variety of documentary sources. With the exception of the trees known to have been planted in the twentieth century, the grid references for listed trees were checked against the relevant First Edition, 6 inch to a mile Ordnance Survey sheets, published during the 1880s. This process provided the first level of dating evidence for the sites and in some cases trees were shown in the exact position of existing black poplars. The First Edition OS maps also provided useful place-name evidence and in addition showed differences in land use and habitation around the trees, all of which will be discussed below and summarised in **Table 1**. Where available, the maps produced in association with Tithe commutation and Enclosure awards were consulted to provide dating evidence from the late eighteenth to mid nineteenth century. In some cases it has been possible to locate properties, field boundaries and other features on earlier estate maps, whilst correspondence and accounts have provided eighteenth-century references to poplars. The terms ‘poplar’, ‘popples’ and ‘pepyl’, found in manuscript sources have been taken to refer to black poplars up to and including most of the eighteenth century. White poplars (*Populus alba*) were usually referred to as ‘abeles’ in early documents. One source, however, referred to both abeles and white poplars but it may be that the reference to white poplars described the grey poplar (*Populus x canescens*). Hybrid poplars (e.g. *Populus canadensis*) began to be introduced in the mid eighteenth century (Cooper, 2006; p28). Correspondence exists with regard to landowners trying to acquire saplings or having problems establishing the young hybrid trees in the 1770s³. Whilst it is not possible to be certain that references to ‘poplars’ always mean black poplars it is

²<http://getamap.ordnancesurvey.co.uk>

³ NRO MC50/16/8; 1773

likely even in the later eighteenth century *Populus nigra* var. *betulifolia* was the species implied. However, care has been taken with references to ‘poplars’ in manuscript sources and in the text of this report ‘black poplar’ will always refer to *Populus nigra* var. *betulifolia*.

Documentary research has produced interesting results, in particular with regard to former industrial and agricultural activity near the trees. In addition to researching the history of the locations, some more general work on black poplars in Norfolk was undertaken. This revealed information about the cultivation of poplars, uses for poplar timber, in addition to the locations of black poplars no longer extant. Some notes on the cultivation and uses of various species of poplar were recorded in 1741, by Charles Ambler, barrister. It is not clear from Ambler’s notebook where he was writing and many of the references to legal cases from Norfolk are in a different, later hand. The notebook is however part of the Diocesan archive at the NRO so it is possible that Ambler may have had some connection to, or knowledge of Norfolk. Whether or not this is the case, his notes on poplars provide a fascinating, if brief account of their management and uses. A transcript of the notes can be found in **Appendix 2** along with transcripts of documents from the Taylor of Diss minor collection, NRO MC 257. The information gathered about the history and topography of the seventy-eight locations, along with the status of individual trees, has been entered in a fully searchable database. A copy of the database and photographs of black poplars and some related documentation has been included on an accompanying CD.

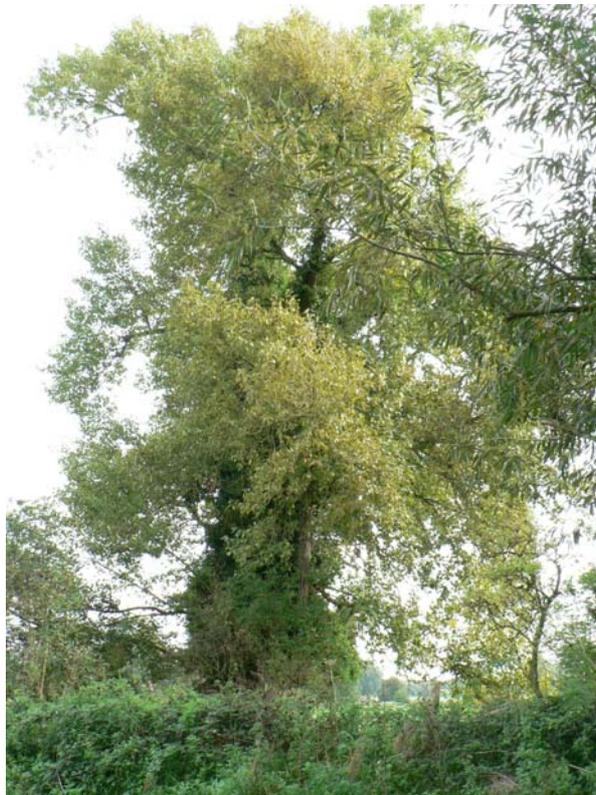


Plate 1: Northwold (21) Grid Ref. TL 751980, beside a stream on a former common. Locations and topography



Plate 2: An extract from a sketch map of Pockthorpe St James, Norwich. dated 1714 NRO DCN48/10/16/E

Locations and Topography

The sketch plan of the Pockthorpe St. James area of Norwich, shown in **Plate 1**, was consulted during research for this report. It included an early reference to a ‘popple’ tree growing on the banks of the River Wensum in 1714⁴. At this date, it is very likely that the tree illustrated was a black poplar⁵. The tree stood in what could be described as the classic black poplar location on a riverbank in an area liable to flood, similar to that of **Norwich (18)** in Old Palace Road. However, the site at Pockthorpe, which was semi-rural in the early seventeenth century, was also the scene of both agricultural and industrial activity. A coal yard and a bone [?] yard are illustrated and the First Edition OS map for the area recorded a limekiln nearby and a timber yard on the site in the 1880s. Trees were still present at the location at that date but the area is now a housing development. The data gathered for this report shows that, in common with the ‘popple’ at Pockthorpe, many Norfolk black poplars were associated with industrial sites and farms but fewer than might have been expected are located in their natural habitat. **Table 1**, below, summarises information included in the database.

⁴ NRO DCN48/10/16/E; 1714

⁵ The site at TG239092 was visited but no black poplars were located, a recent housing development occupies most of the site. The 1st ed. OS shows a tree in approximately the same location and the aerial photograph taken by the RAF in 1946 shows trees on the site.

Table 1: Topography, land-use and industry near black poplars in Norfolk.

Note – some locations are associated with more than one feature.

Feature	Number of black poplar locations adjacent or nearby
Floodplain/marsh/ Riverbank	18
Greens/commons	23
Farmyards/farms	36 (immediate vicinity not including FBs)
Kilns	10 (within 500 metres but most much nearer)
Mills	9 (as above)
Smithys	5 (immediate vicinity)
Malt houses	3

Whilst it is true that it would be possible to locate oak, ash and many other trees in close vicinity to the farms and industrial sites, the rarity of black poplars in Norfolk makes the above associations more significant. The black poplar is usually considered to be a tree of flood plains and damp, low lying ground but this is not always the case in Norfolk. Only eighteen locations are near rivers, streams or marshes of which ten could be loosely described as being on flood plains. Trees such as those at **Northwold (21)**, **Needham (38)**, **Sparham (52)** and **Diss (72)**, grow on the banks of rivers or streams but many of the Norfolk black poplars are far from their natural habitat. This is a lower number than that recorded by Rogers in 1992, probably because several of the trees lost from Rogers list were in streamside locations whereas many of the additions to the list are not (Rogers, 1992:p379). Most of the none-flood plain trees grow on medium to heavy clays although some of the north Norfolk locations such as **North Creake (04)** are on light loams. The Breckland locations such **Sturston (23)** and **Tottington (24)** tend to occur along strips of peat fen in river valleys, a notable exception being **Weeting (22)** on the edge of Bromehill Heath. The black poplar is not considered to be a woodland tree, which is bourn out by the fact that of the seventy-eight Norfolk locations only a few are sited on the edges of wet riverside woods, with just one, **Long Stratton (69)** is in the middle of a large wood. The First edition OS shows that even this location, now part of Tyrell's Wood was then the sparsely wooded Crow Green.

The location evidence suggests that the majority of the trees were planted or regenerated from fallen stock in field boundaries and around farms, rather than reproducing naturally along rivers and streams. This concurs with Rogers's results, who in addition, found that twenty five percent of the 1992 survey poplars were planted near a pond (Rogers, p379). The map survey conducted for this report found similar results, in that seventeen of the seventy-eight locations (22%) were adjacent to water sources such as ponds, pits or moats. This implies that landowners or tenants were aware of the black poplars need for a damp location, as advised by Charles Ambler in 1741. Ambler suggested that the ideal conditions were -

*Soil – Moist and boggy – not spewing. Banks of rivers, low sweet and fertile grounds and even in the drier [soils].*⁶

Field boundary and roadside trees are almost always beside a ditch and often in a hedge-line. The black poplar was clearly valued as a farmyard tree as map evidence has revealed that even trees, which now appear to be in uninhabited fields, were once in or near farmyards. For example **Burston 1 (36)**, **Thorpe Abbots 1(48)** and **Denton (53)**. In the case of Denton, five mature trees stand in the middle of a field, however the 1st edition OS map shows that the field was once two small paddocks on either side of a property, possibly a small farm. Larger farms are shown at Burston and Thorpe Abbots but no trace remains of the buildings.

The popularity of the black poplar as a farm tree may have been due to the versatility of poplar wood. Fiona Cooper states that the shock absorbent qualities of the wood made it ideal for construction of carts, whilst its fire retardant properties encouraged its use in the construction of farm buildings and hop kilns. (Cooper, 2006: P25) An example of a windblown black poplar being used to build a stable can be found in a document relating to poplars growing on The Lows Common in Palgrave, Suffolk in the late eighteenth century⁷. Eric Rogers mentioned that many of the Norfolk trees appear to have been shredded and suggested this might have been for firewood. However, given the fire retardant properties of poplar wood it is more likely that the trees were shredded for animal fodder. Charles Ambler noted that aspen foliage was cut for fodder (see **Appendix 2**) and it may be the case that black poplar foliage was equally palatable. Rogers suggested that the fast growing wood might be used for spars and it is likely that farm trees also supplied wood for general repairs to buildings and houses. Charles Ambler stated that poplar timber was used for all types of carpentry and that black poplar timber made particularly fine floor boards, “prized above oak by some” because of the whiteness and durability of the timber. The Norwich Cathedral Priory gardeners’ accounts for 1401-2 records the purchase of *pepyl* boards at a cost of 6 pence⁸.

When such versatile wood occurs in tandem with an aesthetically pleasing appearance it is hardly surprising that poplars were to be found around *Improved* eighteenth century farms. Charles Ambler described the “stately black poplars” growing in Cheshire but added that, “the black poplar rarely grows with us”. He also commented on the black poplars growing by the banks of the River Po in Italy and it may be that some of the Norfolk trees were planted by landowners who had been impressed by specimens encountered whilst abroad. The trees described by Ambler in Italy may have been the Italian hybrid black poplar ‘Serotina’ but these were not introduced in Britain until circa 1780 (Mitchell, 1996; p 274). It is possible that the native black poplar experienced a period of increased popularity during the eighteenth century before various hybrid forms began to be introduced. The aesthetic aspect may explain, in part, why not all farm trees were pollarded and why several grow in farm gardens such as **Wiveton (08)** and **Great Ellingham (29) & (30)**.

⁶ NRO DN/PCD6/5 Notes on the propagation and uses of poplars, written by Charles Ambler, barrister at law, 1741

⁷ NRO MC257/23/3/3

⁸ NRO DCN1/11/4

Some eighteenth century references to poplars on a Norfolk estate were found for the parish of Tottington. The parish has a current black poplar location, **Tottington (24)** but it is clear that other trees existed on the De Grey estate in the past. A note on tree management from circa 1775, amongst papers of Sir Thomas de Grey, instructed that the Tottington poplars should be

[pollarded?] – for cuttes or poles – [in] spring⁹

No indication was given as to what the poles were to be used for but the ‘cuttes’ may refer to cuttings or sets. A copy of an estate map of 1774, drawn by Henry Keymer records two fields in Tottington called *The Poplar Close*. The adjacent field, **H** is referred to as *The Poplar Eight Acres* on the terrier. These fields were situated near the location of **Tottington (24)**, which may equate with an area of meadow to the south of *The Poplar Closes*.

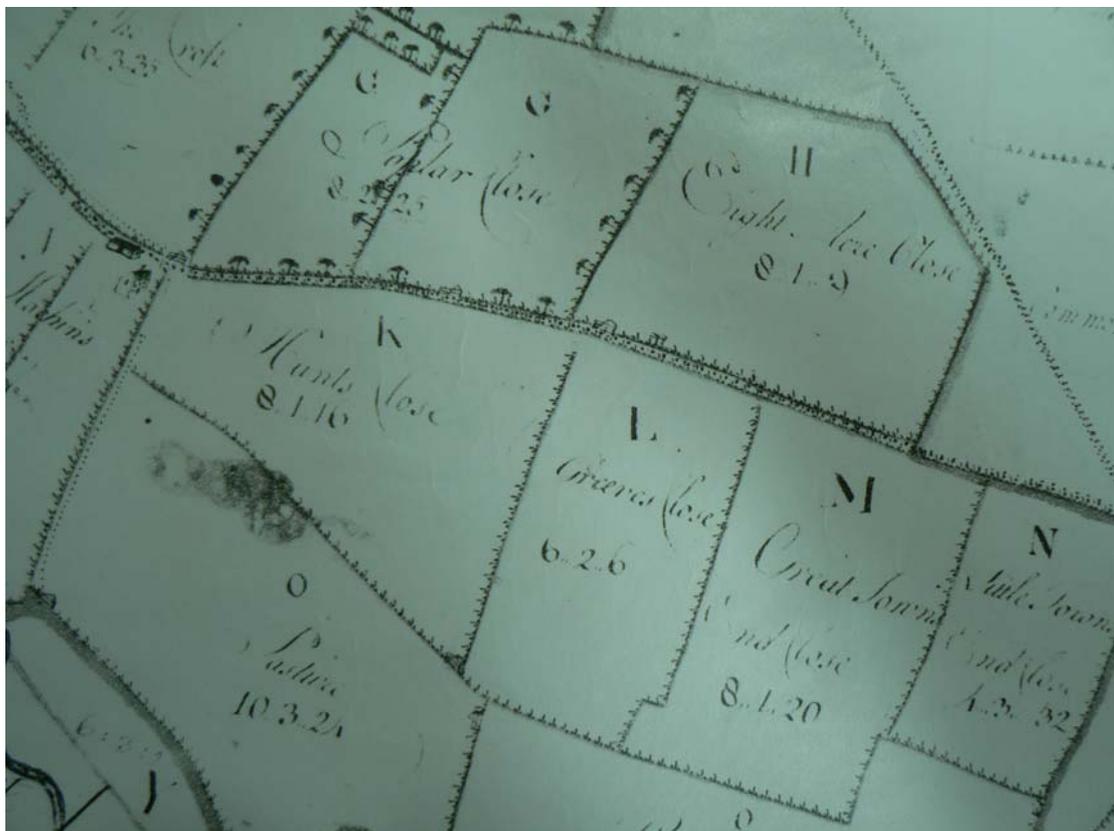


Plate 3: Extract from an estate map of Tottington and Sturston, 1774
NRO WLSXVII/4 (copy)

⁹ NRO WLSXXVII/20/41, 415x5, circa 1775



Plate 4: South Lopham (32) Grid ref. TM050802. A coppiced black poplar on Low Common Road.

As discussed above, almost half the locations of black poplars in Norfolk are in or near farmyards. In Norfolk and Suffolk many farms are situated along the edges of greens and commons, so it is not surprising to find a second correlation between black poplars and ‘common-edge’ settlements, in particular with the place-name element ‘Green’. The occurrence of existing black poplars on or near former commons and greens may also be due their preference for moist locations. Low commons such as **Northwold (21)** or **South Lopham (32)** would have provided almost ideal growing conditions for poplars. The distinctive appearance of black poplars may have resulted in some being used to mark the boundaries of commons and greens. The location of **Wacton (75)** lies on the former bounds of Wacton common and the current parish

boundary between Wacton and Great Moulton. **Plate 3**, below shows that **Tibenham (62)** was located on the boundary of Priesthorpe Green as shown on the Enclosure award of 1822¹⁰. **Plate 4** shows the tree, a pollard with a girth of 405 centimetres, which could date from the eighteenth century or earlier. It stands by a deep ditch, where the former Green tapers to a point and meets the bounds of a field, which was called 'Fishpond Piece' on the Enclosure award.

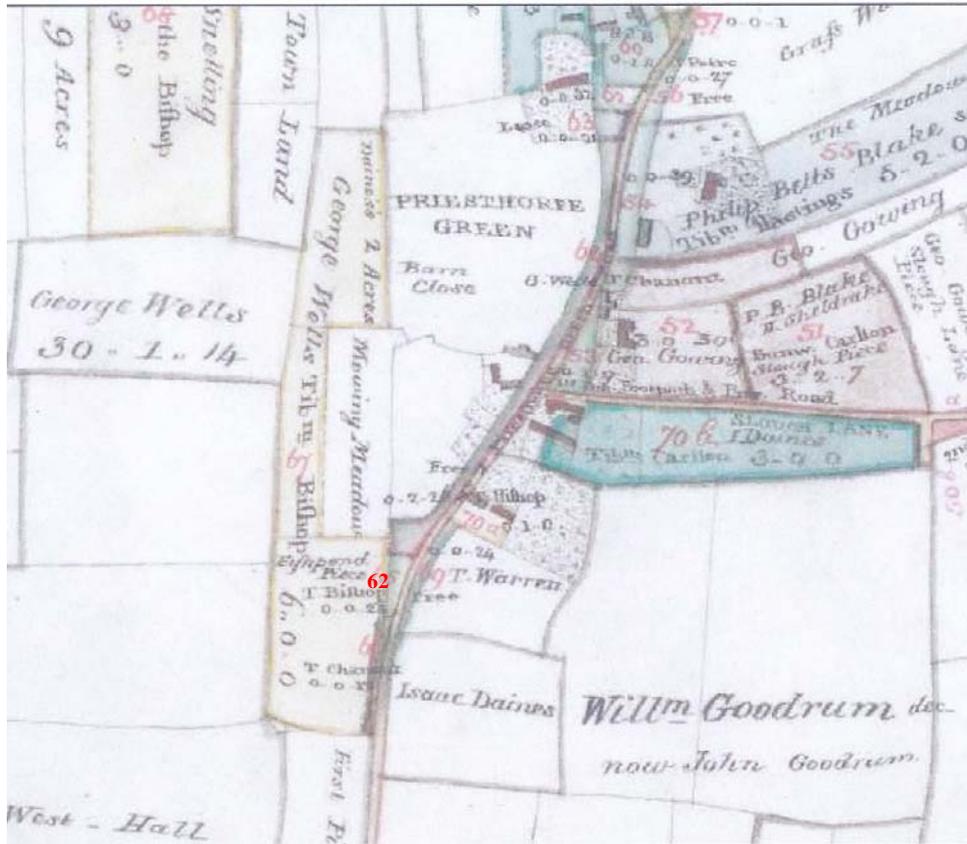


Plate 5: Extract from the map accompanying the Enclosure Award for Tibenham, indicating the location of Tibenham 62
 NRO C/Sca300; 1822

¹⁰ NRO C/Sca/300; 1822



Plate 6: Tibenham (62) Grid Ref. TM131 886. Pollarded black poplar on the bounds of Pristow Green.

Black Poplars and Industry

Charles Ambler stated that poplar wood was used by turners for making all types of domestic wares and Rogers suggested that the black poplars at **Wymondham (12)** and **(34)** may have provided wood for the local turning industry (Rogers, p 378). The fact that black poplar timber is fire resistant may be significant when considering another association revealed during research for this report. Ten locations of black poplars in Norfolk include place-name elements related to, or are located adjacent to, the sites of brick or limekilns. Another nine locations are near mills of various kinds, four are close by smithys and three near to a malt house. In the case of **Starston (38)**, the location is currently known as Poplar Farm but on the First Edition OS it was known as Brick Kiln Farm. The farm nearest to the magnificent black poplar at **East Harling (28)** was known in the nineteenth century as Lime Kiln Farm and the limekiln itself was nearby. The First Edition OS map shows a smithy within a few metres of Bradwell **(58)** in the 1880s. Charles Ambler stated that poplar wood was used by pump manufacturers and also by bellows-makers.¹¹ Kilns and smithys required bellows to achieve very high temperatures so it is therefore possible that black poplars were planted nearby to provide a ready supply of wood to manufacture or repair bellows and other items likely to come into contact with high temperatures. Similar considerations may have made the wood suitable for use in mill machinery where friction could cause wooden components to become hot. **Bawburgh (14)** was situated beside a paper mill and a smithy in the 1880s, whilst **Weeting (22)**, **Thorpe Abbots (49)** and **North Creake (04)** were all near windmills. In the case of the poplars at **Diss/Frenze (72)**, the location was near a brick kiln, mill, smithy and malt house. As mentioned above, poplar floorboards were considered by some to be superior to oak and they may have used to construct malt house floors, where the fire retardant properties of the timber would also have been important. Only three current locations occur near malt houses but a fourth was recorded in the archives of the eighteenth-century gentleman, Meadows Taylor of Diss.

Meadows Taylor was an attorney and descendant of John Taylor, Unitarian and founder of the Octagon Chapel in Norwich. In 1786 Taylor moved to Diss, having inherited from his uncle a vast portfolio of property and businesses throughout Norfolk and Suffolk. In addition to the farms inherited in 1786, the Taylor archive, NRO MC 257, includes several references to the purchase of further meadows, damp pastures and low commons. Some of these grounds were included in subsequent Enclosure awards, instigated by Taylor. The properties also included many public houses and Meadows Taylor owned a half-share in a brewing and malting business based in Diss. In 1794 Taylor bought nineteen “poplar timber trees” growing on The Lows Common in Palgrave, next to the Cockstreet Bridge across the River Waveney from a malt house in Diss. These poplars were first mentioned in a deed of 1754, when twenty were noted, growing on that part of the common granted to John Cock of Palgrave to build a property¹². Given that these trees were mature enough to be mentioned in the 1750s it seems likely that they were black poplars rather than abeles. In January 1794, prior to the sale, the nineteen trees were estimated to equate to twelve loads of timber, valued at £24. It was noted in the valuation that one tree had

¹¹ NRO DN/PCD6/5 Notes on the propagation and uses of poplars, by Charles Ambler, 1741

¹² NRO MC257/23/3/1

been windblown in 1792 and sold for 27s.¹³ The sale was concluded on 31st January and a note added in February, which stated that another tree had been windblown and used to construct a stable, as mentioned above.¹⁴

Whilst, as yet, no direct reference has been found linking the business interests of Meadows Taylor with his purchase of low lying pastures and considerable quantities of poplar wood, it is possible there may have been a connection. The poplars could have provided timber for his malt houses and hop kilns across the river in Diss, or in the construction or repair of his other properties and businesses in East Anglia. In what may be no more than a coincidence, another interesting association has been revealed in the NRO MC257, Taylor archive. Seventeen current black poplar locations occur in parishes where Meadows Taylor owned property. They are **Drayton (15)&(16); Diss/Frenze (72); Tivetshall (37); Old Buckenham (33); Wacton (75); Wymondham (12) & (34); Burston (36), (44), (45), (46) & (47); Norwich (17) & (18) and Starston (39) & (64)**. This list may be no more than a reflection of the distribution of black poplars and Taylor's properties in Norfolk, but it might be worth further work to establish if Taylor had an interest in any of the properties near existing black poplars.

In conclusion, the research carried out during the preparation of this report has revealed that *Populus nigra* var. *betulifolia*, although now rare, played an interesting role in the agricultural and industrial history of Norfolk. Before the advent of hybrid species the black poplar would appear to have provided wood and timber suitable for some very specialised situations, in addition to more mundane uses such as farm carts and turned goods. It may also be the case that the attractive and distinctive appearance of the black poplar was appreciated in the past. The results discussed above suggest further research into the history and ecology of black poplars in Norfolk would be worthwhile. Targeted field survey might well reveal unrecorded black poplars in locations similar to those described above. The fact that several trees in the database can be dated with some accuracy could be used by dendrologists to calculate the age black poplars. To this end, recording the girth measurements of more black poplars could prove useful. The connection between poplar timber and industries such as brick making and malting could be also be explored further. In particular the extensive archive of the Taylor family of Diss could be investigated to establish if they had specific uses for black poplar timber and wood in their brewing and malting businesses. The close relationship between Taylor properties and parishes with surviving black poplars could also be usefully pursued.

¹³ NRO MC257/23/3/2

¹⁴ NRO MC257/23/3/3

Bibliography

Cooper, F., (2006) *The Black Poplar: Ecology, History and Conservation*. Windgather Press, Macclesfield.

Faden's Map of Norfolk, Larks Press Edition, East Dereham, 1989

Mitchell, A., (1996), *Trees of Britain*. Harper Collins, London.

Rogers, E.V., (1993) "The native black poplar (*Populus nigra subsp betulifolia*) in Norfolk", *Transactions of the Norfolk Naturalists Society* **29**, 5, 375-82.

Norfolk Emap Explorer Website

<http://www.historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk/Emap/EMapExplorer>



Plate 7: Old Buckenham, grid ref. TM063916 unpollarded tree on Church Green

Appendix 1
Alterations to Original Table

NCC Ref	Original Field	Original Info	Alteration
01	Description	2 pollards, 1 windblown 92/93	Remaining pollard windblown 2001
02	Grid Ref	TF672367	TF671366
14	Description	Tree shooting well, Bawburgh	Tree disintegrated and removed.
15	Name	Costessey/Drayton	Drayton
16	Name	Costessey/Drayton	Drayton
17	Grid Ref	TG207088	TG205
36	Name	Gissing 1	Burston
37	Description	By ditch, near moat	No poplar or moat located at this grid ref.
41	Grid Ref	TM312008	TG
44	Name	Gissing 2	Burston
45	Name	Gissing 3	Burston
46	Name	Gissing 4	Burston
47	Name & Status	Burston; Old tree in hedge	Now Burston 5. Tree not located, building work in Orchard.
50	Status	Live tree, Saxlingham	Tree windblown, 2000/1
51	Grid Ref	TM977082	TF
53	Name	Alburgh	Denton
55	Grid Ref	TM206827	TM209
56	Name	Wilney Green	Bressingham parish
64	name & description	Black Farm, North Green	Bleach Farm, Starston Parish
65	Name	Bungay/Earsham	Earsham
69	Name	Tyrell's Wood	Long Stratton
74	Name	Edingthorpe	Paston
77	Map	NA	Froncett St. Mary, noted on map but not included in original table.
78	Map	NA	Fundenhall, noted on map but not included in original table.

Appendix 2

Transcripts and notes of documents relating to poplars.

The Notebook of Charles Ambler, Barrister at Law. 1741 (with later additions).

NRO DN/PCD6/5

Volume copied from the notes of Charles Ambler, barrister at law, 1741, with later entries re court cases and legal opinions, no date but circa 1810. At the back of the volume are some notes on the cultivation and uses of poplar trees, written in the earlier hand.

Poplar, White

Raised – from sets, slips, suckers, truncheons. From suckers best. Truncheons must be thrust into a hole made with a sharp stake, filled with water, then with fine earth pressed in and closed about them.

Soil – Moist and boggy – not spewing. Banks of rivers, low sweet and fertile grounds and even in the drier.

Growth – they will make prodigious shoots in 15 or 16 years.

Uses - They saw into boards which lying dry continue a long time.

Mushrooms. The bark sown in drills and well dunged produce mushrooms. Or warm water, in which yeast is dissolved cast upon a new stump. The fungi or mushrooms springing from poplar stumps are not venomous (whereas they are found to be so from most other trees).

This wood with ye abele is in comparable for white wood vessels – as trays, bowls and other turner's ware – also for bellows makers and ships pumps. Soles and wooden heels for shoes etc.

Price –

Species – There is a poplar of a paler green and is the properest for watery ground. Will bring a good lop in a short time and is by some preferred to willow

Also a Virginia poplar, called with us a Tulip Tree.

And an aspen – it is a hospitable tree for any thing will grow under its shade and its leaves are food for cattle.

Mountain Poplar – there is a mountain poplar much cultivated in Germany about Vienna and Bohemia, of which some trees have yielded planks of a yard in breadth.

Abele

Raised - From slips, from ye roots – the least of which will take and may in March at 3 or 4 yeas growth be transplanted. In Flanders they have large nurseries of them, which first they plant at one foot distance, the mould light and moist, by no means clayie, in which, tho' they may shoot up tall, yet for want of root they never spread. For they must be interred pretty deep, not above 3 inches above ground, and kept clean by pruning them to the middle shoot for the first two years and so till ye 3rd or fourth. When you transplant them place them at 8 – 10 or 12 foot interval. They will also grow of layers and even of cuttings in very moist places.

Growth – In three years they will come to an incredible altitude, in 12 be as big as your middle and in 18 or 20 arrive at full perfection.

Price – After the first 7 years the Abele is annually worth 12 [?]

Use – floors for Rooms and all carpenters inside works – turners ware, bellows makers, soles, pattens and wooden heels of shoes etc.

Poplars – Black

Raised – as before directed for the white poplar.

Soil – the same

Growth – the same

Uses – In Cheshire there grow many stately black poplars, which they call Peplurus and that yield boards and planks of an inch and a half thickness, so fit for flooring of rooms, by some preferred to oaks for the whiteness and lasting – where they be dry.

The black poplar rarely grows with us – it is a stronger and taller tree than the white, the leaves more dark and not so ample. They flourish about the banks of the Po in Italy.

Poplars planted on The Lows Common, Palgrave, Suffolk.

NRO MC257/23/3/1

[On reverse of document]

Grant of a piece of waste ground on Palgrave common on which are planted 20 poplars.

To all whom those presents shall come, John Cock of Palgrave in the county of Suffolk, greeting. Whereas the said John Cock is desirous to erect and build a cottage or dwelling house with suitable outhouses to the same upon a barren corner or nook of the common of Palgrave aforesaid on the right hand side of the causeway or road leading from Palgrave aforesaid to Diss in the county of Norfolk, near to Cockstreet Bridge and the river dividing the counties aforesaid and hath requested of us whose hands are here unto set and subscribed being tenants of the said manor of Palgrave aforesaid that by and with a grant or license from the lord of the manor of Palgrave he may be enabled and empowered sufficiently to take in and enclose a piece of waste ground upon the common not exceeding half and acre in quantity for the erecting and building such cottage or dwelling house with suitable outhouses aforesaid. And we the said tenants being sensible that the said piece of common ground is of small value, profit or service to us, we and each and every one of us do fully and freely for us and our heirs give and grant our free consent to the premises. In testimony etc.

16th December, 1754

NRO MC257/23/3/2

Timber valuation

1st January 1794

To 19 poplar trees standing on the waste next the river at Palgrave containing 12 loads at per load £2

£24 0s 0d

The above now valued by me the day and year above written as witness by my hand

Thos. Fulcher

N.B. There were 20 trees but one was blown down about the year 1792 and was bought by Mr. Harrow for 27s

NRO MC257/23/3/3

31st January 1794

Deed of sale between Ben. Fincham*, shopkeeper of Epping Essex and Meadows Taylor, gentleman of Diss, for the sale of 19 poplar timber trees.

....All those 19 poplar timber trees now standing growing and being in and upon the common pasture of Palgrave in the county of Suffolk called The Lows near to and on the south side of the river dividing the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk. Together with the right or liberty of cutting down and carrying away the same trees at the will and pleasure of the said Meadows Taylor, his executors and assignees and of converting the same to his own use.

[Note added to above document]

Item: In February 1795 one of the smallest of the poplar trees having been blown down nearly (tho' caught by an opposite tree of Mr. Layman's) I felled it in order to build a stable in my Broom Lay meadow. It measured of timber 0 loads 30 feet.

*Benjamin Fincham is referred to in other documents in MC257 collection as a tanner of Diss.