

Quantified Tree Risk Assessment

Newsletter March 2011

Training Calendar 2011

QTRA Licensed User Training

- 02 Mar - Chorley, Lancashire, UK
- 22 Mar - Perth, Australia
- 25 Mar - Melbourne, Australia
- 01 Apr - Auckland, New Zealand
- 07 Apr - Sydney, Australia
- 13 Apr - Brisbane, Australia
- 05 May - Guildford, Surrey, UK
- 10 May - Perigueux, France
- 26 May - Bristol, Somerset, UK
- 15 June - Henley-in-Arden, UK
- 06 Oct - Macclesfield, UK
- 13 Oct - Luton, Bedfordshire, UK
- 20 Oct - Perigueux, France
- 02 Nov - Sheffield, UK
- 23 Nov - Carlisle, Cumbria, UK

Practitioners Guide to Visual Tree Assessment

- 01 Mar - Chorley, Lancashire, UK
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Quantified Tree Risk Assessment an Evolution

It's almost eleven years since British arborists and tree managers were first introduced to QTRA in a three-day workshop at Imperial College Silwood Park. Conceived and organised by Mike Ellison and hosted by the International Society of Arboriculture UK & Ireland Chapter, the 'Principles of Tree Risk Management' workshop ran for five years and initiated a sea-change in the way that we view the risks from trees.

From a process that initially sought the simple quantification and prioritisation of tree failure risk, a risk philosophy has evolved that can assist the risk manager and tree owner in making reasonable and proportionate decisions based on clear, rational policies and the outputs of the QTRA assessor. But, despite considerable progress, there are still those in the arboricultural industry who perceive QTRA as a process by which either the risk from each and every tree must be quantified, or with which only the

high risks are quantified.

In reality, nothing could be further from the truth as is summarised here.



Using QTRA, the risks from tree failure are always considered in relation to land use and using basic GIS data and aerial photography, the distribution of trees and land-use can be quickly plotted to inform cost effectively the prioritisation of tree assessments.

At first, all that was required was a method to quantify the risk from tree failure and

QTRA fulfilled that role. As we applied the method, it became increasingly apparent that the majority of tree populations could be quickly assessed in groups and often as large collections of hundreds and even thousands of trees. On the basis of low levels of land-use, the risk associated with trees across large areas of land can be quantified and identified as so low that no particular assessment of tree safety is required.

The structured 'walkover' assessment was developed in which trees are assessed at an appropriate level of detail in relation to the adjacent land-use and where significant trees and other notable issues are recorded. In some situations, where there are perhaps large, old trees in a busy location, each and every tree might be assessed, but only where significant issues are identified is a tree recorded. Using the 'walkover' approach, the worst case risk of harm for the group is calculated and if this falls below the landowner's broad threshold for action no further

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calculations are required. If the initial calculation exceeds the threshold and is considered unacceptable, management options can be proposed and the next worst case is calculated and so on. This same approach can be applied to the 'drive-by' assessment, where a surveyor, driven by a dedicated driver, assesses the general state of trees adjacent to the highway and records those trees that exhibit signs of significant instability, later to be assessed at an appropriate level of detail. Both the 'walkover' and 'drive-by' assessments enable appropriate levels of assessment at a reasonable and proportionate cost.

Rational tree safety management should be reasonable and proportionate and using QTRA, can move away from the all too commonly applied 'better safe than sorry' and 'if it moves, kill it' principles that are so often applied.

Our Workshops

The Quantified Tree Risk Assessment Training Workshop is a one or two day course that introduces the new user to principles of probabilistic risk assessment and provides instruction in the application of the QTRA method. After an introduction, a morning field exercise is used to apply the basic method to the assessment of a single tree. Worked examples follow and we set out the framework within which the method can be applied to tree populations of all sizes. An afternoon fieldwork session, taking delegates through the 'walkover' assessment process cements the approach. We finish off indoors looking at further worked examples and various approaches to assessing the way in which land use affects the outcome of our assessments.

The Licensed User Update Workshop brings existing users up-to-date with the QTRA method. As we receive feedback from users and the method evolves, we seek to bring new information to users of the method. Updates are circulated to current users and new information is made available on the QTRA website. The direction of the update workshop is led largely by the needs of the users but we always focus some effort on the broad application of QTRA through the 'walkover' and 'drive-by' assessments.

Practitioner's Guide to Visual Tree Assessment Workshop brings together the work of several researchers and authors to present a structured approach to assessing tree stability and the effects of defects and fungal decay on the structural state of trees. We look at the structure of the tree and how an knowledge of its morphological development can inform and underpin our understanding of its colonisation and decay by fungi. The cornerstone of this workshop is the premise that a healthy tree is a mechanically self-optimising structure and we reveal that many tree management decisions belie this single truth.



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International QTRA

2010 was an interesting year for QTRA, where we developed further links with arborists and tree managers in Europe, Hong Kong and the Antipodes. Regular QTRA Training and Update workshops have continued to develop in the United Kingdom and have been attended by a wide range of professionals, including arborists, foresters, landscape architects, ecologists and tree managers from Councils, Housing Associations and large country estates.

In Australia and New Zealand, Mike Ellison and David Evans continue to deliver training workshops and were joined last year by Australian Arborist Mark Hartley, who is able to provide QTRA training between our annually scheduled workshops.



In France, our associate William Moore of Atelier de l'Arbre, delivered QTRA training to Belgian, French and Swiss arborists in a two day workshop held in Périgueux in the beautiful Dordogne region of central France. William has further workshops scheduled for May and October 2011.

In Hong Kong, Mike delivered both the QTRA and Practitioners Guide to Visual Tree Assessment training workshops to forty arborists and urban tree managers. In a rapidly evolving arboricultural industry, QTRA has provided a much needed injection of proportionality at a time when deaths from tree failure have led to a focus on tree safety.

For ISA Certified Arborists

The QTRA training, QTRA Update and Practitioner's Guide to Visual Tree Assessment workshops are now pre-approved by the International Society of Arboriculture for the award of seven CEUs each. ISA Certified Arborists can claim their CEUs at the end of each training session.



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