

Heritage mulberry hunt expands to Essex

THE Conservation Foundation has received funding from the Essex Heritage Trust to extend its ongoing survey of the country's mulberry-tree heritage to Essex. *Morus Londinium* was launched 10 years ago this year and, to date, about 1,200 trees—memorably crooked and often prostrate in old age—have been pinpointed on the project's online map, with a large concentration in London, the centre of James I's ill-starred 17th-century attempt to boost the English silk industry. However, mulberries were originally introduced by the Romans, who considered the fruits a delicacy. No trees survive from those times, but Essex's strong Roman associations make it an appropriate place to extend the survey.

Dr Peter Coles, the Foundation's mulberry expert and author of *Mulberry*, published by Reaktion Books, describes Essex as 'virgin territory', with only 30 known examples, but he does cite a sprawling ancient at St John's Abbey Gate, Colchester, the site of a former Benedictine abbey, but now 'stranded in a car park'. Visit www.conservationfoundation.co.uk/projects/morus-londinium Jack Watkins



A mulberry at Down House, Darwin's former Kent home