

It's just plane big

City tree is of national significance

By STEVE KELLY

ONE of Wangaratta's majestic London plane trees has stood tall for over a century and now it's made the 'national register of big trees'.

It stands accompanied by a family of plane trees (*Platanus x hispanica*) near the banks of the Ovens River on Baker Street.

Only red gums would dwarf the 32-metre tall, 34-metre wide marvel that has a trunk circumference of 5.73 metres.

Arbor Essence operator Gerard Reynolds, who by word of mouth reported the tree to the register's creator Derek McIntosh, said the location by the river and the climate have been ideal for the tree's growth over the past century.

"Generally they're a large growing tree anyway and they're particularly fond of conditions in the North East, as the growth season is longer," he said.

"I was impressed by the whole standing when I first saw the tree and it wasn't until I had a climb around it one day for a bit of fun that I realised how big it actually was."



NOW THAT'S A TREE: Arborist Gerard Reynolds with his daughter Ronja (4) in front of the biggest registered London plane tree in Australia (32 metres tall), located on Wangaratta's Baker Street.

PHOTO: Cheryl Browne

The tree's root system would probably stretch further than the impressive canopy above the ground and Mr Reynolds said it would span to the Ovens bank and possibly half way up Baker Street.

And while it's not the biggest tree Mr Reynolds has seen in Wangaratta with red gums taking that mantle,

it's "one of the biggest" he's seen in the city's centre when talking about volume.

It does, however, beat others of its kind across the nation, according to Mr McIntosh's points system.

It has 358 points, outscoring the second biggest registered London plane tree in Bega, NSW, by one point.

Points are calculated by

adding height, weight and 25 per cent of the crown.

In practice for work and competition climbing, Mr Reynolds and his team also make full use of the Baker Street trees.

"Competition climbing is about getting to certain points on the tree and how well you can move around it, with speed and technique

involved," he said.

But the job or sport isn't as dangerous as it sounds, as Mr Reynolds said with that type of climbing it's all rope and harness work where they set a throw line and they're protected by the rope.

To register a big tree you know of go to www.nationalregisterofbigtrees.com.au.

News in brief

Paraglider stuck in tree for six hours

A PARAGLIDER who crashed into a tree and was stuck 30 metres in the air for six hours near Bright has been rescued by the Police Search and Rescue squad.

The 68-year-old paraglider from St Kilda got into trouble between the Ovens and Wandiligong valleys when his main chute collapsed on Tuesday.

He successfully deployed his emergency chute before colliding with the top of a tree 25 to 30 metres off the ground.

Acting Sergeant Ryan Hartshorne said the man was extremely lucky, and had come out of it without a scratch.

Car gutted by blaze

FIRE gutted a Taminick man's vehicle on Saturday evening.

Police said the man was driving west along Lake Mokoan Road, Taminick at around 8.55pm when he noticed smoke coming from under the bonnet.

A Benalla Highway Patrol officer passing by at the same time attempted to extinguish the fire, but it had too great a hold on the vehicle and completely gutted the car prior to the arrival of the CFA unit.

Damage was estimated at \$4000.

Ukulele a class act

THE Wangaratta Ukulele Band is out to prove the ukulele is the easiest musical instrument in the world to play.

It is starting a beginner's course next Thursday, which will run for six weeks, for anyone 10 years and over.

Graduates can then further develop their musical skills with the main band rehearsals from 5.30pm to 7pm every Thursday night.

For further details contact Andy on 5721 7922.

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