

Sculpture: 'After the Storm' by Glenn Morris

On the morning of the 16th of October 1987, the residents of Sevenoaks awoke to an entirely altered landscape; winds of up to 134 miles per hour had torn trees from the earth and caused utter devastation. Ancient oaks and beeches that had stood for literally hundreds of years were now lying broken on the ground.

Sevenoaks, as a town, became widely known as the epicentre of the 'Great Storm' so, for me, this seemed a fitting subject and source of inspiration for this work. 'After the Storm' is made from a small section (less than a quarter) of the main stem of an oak tree that fell that night in 1987.

The timber lay for over thirty years and, as can be clearly seen from the cracks and holes, was subject to nature's steady and inexorable attempts to slowly break down the wood and return it to the earth.

Oak is, however, extremely resilient and was, until recently, the timber of choice for a wide variety of crafts including shipbuilding, furniture, transport and buildings so, even after such a long time, I was able to salvage the timber (albeit bearing the scars of time) which now, away from the damp and decaying organisms will last for hundreds of years into the future.

The ring count of the main stem would indicate that the tree was 280 years old on the day it fell victim to the storm, and therefore was a sapling when William III was on the throne and the only form of transport was by horse.

I have attempted to echo the splits that were commonplace in the massive branches as they hung from Sevenoaks' ravaged trees and also, with ironwork, a reference to man's attempts to 'fix' nature, as well as a nod to the lost crafts of the Weald of Kent, once famous for iron.



The heavy cast-iron base section was cast in one of the last great foundries in the city of Birmingham and the lines cut into it are an exact replica of the pattern of the isobars that appeared on the weather chart of Sevenoaks on the night of the storm.



Since 1987, and the onset of what is now called 'Climate Breakdown', extreme weather events are becoming more commonplace so, perhaps, the sculpture might also serve to remind us of our frailty and vulnerability as a species in the face of nature.

