

Appendix 1- Extract from "The Natural History Of Oxfordshire"  
by Dr. R. Plot, 1677  
Chapter 6

50. And thus I had immediately passed on to Elms, but that I am detained by a parcel of subterraneous Oaks, found some years since at the bottom of a Pond on Binfield–heath in the Parish of Shiplake, very firm and sound, but quite through to the heart as black as Ebony, caused I suppose by a Vitriolic humor in the Earth, which joining with Oak the parent of a fort of Galls, might reasonably enough produce such an effect, as we see they do always in the making of ink: And that I am not mistaken in this conjecture, the Ditches by the Woods side between this and Caversham will bear me witness, the Waters whereof, where they stand under Oaks and receive their droppings and fall of the leaves, being turned blacker than any Vitriolic ones, I have any where seen, except those of Mr. Tyrrill of Oakley in Buckinghamshire.

51. And these also no question performed the same feat to some Tuns of Oak found also under a Pond, belonging to the Worshipful Thomas Stonor Esq. of Watlington–Park near Blund’s Court, in the Parish of Rotherfield–Pypard, which for the benefit of the soil and other conveniences, being cleansed in July, Anno 1675. the Work–men sinking it a convenient depth, came at last, as it proved, to the top Branches of an Oak: relation whereof being made to the owner the worthy Mr. Stonor, a person not only curious but equally generous; he presently gave order for a further inquisition, and accordingly employed an equal number of man to the greatness of the work, who sinking a pit about twenty yards over, and about fifty or sixty feet deep, found many whole Oaks; whereof one stood upright perpendicular to the Horizon, the others lay obliquely, only one was inverted, the forked end downward: All of them dyed through of a black hiew like Ebony, yet much of the Timber sound enough, and fit for many, uses, several of the Trees being a foot or fourteen inches, and particularly one above three foot diameter, and all receiving a very good polish; and therefore fitter for Joyners in–laid works, than pales to set about closes, to which use that was put, which was found at Binfield.

52. Beside the Trees, all along as they dug. they met with plenty of Hazel–nuts from within a yard of the surface to the bottom of the pit, which Times iron teeth had not yet crack’d; and that which amazed me most of all, I think they lay thicker than ever they grew: Some of which, as well as the Oaks were at some places cover’d with a bluish substance, much of the consistence of the flower of Sulphur, and not much unlike to the finest blue starch; which is the *Caeruleum nativum* before mentioned in this History, Cap. 3 Sect. 18. The Oaks had none of them any roots, but plainly cut off at the kerf, as is used in felling Timber; The shells of the Nuts very firm without, but nothing remained within of the Kernel, but a shew of the dry outer rind. And the blue substance not found only upon the Nuts and Oaks, but in any other small cavities of the Earth, dispersedly here and there all over the pit.

53. Moreover, there was found a sort of white stone dispersed in like manner in pieces sometimes as big as ones fist, in colour somewhat like to white Marble or Alabaster, but of a much different texture. And near the bottom of the pit a large Stag’s–head, with the Brow–antlers, as sound as the Beam it self, with two Roman Urns, both which were broken by the incurious Workmen.

54. How the Timber should be thus dyed as black as Ebony, I hope I have made no improbable conjecture, nor is it liable that I know of to any exception, unless to a Quaere: Why the Nuts and Stags head were not dyed so too? To which it may be answered, That the pores of the shells being closer than the wood, and neither the nuts nor the horn having any thing gallish, the Vitriol of the Earth could have no power on them, whether it be wrought by repugnancy or combination, to work that effect.

55. But how the Timber should become thus buried both at Binfield and Blund’s Court? and at the latter how joyned in so strange a mixture, as Hazel–nuts, a Stag’s–head and Urns; and at some places only with an Alabastrine kind of substance? remains yet a knot not so easily loosed. However, since attempts have sometimes pleased, and it has always been acceptable in *magnis–voluisse*, I shall adventure to propound my present thoughts; still reserving the liberty to my self, as well as Reader, of thinking otherwise when sufficient grounds of change shall offer