



The disease-ridden circle of elms at Hempstead.

Disease destroys famous trees

THE famous ring of trees in the centre of Hempstead, once the arena for prize fighting, is so far diseased with Dutch elm that the trees can't be saved.

Known as Turpin's Ring, the strange circle is to be preserved by the parish council however. They plan to replace the gnarled elms with small leaved lime.

Margaret Grimster, the parish council clerk, said the Forestry Commission, after examination by experts, had told

them the centuries-old trees were diseased and could not be saved.

Last year the parish council spent £40 on what they thought would be a life-saving pollarding exercise. But this proved unsuccessful.

"Apparently once the disease has struck a tree it is unlikely they get over it. Even if the trunk is cured the roots are affected," said Mrs Grimster.

There are numerous stories about the old ring. Some say it was a place for prize-fights, another story is that cock-fights took place there and one historic account of Hempstead says it was a witches' coven.

Mrs Grimster said: "The ring is well worth looking after as a feature of the village and we hope to get some help from the district council to buy replacement trees."