

Bentley Station and The Wooden Bungalow tree walk

This walk is approximately 2.5 miles in length, parts of it over rough ground, starting and ending at the Forestry Commission car park off Gravel Hill Road. You will stop and admire magnificent examples of ten species of tree, have the opportunity to identify many more, and also to walk through the Butterfly Conservation meadow, to the start of the Shipwrights' Way near Bentley Station.

You will skirt round the Alice Holt Arboretum housing a fine collection of trees from around the world but, in the main, you will see native species, butterflies and take a little more exercise than the Arboretum offers.

1. Yew *Taxus baccata*

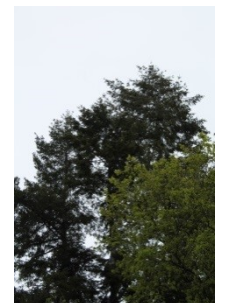
Yews are one of only three conifers native to Britain. They have usually radiated out from churchyards. Individual trees can live for thousands of years but they never grow particularly tall. Instead of a single trunk the base is a bundle of smaller ones.



There are two genders. The males grow small cones which shed clouds of pollen in early spring, and from early September the females bear small, cup-shaped berries called arils. The arils, like most parts of the yew, are not for mammalian consumption, but in November you will often see the trees seething with thrushes and crows building up their fat stores for the coming winter. At the same time they are helping to distribute the seeds of the next generation of yews.

2. European silver fir *Abies alba*

Originating in southern Europe it was brought to Britain in 1603, but only got established in upland regions where it has proved to be long-lived and is still frequent. It has not proved useful in forestry in our climate as it is vulnerable to defoliation by aphids.



It is a towering tree, which can reach over 50m in Scotland.

You start the walk at the Gravel Hill car park. Approach the barrier at the west end and our first tree, the Hour Glass Yew is on the right.

This and other tree walks in the civil parish of Binsted feature on the **Walk Alton** website and **ViewRanger**.

If you are interested in tree conservation, or other matters concerning our trees, please contact the Binsted Tree Warden at binstedtrees@gmail.com.

3. Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*

When fully grown, ash trees can reach a height of 35m. They can live to a grand old age of 400 years – even longer if coppiced, the stems traditionally providing wood for firewood and charcoal. This specimen is still relatively young. Ash is the third most common tree in Britain, but it is under attack by a fungus called *chalara* whose spores have been blown all the way from China. It is estimated that only 20% of the population will survive.



4. Japanese maple *Acer palmatum*



This is a species of small tree or tall shrub native to Japan, Korea, China, eastern Mongolia, and southeast Russia. Many different cultivars have been selected and they are grown worldwide for their large variety of attractive forms, leaf shapes, and spectacular colours. It may have multiple trunks joining close to the ground. The fruit is a pair of winged samaras ('helicopters'), each samara 2–3 cm long with a 6–8 mm seed.

Forest Research, Alice Holt

This is the research agency of the Forestry Commission and Great Britain's principal organisation for forestry and tree-related research. Forest Research is internationally renowned for the provision of science, research, evidence, data and services in support of sustainable forestry.

5. Red oak *Quercus rubra*

Not to be confused with our native *Quercus robur*, northern red oak, is an oak tree in the red oak group, the lobes of the leaves are more pointed than those of *Q. robur*. It is a native of North America, in the eastern



and central United States and southeast and south-central Canada.

6. Leyland cypress *Cupressus leylandii*



At the centre of many neighbour wars, Leyland cypress can reach great heights very quickly. It is one of the fastest growing conifers and often towers over houses and gardens. As a sterile hybrid accidentally created in

Wales from two species of cypress from North America, Leyland cypress is not found in the wild.

In the forest, however, Leyland cypress can make an impressive timber tree, and given enough room in parks and (very) large gardens it can make an imposing specimen.

7. Common beech *Fagus sylvatica*

Young leaves are lime green with silky hairs. As they mature they become darker green and lose their hairs. Beech is monoecious, meaning both male and female flowers grow on the same tree. In April and May the tassel-like male catkins hang from long stalks at the end of twigs, while female flowers grow in pairs, surrounded by a cup. The cup becomes woody once pollinated, and encloses one or two beech nuts (known as beech mast).



Beech woodland is shady and characterised by a dense carpet of fallen leaves and mast husks which prevent most woodland plants from growing. Only specialist shade-tolerant plants can survive beneath a beech canopy.

Bentley Station Meadow

The site is an interesting wet meadow on a sheltered west facing woodland edge. It is probably medieval in origin and lies mainly on Gault clay, though with an area of dry slightly acidic soil that provides variation in the vegetation.



It is managed by grazing with cattle and careful scrub control - ensuring enough remains to sustain the species relying on it.

8. English Oak *Quercus robur*



The ruling majesty of the woods, the wise old English oak holds a special place in our culture, history, and hearts. It supports more life than any other native tree species in the UK; even its fallen leaves support biodiversity. They are large,

deciduous tree growing up to 40m tall. As common oaks mature they form a broad and spreading crown with sturdy branches beneath. Oaks even shorten with age in order to extend their lifespan.

9. Silver birch *Betula pendula*

This is a striking, medium-sized deciduous tree. When mature they can reach 30m in height, forming a light canopy with elegant, drooping branches. The white bark sheds layers like tissue paper and becomes black and rugged at the base. As the trees mature, the bark develops dark, diamond-shaped fissures. After successful pollination (by wind), female catkins thicken and change colour to a dark crimson. Masses of tiny seeds are borne in autumn and dispersed by the wind.



The Shipwrights' Way

The butterfly sculpture marks the start of this 50-mile route that can take you all the way to Portsmouth, commemorating the use of Alice Holt oak timber in Tudor shipbuilding



10. Dawn redwood *Metasquoia glyptostroboides*



A deciduous redwood only known from fossils until living trees were recorded in China in 1941. This grove was planted as rooted cuttings taken from a tree raised from one of the earliest batches of seed collected in the wild. Dawn redwood has now become an important ornamental tree.