



This walk is approximately 2.5 miles in length, parts of it over rough ground, starting and ending at the Binsted Recreation Ground car park in The Street. You will stop and admire magnificent examples of ten species of tree, have the opportunity to identify many more, and have the opportunity to reflect on tree-related issues, such as wildlife conservation and tree regeneration. We recommend you download the tree identification app from the Woodland Trust website and take binoculars.

The first tree to look at is alongside the car park at the left hand end.

1. Lime *Tilia europaea*

The common lime is a hybrid of two native species – *T. cordata* and *T. platyphyllos* – but now outnumbers both. At home on a

country estate or deep in the wild, this lime is common in name only.

Limes are hermaphrodite, meaning both the male and female reproductive parts are contained within one flower. Flowers are white-yellow with five petals and hang in clusters of 2–5. Once pollinated by insects, the flowers develop into round-oval, slightly ribbed fruits, with a pointed tip.

Lime leaves are eaten by the caterpillars of many moth species, including the lime hawk, peppered, vapourer, triangle and scarce hook-tip moths. They are very attractive to aphids, providing a source of food for their predators, including hoverflies, ladybirds and many species of bird. The flowers provide nectar and pollen for insects, particularly bees. They also drink the aphid honeydew deposited on the leaves. Lime flowers were considered a valuable source of food for honey bees.

Take the exit out of the car park, turn right at The Street, cross the road and take the first driveway on the left. At the top of the slope the driveway ends and then take the footpath across meadows to the front of Holy Cross Church. Take the path into the churchyard. Once past the church go over to the right hand hedge and follow this to the wall at the end of the cemetery. The last grave you come to is that of Viscount Montgomery and the particular yew to see is the one that shelters his gravestone.

2. 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. Get up close and you can see why. Instead of a single trunk the base is a bundle of smaller ones, as if the tree keeps starting again every so often.

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. (There is also some evidence, apparently, of gender reassignment). The arils, like most parts of the yew, are not for human 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.

Enter a field, continue to the corner, turn right, and then left. Cross the field on a well-defined path. Descend a few steps into a small valley, cross a stream on a wooden bridge and ascend a

few steps on the far side. Turn left and proceed southwards for 700 metres, following the edge of the fields until you reach Wyck Lane. Across the lane is a gate with a sign indicating that the land beyond it is private property:

Wildlife Conservation Area

The sign on the gate is clear enough and should be respected, but you can see a lot from here. Better still, climb 500 m or so, and, on the right, there is a flat area that overlooks the lake. Those who thought to bring binoculars will be rewarded with views of many varieties of lakeside wildlife. Let us know at binstedtrees@gmail.com if you see something interesting.

After this the going gets easier as you continue to climb the lane until it meets Church Street where you turn left. Follow Church Street as it winds past the Wickham Institute hall, the church and Binsted Primary School, until you reach a crossroads. Turn right here to re-join The Street. Continue along The Street to the corner with Thurstons and Clements Close. There is a green here which stretches beyond two houses to the next right turn. Follow the pavement as far as the next turn and go a short way down it. The roadside has developed into a steep bank at the top of which is a fine oak tree.

3. Oak *Quercus robur*

The ruling majesty of the woods, the wise old English oak holds a special place in our culture, history, and hearts. They are large, deciduous tree growing up to 20–40m 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.

Oak forests support more life forms than any other native forest. They are host to hundreds of insect species, supplying many birds with an important food source. In autumn, mammals such as squirrels, badgers and deer feed on acorns.

Walk back the way you came as far as the footpath with steps and turn left at the top edge of the green. At the end of this path is the oak. Halfway along is:

4. Field maple *Acer campestre*

The field maple is not an outstandingly majestic tree. It does not grow particularly tall; nor is it elegant like the beech or the birch, making a more rounded, compact shape than these. But it has been much loved, particularly for its wood. A harp made from maple was found in a Saxon barrow at Taplow in

Buckinghamshire, and another, wrapped in a sealskin bag, was discovered among the treasures of the Sutton Hoo ship burial in Suffolk.

The UK's only native maple, it is found growing in woods, scrub and hedgerows, and on chalk lowland. It is widely planted in gardens and parks due to its compact habit, tolerance of pollution and rich autumn colours.

Now look back the way you came to see a line of three:

5. Wild cherry *Prunus avium*

At least, I have assumed these are wild cherries, but the differences from bird cherry or sour cherry are small. Mature trees can grow to 30m and live for up to 60 years.

The spring flowers provide an early source of nectar and pollen for bees; while the cherries are eaten by birds, including the blackbird and song thrush; as well as mammals, such as the badger, wood mouse, yellow-necked mouse and dormouse.

Alongside the cherry trees, and in the midst of some cherry laurel you will see:

6. Goat willow *Salix caprea*

Also known as the pussy willow, the male catkins of the goat willow look like a cat's paws.

Goat willow is dioecious, meaning male and female flowers grow on separate trees. In early spring, the catkins develop – the male catkins grey, stout and oval, becoming yellow when ripe with pollen; the female catkins longer and green. Once pollinated by wind, female catkins develop into woolly seeds. Most willows can also propagate themselves by lowering their branches to the ground, where they then develop roots.

7. Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*

These broadleaf trees can grow to 35m and live for 400 years.

After pollination by wind and insects, female flowers develop into distinctive winged fruits known as samaras (helicopters to you and me).

Sycamore is native to central, eastern and southern Europe. It was introduced to the UK in the Tudor era around the 1500s. The seed is extremely fertile, so sycamore has spread quickly across

the UK and colonised many woodlands to the detriment of native species.

You now cross The Street and go west a short distance past Broadview Close to a track heading north. Follow this track, past a farm yard, for 200m until you see footpaths joining first from the right, then from the left. Follow the path to the left to arrive at the northwest corner of the Recreation Ground, where you will find:

8. Horse chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum*

Mature horse chestnut trees grow to a height of around 40m and can live for up to 300 years. Once pollinated by insects, each flower develops into a glossy red-brown conker inside a spiky green husk, which falls in autumn.

Horse chestnut is native to the Balkan Peninsula. It was first introduced to the UK from Turkey in the late 16th century and widely planted. Though rarely found in woodland, it is a common sight in parks, gardens, streets and on village greens.

Continue east along the edge of the Recreation Ground to the northeast corner, where you will find the star of the show:

9. 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. Our specimen has a girth of over 5 m. Ash is the third most common tree in Britain, but it is under attack by a fungus called *chalara* which has been blown all the way from China. It is estimated that only 20% of the population will survive.

The leaves can move in the direction of sunlight, and sometimes the whole crown of the tree may lean in the direction of the sun. Another characteristic of ash leaves is that they fall when they are still green.

Ash is dioecious, meaning that male and female flowers typically grow on different trees, although a single tree can also have male and female flowers on different branches. Once the female flowers have been pollinated by wind, they develop into conspicuous winged fruits, or 'keys', in late summer and autumn. They fall from the tree in winter and early spring, and are dispersed by birds and mammals.

Ash trees make the perfect habitat for a number of different species of wildlife. The airy canopy and early leaf fall allow sunlight to reach the woodland floor, providing optimum

conditions for wild flowers such as dog violet, wild garlic and dog's mercury. In turn, these support a range of insects such as the rare and threatened high brown fritillary butterfly.

People have worked with ash timber for years. It is one of the toughest hardwoods and absorbs shocks without splintering. It is the wood of choice for making tools and sport handles, including hammers, axes, spades, hockey sticks and oars. An attractive wood, it is also prized for furniture.

In the 19th century ash was commonly used to construct carriages, and Britain's Morgan Motor Company still grows ash to make the frames for its cars.

Now go south towards the car park but stick to the edge of the field to meet:

10. Walnut *Juglans regia*

Walnut is a deciduous broadleaf tree which can grow to 35m. Native from south-east Europe to south-west China, it's been widely planted throughout the UK and has naturalised in lowland Britain helped along by hoarding squirrels.

The walnut's botanical name, *Juglans*, originates in Roman mythology. According to an ancient myth, Jupiter, who was also known as Jove, dined on walnuts when he lived on earth. Therefore Romans called walnuts Jovis glans, meaning 'the glans of Jupiter'.

Walnut was originally grown in the UK for its nuts. Later it was grown for its timber, which is fine with a decorative, wavy grain.

Binsted tree orphanage

Behind the limes where we started is a small area of allotments, one of which, in the furthest corner, has been reserved as a tree nursery. If you have self-sown saplings in your garden, and you need to move them, please pot them up if you can, or just put them in a carrier bag and leave them by the fence. They will be planted in the orphanage for now, until we can find new homes for them, so as to regenerate the trees we will inevitably lose over time.