

# Ilkley Tree Trails

## Trees in Winter



The trail starts at the Manor House and visits 20 trees selected from the first 26 trees in the Introduction to Trees booklet. They have been selected because they have features easy to see in winter. The winter trail takes around 50 minutes.

A map marking the location of each tree is on the back page of this booklet. Each tree keeps its original number from the Introduction to Trees.

This booklet and map can also be viewed and downloaded from [ilkleytrees.org.uk/treetrails](http://ilkleytrees.org.uk/treetrails)

If you plan to follow the trail on your phone or iPad we suggest you print a copy of the map to carry with you. It is available as a single page download from the website.

Leave the Manor House by the front entrance, turn left and go round the side of the building. In front of you is tree 1

1. **Ash** *Fraxinus excelsior*

The branches of this large tree droop down but then the tips sweep back up as if reaching for the sky, some ending in a three-pronged 'devil's pitchfork'. The twigs are smooth and grey and have sooty, black, velvety buds, a large one at the end of the twig and opposite pairs of smaller ones further back along the twig. This may be a male tree as it has no ash keys (the winged fruits that hang down in bunches). Look towards the river and slightly to the left and nearby you will see a female tree whose branches are festooned with bunches of brown keys, looking from a distance like hanging bats.

Ash loses its leaves early and they reappear late, may be not until late June, so do not assume that a bare ash tree in spring has ash-dieback, the fungal disease that is devastating ash trees in Yorkshire.



Ash 'reaching for the sky',  devil's pitchfork



Ash - black buds, smooth grey twigs



Ash keys 'hanging like bats'



Close up of Ash keys

Turn sharp right towards the church and step up on to the grass. Trees 2 and 3 are by the wall on your right

## 2. Yew *Taxus baccata*

Yew trees are evergreen and so do not change their overall appearance in winter. The leaves are dark green needles in two flattened rows, one either side of the stem. Yew trees are either male or female (though they can change sex) and winter is a good time to determine the sex. Only female trees produce red 'berries' or arils, which are seen in autumn and persist into winter if not eaten by birds. This tree has no berries so may be a male tree – to confirm look on the underside of the twigs and you will see small green spherical structures, a bit like miniature brussel sprouts – these are the male 'cones' which will release their pollen from February to April



Yew leaves



Yew - male cones

Take care when handling yew as all parts of the yew are toxic except the aril

## 3. Pair of Common Lime *Tilia x europaea*

Common limes are tall trees with a straight trunk continuous to the tree tip and retain a forest of shoots around the base all year. The twigs are zigzag, reddish brown, and the buds red.



Common lime - tall, straight



Common lime - forest of shoots at base



Common lime - zigzag twigs with red buds

Turn round. The first tree on the path to your left is 4. At the far end of this row of trees is 5

## 4. Horse chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum*

Horse chestnuts have large, sticky red buds, the one at the end of the twig being especially large. Look closely at the twigs and you will see the scars where the leaf was attached to the stem – the leaf scar is horse-shoe shaped and has what looks like the holes for the nails holding the shoe in place – these are the channels through which water and nutrients travel to the leaf and sugar made in the leaf travels back to the tree. If you can find a leaf stalk on the ground you will see the same pattern. When the bud at the end of the twig bursts open, the bud scales fall leaving a girdle scar. The distance between two girdle scars represent one year's growth of that twig.



Horse chestnut - large red buds



Horse chestnut - girdle scars



Horse chestnut - leaf scar on twig



Horse chestnut - matching pattern on end of leaf stalk

### 5. Downy birch, *Betula pubescens*

Birch trees stand out in winter because of their whitish bark. This is a downy birch - the native birch of the north. The bark of downy birch is greyer than silver birch and does not develop black diamond patches. The twigs are soft and downy to touch and have a purple tinge. Greenish-brown male catkins appear in autumn, 3 or 4 hanging down at the end of twigs like lambs' tails. They will become yellow and open out in spring. Female catkins will appear on the same tree in spring – they are short, bright green and stand upright on the twigs.

Look up and high in this tree you will see a dark dense mass of highly branched small twigs – this is a 'Witches broom' – these can be caused by various parasites, but in birch is often due to a fungus (*Taphrina betulina*). It is not harmful to the tree.



Downy birch bark



Silver birch bark



Birch – witches broom



Birch – cluster of male catkins - 'lambs' tails'

Cross the neck of the turning circle and go straight ahead, down the steps to New Brook Street and turn left. (For wheelchair access turn right and left). Head towards the bridge. Trees 7 and 8 are on the left, just before the steps down into the park

**7. Large-leaved lime** *Tilia platyphyllos*

In contrast to Common lime (tree 3) this lime does not have a forest of shoots around the base. Lime fruits are wind dispersed in the autumn. There are none left on tree 3 but here, in a more sheltered spot, some withered fruits may remain on the tree through winter.



*Large-leaved lime - no mass of shoots at base*



*Withered lime fruits on tree in late December*

**8. Cotoneaster hybrid** *Cotoneaster x watereri*

There are many varieties of cotoneaster and some, like this one, are evergreen. They often have multiple leaning stems. The red berries can last right through the winter but are often eaten by birds.



*Cotoneaster -multiple leaning stems*



*Cotoneaster berries*

Cross the river. On the right before the ramp into East Holmes field is 9

**9. Holly** *Ilex aquifolium*

Holly is evergreen but the leaves on this tree do not look like the well-known prickly holly leaves. This is because the lower branches, where the prickly leaves grow, have been cut off, leaving just the upper branches with their smooth-edged leaves. The prickly spines are a defense against browsing animals so are not needed above head-height and making smooth rather than prickly edges saves the tree energy. These upper leaves used to be harvested for winter fodder. If you look at the base of the tree you will see some new prickly-leaved shoots. This tree is a female as it has red berries in the autumn but they don't usually stay long as they are eaten by birds and squirrels. The berries are toxic to humans.



Holly tree



Holly - prickly lower leaves



Holly - smooth upper leaves

Enter East Holmes Field by the ramp on the right side of the road. At the bottom look right to tree 10

**10. Grey alder *Alnus incana***

The bark is grey. The leaves have all gone but the branches are full of female ‘cones’ and male catkins. The female ‘cones’ are green to start with but become brown and woody after pollination and remain on the tree through the year. Although they look like cones, they are not true cones – only conifers have these. The male catkins are greenish-yellow and hard initially but open to bright yellow blossom in January.



Grey alder cones and catkins in December



Grey alder catkins in January

Walk along the path, passing between three small trees. The next group of trees nine metres to the right of the path is 11

**11. Wych elm *Ulmus glabra***

The bark, although smooth when young, develops slightly wavy, orange fissures as the tree ages. The twigs are densely hairy and have two different types of buds on them – conical, black/purple buds near the tips of the twigs – these are the leaf buds, and further back on the twig are smaller, rounder buds – these are the flower buds, which will open in late winter, before the leaves.



Wych elm - vertical orange fissures



Wych elm - hairy twig, conical leaf buds, round flower buds

Return to and cross the path to 12

**12. Oak** *Quercus sp.*

A stocky tree, many branched, and as wide as it is tall. This is the natural shape of oak growing in an open space. Oak retains some leaves well into winter. The twigs are knobbly and branched and have a cluster of buds at the end as well as buds along the length. The buds are orangey-brown and plump, with many scales.



*Oak tree - knobbly, branched twigs with some leaves retained*



*Oak tree as wide as it is tall*



*Oak buds - cluster at end of twigs*



*Close up of bud to show bud scales*

Further along path is 15 - a group of trees around a concrete post and plaque

**15. Wild cherry** *Prunus avium*

The bark with its horizontal lines is distinctive. The lines are often an orange colour – ‘Tiger stripes’.

The twigs are relatively straight, often curving up at the end. The buds are red-brown, rounded, with a pointed end and are often at the end of multiple scars -like a pile of pancakes.



*Cherry - tiger stripe bark*



*Cherry - buds at end of multiple scars*



*Cherry - fairly straight twig, turning up at end*

Head towards the hedge surrounding the rugby field for 16

**16. Copper beech** *Fagus sylvatica purpurea*  
 Like oak, it retains some leaves well into winter. Some of the husks containing the beech nuts may persist on the tree through to spring. The buds are slender, copper-coloured, and torpedo shaped and are at 60 degrees to the twig.



Copper beech buds



Copper beech - retained beech nuts

Go back towards the river, crossing through 17, the community orchard, to an orchard tree on the river side of the group marked x on the map. It's the tree nearest to the bench and the tree guard has a metal donation plate from the Farrow family

**17. Community orchard, x Ribston Pippin apple** *Malus domestica* 'Ribston Pippin'  
 One of the fruit tree varieties planted in the orchard is Ribston Pippin. This apple, also known as the 'Glory of York', is named after Ribston Hall near Knaresborough where it was thought to originate but almost certainly grew there from seeds brought over from France around 1690. The fruiting buds, growing on short fruiting spurs, are large, grey and downy. The leaf buds are smaller and lie flat against the shoots.



Ribston pippin apple



Apple - Fruiting spurs



Large fruit bud on fruiting spur



Leaf buds lying against shoot

Go on towards the river passing to the left of the bench and cross the path to a huge tree

**18. Black poplar** *Populus nigra*

Now a rare tree in the UK. There are three other large black poplars further along the river bank. This is a massive tree with large, heavy looking limbs and branches coming off them that arch downwards. The bark is grey, thick and gnarled, with burrs and deep fissures. Buds are brown, sharply pointed and lie fairly flat against the stem.



*Black poplar - massive tree*



*Black poplar - very pointed buds*



*Black poplar bark*

Continue along the path and at the next poplar go closer to the river for 19

**19. Crack willow** *Salix fragilis*

This tree prefers wet places and there are many growing along the riverbanks in Ilkley, the trunks often leaning out over the river and the branches sweeping the pebbles or water. The twigs break off with a 'crack' and the trunk may crack under its own weight - hence its name. The trunk becomes very rugged and fissured with age. The twigs and buds are olive-brown coloured, the buds flattened against the twig and spiralling around it.



*Crack willow - olive twigs and buds*



*Crack willow bark*

Turn away from the river and go to the corner of the rugby field hedge for 20

**20. Hawthorn** *Crataegus monogyna*, planted as a hedge

It is easy to see the thorns in winter. Thorns are modified branches and grow out from the stem in the same place a leaf or bud would grow, spines are modified leaves such as in cacti, and prickles arise anywhere from superficial tissue and can be broken off easily- roses have prickles, not thorns. Hawthorn might be confused with blackthorn in winter, but in early spring blackthorn produces flowers before leaves whereas hawthorn produces its leaves before flowering.



Hawthorn thorns and buds

Walk up the side of the hedge towards the swimming pool, passing a gate and two Downy birches to 24, a row of ten trees

**24. Sycamore** *Acer psuedoplatanus*

Sycamore has big green buds at the ends of the twigs and in opposite pairs along the twig. Close up you can see the buds have large scales with purple edges and a white line – this is a fringe of tiny white hairs. On the old leaves on the ground there are many with black spots, known as ‘tar spots’. These are caused by a fungus (*Rhytisma acerinum*) and the fungal spores mature in the old leaves over winter, ready to infect the newly emerging leaves. The spots are visible on the new leaves from summer onwards, but though unattractive, it does not much harm the tree.



Sycamore buds



Sycamore - green bud scales with purple edge and fringe of white hairs



Sycamore - tar spots

**Take care, road crossing ahead.** Go through the gap in the hedge ahead and cross the road, heading towards the swimming pool. On your right, in the middle of a grassy square is 25

**25. Broad-leaved cockspur thorn** *Crataegus persimilis* 'Prunifolia'

The branches have many sharp thorns, much longer than those of common hawthorn, and the thorns are slightly curved, like the spurs on the legs of cockerels, hence its name. A few berries may be retained through the winter.



Cockspur thorn - thorns



Cockspur thorn - berries

Continue up the path towards the swimming pool building. The hedge of your right is 26

**26. Common beech** *Fagus sylvatica*, grown as a hedge

A beech hedge retains many of its dead leaves in winter. The leaves can be confused with Hornbeam but the edge of a Beech leaf is smooth and wavy rather than toothed. Hornbeam hedges also retain some leaves through winter but not as reliably as Beech.



Beech Hedge



Beech leaf



Hornbeam leaf

The winter trail finishes here. To return to the Manor House you can retrace your steps or go back to the road and turn right and then left on to the road that crosses back over the river

This booklet has been produced by Sue & Neil Stevens in December 2021 and is the companion to our "Introduction to Trees" booklet. We hope you have enjoyed the challenge of identifying trees in winter. Your comments are welcome via [trees@ilkleytrees.org.uk](mailto:trees@ilkleytrees.org.uk)  
We would like to thank Wharfedale Naturalists for their help and expert advice.

This map is available as a single page download from [ilkleytrees.org.uk/treetrails](http://ilkleytrees.org.uk/treetrails)

