Ilkley Tree Trails

Introduction to Trees

Printing thanks to Ilkley u3a Environment Group *ilkleyu3a.org*

The trail starts at the Manor House and visits 41 trees in the riverside and swimming pool areas. The trail is just over a mile long and takes 75 - 90 minutes.

A map marking the location of each tree is on the back page of this booklet

This leaflet and map can also be viewed and downloaded from ilkleytrees.org.uk/treetrails
We suggest that if you plan to follow the trail on your phone you print a copy of the map to carry with you.

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*
A big ash, over 100 years old. Native. Its 3 entwined trunks suggest it has been damaged or pollarded in the past. Its leaves have long thin leaflets (9-13 per leaf) that can be confused with those of Elder (36) or Rowan (22). Ash has black leaf buds, easily seen on all ash trees, and winged fruit that hang like bunches of keys on female trees. This has none and is probably a male tree. There are many Ash trees in Yorkshire, and Ash die-back, a fungal disease, is devastating them. This tree has early signs of the disease – a few of the ends of the higher branches are bare, but it does not seem to have progressed over the last few years - perhaps the tree has some resistance. The ash to the NW of this tree, which does have keys, has significant die-back and tree 34, towards the end of the walk has advanced Ash die-back.

Ash leaves and black buds

'Keys' on nearby ash

left-Ash, middle-Elder, right-Rowan

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*
One of only three native conifers in UK. The others are Juniper and Scots pine. The leaves are dark green needles in two flattened rows, one either side of the stem. Yew does not have cones like other conifers but the female tree has a red fruit that looks a bit like a berry called an aril, which contains a single seed. This is a male Yew, so has no arils, but in winter you can see small yellow-green balls on the underside of the twigs which are the male 'cones'. In early spring these release clouds of pollen if touched. All parts of the yew are toxic except the fleshy aril, which birds enjoy and the seed passes through their gut intact. Yews can live to a great age, with some in the UK thought to be over 2000 years old. Like this one, Yew is often associated with churches.

Yew leaves

3. Pair of Common lime *Tilia x europaea*
Native. They grow tall and straight. The leaves are heart shaped, have a serrated edge and are lopsided at the base. Common limes have a forest of shoots around the base and tufts of white hairs on the underside of the leaves just around the base of the veins. Later in the walk is Large-leaved lime *Tilia platyphyllos* (7). Both have highly scented flowers followed by round fruits that hang down in clusters, best seen in tree 7. The flowers produce nectar and pollen for insects, and aphids are especially attracted to limes, producing honeydew that may drip from the tree and is consumed by bees. Later on still is Silver pendant lime *Tilia tomentosa* 'Petiolaris' (31).

Lime- heart-shaped leaf, lopsided base

Tree 7 - Clusters of fruits

Common lime – shoots at base

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*

Not a native tree but introduced into the UK in late 16th C from Turkey. Each leaf has 5-7 large leaflets. Blossom in spring is on large upright 'candles' – the white petals have yellow at the base which changes to pink/red after pollination by insects – insects can see yellow but not red so only visit the unpollinated flowers. The fruits, 'conkers' are in green prickly cases.

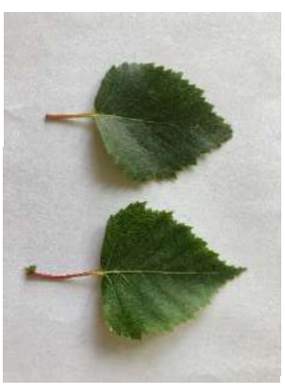
Horse chestnut leaves

Developing fruit

5. Downy birch *Betula pubescens*

This is the native birch of the North. In contrast to the Silver birch *Betula pendula* of the South the young twigs are hairy and the leaves have a more rounded base, are duller green and feel rough. This specimen is old and the white bark has developed greyish horizonatal bands, whereas an ageing Siver birch develops black diamond patterning. Further on in the walk you will see two non-native birches - Himalayan birch *Betula utilis* (25a) and Paperbark birch *Betula papyrifera* (38)

Downy birch bark



Downy birch (Top)
Silver birch (Bottom)

Cross the neck of the turning circle to tree 6

6. Variegated sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* f. *variegatum*

This belongs to the maple family and is a cultivar of Sycamore. It is planted for its variegated leaves with cream splashes. Further on are Field maple *Acer campestre* (13) and Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* (24).

Variegated sycamore

Field maple

Sycamore

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 (3) this has no shoots at the base and the undersurface of the leaf is hairy

8. Cotoneaster hybrid *Cotoneaster x watereri*
Non-native. Cotoneaster often has multiple leaning stems like this one. The white flowers give way to dark red berries which can last until spring and are enjoyed by birds, which spread the seeds widely. It is popular in gardens as a shrub or hedge but where it has escaped into the wild it can be an invasive weed as it blankets out and shades other species.

Cotoneaster

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

9. Holly *Ilex aquifolium*
Native and very common. On the lower part of the tree the evergreen leaves, glossy on the upper surface, matt beneath, have prickly spines to deter browsing animals, but higher up the spines are absent. Holly has separate male and female trees – the red berries are only present on the female tree, which needs a male tree growing not too far away to pollinate it. The berries are eaten by birds but are poisonous to humans.

Holly - lower leaves

Leaves higher up the tree, and developing berries

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*
Introduced from Europe. It has brown 'cones' which stay on the tree all year and can be seen on this tree. They are similar to those on our native Common alder *Alnus glutinosa,* but the leaves are different. It has long, bright yellow catkins in spring.

Grey alder cones and leaf

Common alder leaf

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*

It has the largest leaves of any native tree. The leaves are almost stalkless, are asymmetric at the base with the longer side overlapping the stalk, and taper to a sudden point. The leaf upper surface feels rough, like sandpaper. It is hardier than English elm and more common in the North, but both English and Wych elm have been badly affected by Dutch elm disease. This is caused by a fungus, transported from tree to tree by a bark-boring beetle, which disrupts the water transport system in the tree, inevitably causing its death though this may take up to two years. This tree looks healthy.

Wych elm leaf showing asymmetric base

Return to and cross the path to 12

12. Oak *Quercus*

Native. This specimen is a hybrid between Sessile *Quercus petraea* and English oak *Quercus robur*. It has long stalks to the leaves and almost no stalk to the acorns, typical of sessile oak, but the leaf base has 'ears', typical of English oak. Sessile oak is more common in the North, English in the South, but both occur everywhere, and hybrids are common. Acorns are not produced until the tree is 40 years old and peak production is not reached until 80-120 years. Oak trees support more wildlife than any other native tree. Later on in the walk is Red oak *Quercus rubra (21)*

Oak leaves and acorns

Along the edge of the skatepark is 13, a row of three trees, and at the corner is 14

13. Field maple *Acer campestre*

Native. The leaves have 5 lobes and can be confused with Sycamore (24) but are smaller, dark green and shiny, and have just a few, rounded teeth as opposed to the Sycamore's many coarse jagged teeth. Both produce winged fruits called samaras, but the wings of Field maple are almost in a straight line, whereas those of Sycamore are angled.

Field maple

Sycamore

Field maple - winged fruits

14. Willow *Salix*

There are many types of willow and many hybrids. They are fast growing trees**,** prefer wet ground and are often found by water. This tree is a **White willow** *Salix alba*. It looks paler than other willows as both sides of the long thin leaves, particularly the under-surface, are covered in long silky white hairs lying flat against the leaf, though these are difficult to see without a hand lens.

Later on are Crack willow *Salix fragilis* (19) and Goat willow *Salix caprea* (37). Willows, particularly goat willow, are often planted to prevent riverbank erosion.

White willow

Crack willow

Goat willow

Go back towards the path to 15 - a group of three trees around a concrete post and plaque

15. Wild Cherry *Prunus avium*
Native. Planted for its spring blossom. Cherry is easy to recognise by its distinctive bark with horizontal bands, sometimes orange -'tiger stripes'. The leaves are large and have coarse teeth.

Cherry bark

Cherry leaves

Head towards the hedge surrounding the rugby field for 16

16. Copper beech *Fagus sylvatica purpurea*
This is a cultivated form of Common beech. The leaves are purple in spring, becoming more coppery in the autumn. Further on in the walk is Common beech *Fagus sylvatica* (26) grown as a hedge, and towards the end of the walk are Common beech trees (39).

Copper beech

Common beech

Go back towards the river, crossing through the young trees, 17, to a huge tree by the river, 18

17. Community orchard
20 fruit trees planted by Climate Action Ilkley in March 2020. Mix of pear, apple, damson.

18. Black Poplar *Populus nigra*
Native, now rare. There are three others further along the riverbank. These are huge trees, over 100 years old. The leaves are triangular with long tips and some have spiral galls on the stalks. These particular galls are only found on black poplars and are produced by an aphid. The bark is very gnarled.

Black poplar leaf and spiral gall

Gnarled bark

Continue on the path and at the next Poplar go closer to the river for 19

19. Crack willow *Salix fragilis*
Down by the water's edge**,** its branches sweeping the pebble beach, it has similar shaped but more shiny, bright green leaves than the White willow (14). It's called Crack willow because the twigs break off with a sharp snap.

Go around the corner of the hedge to 20

20. Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna,* planted as a hedge.
Native. It is commonly used in hedging as it is dense and thorny but is also planted as a stand-alone tree **–** see 27 further on**.** The leaves have deeply cut lobes, each with a tooth at the tip. Also known as 'May' because of its abundant scented white or pale pink flowers in that month. The fruits, which turn dark red, are known as haws.

Hawthorn hedge - deeply lobed leaves

Walk up the side of the hedge to three trees growing in the hedge, 21, 22, and 23

21. Red oak *Quercus rubra*
So called because its leaves turn red in autumn. A native of North America. Its leaves are much bigger than those of our native tree

Hybrid oak - top

Red oak - bottom

22. Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*
Native. Commonly found in the wild in the North and West, but often planted too. It used to be planted by houses to protect against witches. Also known as 'Mountain ash' as it grows well at altitude but is not related to the Ash tree. The leaves consist of 4-8 pairs of leaflets with another leaflet at the end and are more noticeably toothed than those of Ash (1) with which it can be confused. Its red autumn berries are a rich source of food for birds.

Rowan - leaves and berries

23. Mitchell's Tibetan Whitebeam *Sorbus thibetica* 'John Mitchell'
Non-native. This is a popular clone of a rare Chinese whitebeam. It has huge, broad leaves, conspicuously white-felted beneath and dark green above, and large fruits. Common whitebeam *Sorbus aria* (40), the last tree on the walk, has much smaller leaves and fruits.

Mitchell's Whitebeam

Continue along the hedge, past two birches to 24, a row of ten trees

24. Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*
Non-native. Introduced to the UK possibly by the Romans and now very widespread. The leaves have 5 lobes with many coarse jagged teeth. The yellow-green flowers hang down in spikes and once pollinated develop into hanging winged fruits called samaras, also known as 'helicopters'. It can be confused with our native Field maple (13) but this has only a few rounded teeth on its leaves, and Norway maple which has just a few long-pointed teeth on its leaves.

Sycamore leaf

Sycamore winged fruits - samaras

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'*
Non-native, from North America. The oval leaves are very glossy and turn brilliant orange-red in autumn, when it also has red berries. The branches have many long sharp thorns, said to resemble the spur on a cockerel's leg, which gives it its name.

Broard-leaved cockspur thorn

Continue up the path towards the swimming pool building. Before you reach the hedge (26) is a tall, thin, recently planted tree (25a)

25a. Himalayan birch *Betula utilis var. jacquemontii*
Native to the Western Himalayas, widely planted in the UK for its intensely white, smooth bark which peels off in large sheets - manuscripts used to be written on these. The white pigment will rub off on your hands. The leaves are much larger than those of our native birches and the branches more upright.

Himalayan birch

26. Common beech hedge *Fagus sylvatica*
Beech is native to the South of England but is widely planted in the North. It will retain many of its dead leaves in winter. The leaves can be confused with Hornbeam (30), but the edge of a beech leaf is wavy rather than toothed.

Beech hedge

Beech leaf, wavy edge

Beyond the far left corner of the car park is 27

27. Hawthorn tree
Crataegus monogyna
See 20

Hawthorn Haws

In the hedge to the left is 28, a group of conifers

28. Western red cedar *Thuja plicata*
Non-native, from North America. The foliage is in rather glossy, fairly flat, drooping 2-D sprays. The leaves are tiny pointed scales that enclose the stems. The underside of a spray is duller with fine white markings. It has small flask shaped cones which stand up on the branches, and open out like petals, visible on this tree. The crushed leaves smell very sweet, like pineapple.

W. red cedar - flat sprays

W. red cedar - open cones

Follow the hedge back down to the tennis courts, passing a magnificent Weeping willow in a private garden, and turn right. 29, a group of trees, is on the right just before halfway along the courts.

29. Aspen *Populus tremula*
Native. The leaves are round with big wavy teeth and the leaf stalk is flattened at right angles to the plane of the leaf- you can't easily roll it in your fingers – this allows the leaf to quiver in the wind, so the tree rustles even in the lightest breeze. Aspens produce many suckers and a clonal colony (ie one tree with a massive root system and many suckers) in North America is said to be the biggest living organism in the world – estimated to weigh 6 million kg.

Aspen leaves

Take care, road ahead. Continue to Middleton Ave and turn left. The first tree in the pavement is 30

30. Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*
Native to the South of England but widely planted elsewhere. It is a good street tree as the branches point up. The leaves are similar in shape to beech but are more deeply furrowed and have a toothed edge. Some leaves may stay on the tree through the winter.

Hornbeam

Hornbeam - toothed edge

Beech - wavy edge

Cross over the road. Just before the lamp-post is 31

31. Silver pendant lime *Tilia tomentosa* 'Petiolaris'
A non-native tree with weeping branches that has bigger leaves than our native lime, pale underneath, and long stemmed. It is a good street tree as it is very tolerant of urban pollution and soil compaction.

Whitish undersurface of leaves

Long stems to leaves

Continue along the road and cross back to the left side at the junction with Gilstead Way for 32, another conifer

32. Leylandii *x Cuprocyparis leylandii*
It is a hybrid of 2 non-native trees- the Monterey and Nootka cypresses- and first appeared in the late 19th C. Commonly planted as a very fast growing hedge and often disliked as such but an individual can grow into a handsome tree which has reddish-grey ridged bark, scale-like leaves in flat sprays on long stalks and brown (initially green) ball-shaped cones 1-2cm across. Each face of the ball has a spine in the centre. There are some visible on this tree. If you crush the foliage hard it smells resinous.

Leylandii spray

Leylandii cones

Further down the road, growing in the hedge on the right hand side and opposite the entrance to the cricket club is 33, also a conifer

33. Lawson cypress *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*
Native to California. Easy to confuse with Leylandii, but it has tiny pea-sized cones, smaller than Leylandii and the crushed foliage smells of parsley.

Lawson cypress

Leylandii cone (L) Lawson cone (R)

Look across the road in front of the cricket pavilion to see 34

34. Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*
This tree has advanced ash die-back - the ends of many branches are bare and the foliage is bunched around the trunk -the tree is trying to survive by putting out more leaves directly from the trunk.

Continue down the road. On the right, in a private garden but hanging over the street, just before the junction with Denton Road is 35, a very tall conifer

35. Black pine *Pinus nigra*
Non-native. You should be able to find some old needles on the ground - these needles are in pairs and are approx. 13cm long. Our native Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris* also has needles in pairs but they are not nearly so long (only 2-8cm), nor does the tree grow so tall. Black pine is grown as a timber tree and in shelterbelts.

Black pine needles

Black pine

Carry straight on towards the bridge. Just before the bridge, on the right, leaning over railings is 36

36. Elder *Sambucus nigra*
A common native tree. The leaves usually have 5 leaflets (can be 7). It has white, strongly scented flowers in spring followed by edible berries that ripen purple-black in autumn. The berries must be cooked before eating as raw they are poisonous – they contain cyanide-forming glycosides which are destroyed by cooking. The trunk of this and many other trees in the park are covered in ivy – this does not harm the tree and is good for wildlife.

Elder with developing berries

Go over the bridge and take the footpath after the steps. On your right, down the grassy slope is 37

37. Goat willow *Salix caprea*
This has quite different leaves- shorter and fatter- than the 2 previous willows (14 and 19) and the tip of the leaf is twisted.

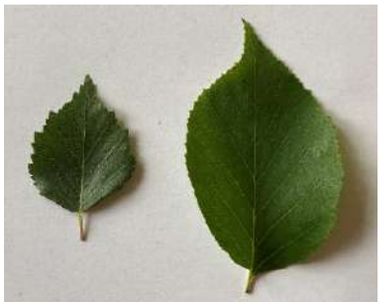
Goat willow

Crack willow

Go further along the path and in the grass to the left of the path is 38

38. Paperbark birch *Betula papyrifera*
Native to N America. Like the Himalayan birch (25a) it is planted for its attractive bark. This specimen is old and the bark past its best, but you can still see the white bark peeling off in thin horizontal strips to reveal pink coloured bark underneath. The leaves are too big for a native birch (5) and are similar to the leaves of Himalayan birch with which it is easily confused.

Bark of Paperbark birch



Downy (L) and Paperbark (R) birch leaves

At the end of the path, just to the right and beyond the steps is 39

39. Common beech *Fagus sylvatica*
A row of trees planted very close together**.** These were probably planted as a hedge but have been left to grow.

Beech leaves

Continue across the grass, parallel to the river, cross the path and head towards the wall on the left. Just below where the wall becomes topped by railings is a single tree, 40

40. Common whitebeam *Sorbus aria*
It is native to the South of England but widely planted everywhere. It has much smaller leaves than the Tibetan whitebeam (23) but they are similarly white underneath.

Whitebeam

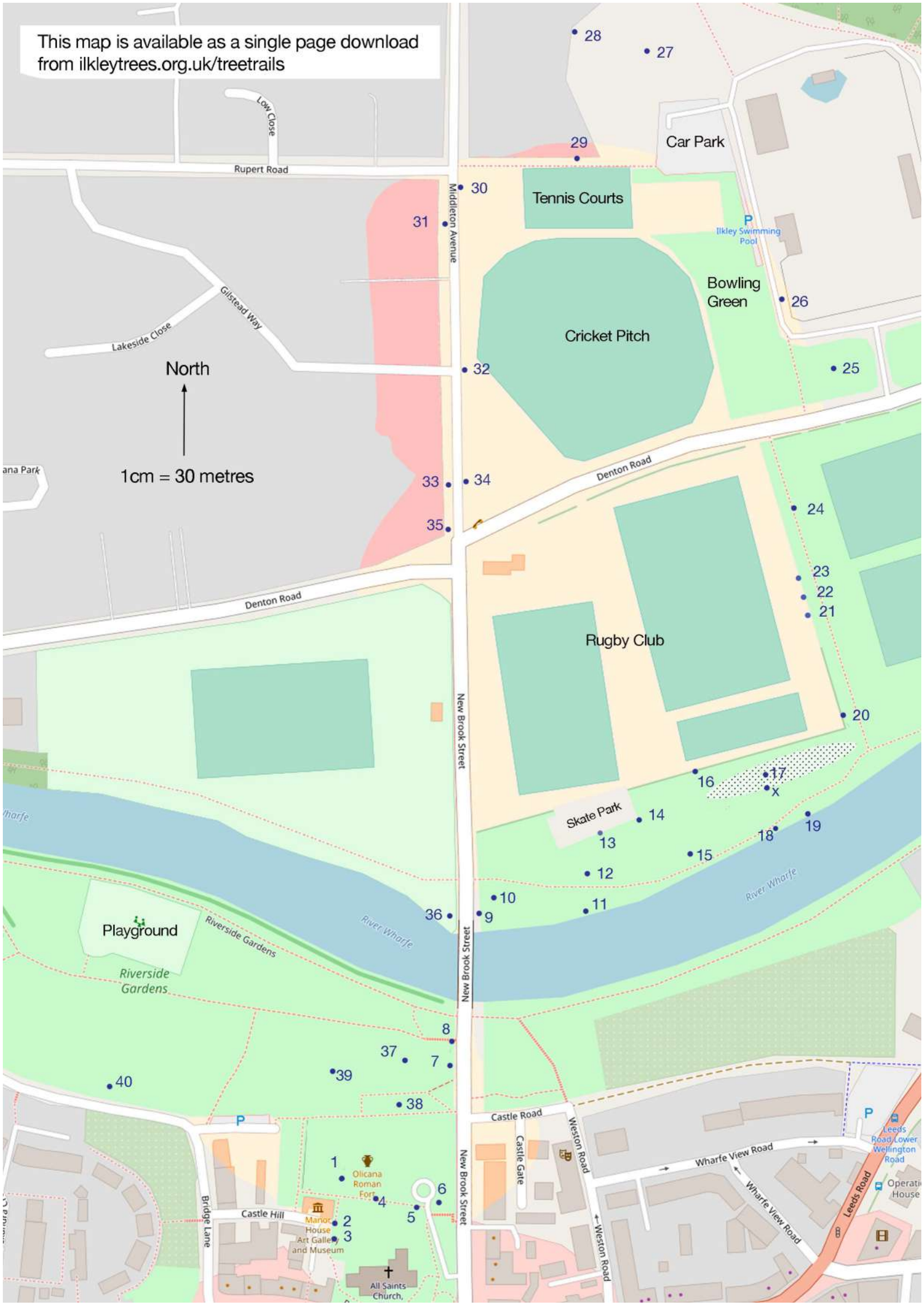
White under-surface of leaves

To return to the Manor House retrace your steps to 39 and then walk uphill past the remains of the Roman fort.

This booklet was produced by Sue & Neil Stevens in August 2020 and updated March 2022 and March 2025. We hope you have enjoyed getting to know trees. Your comments are welcome via trees@ilkleytrees.org.uk.We would like to thank Bruce Brown of Wharfedale Naturalists for his expert advice. There are four other tree trails available:

- Town Centre
- Ilkley Cemetery
- Darwin Gardens and the Moor
- Trees in Winter

They can be viewed/downloaded from ilkleytrees.org.uk and are usually available in printed form from the Grove Book Shop or Ilkley Visitor Centre: the first three April - October, Trees in Winter November -March.
There is also a Ben Rhydding Tree Trail produced by Chris Forshaw


This map is available as a single page download from ilkleytrees.org.uk/treetrails
North
1cm = 30 metres
Low Close
Rupert Road
Middleton Avenue
Tennis Courts
Car Park
Ilkley Swimming Pool
Bowling Green
Cricket Pitch
Gilstead Way
Lakeside Close
Denton Road
Rugby Club
Skate Park
New Brook Street
River Wharfe
Playground
Riverside Gardens
Castle Road
Weston Road
Castle Gate
Wharfe View Road
Leeds Road
Bridge Lane
Castle Hill
Olicana Roman Fort
Manor House Art Gallery and Museum
All Saints Church,
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