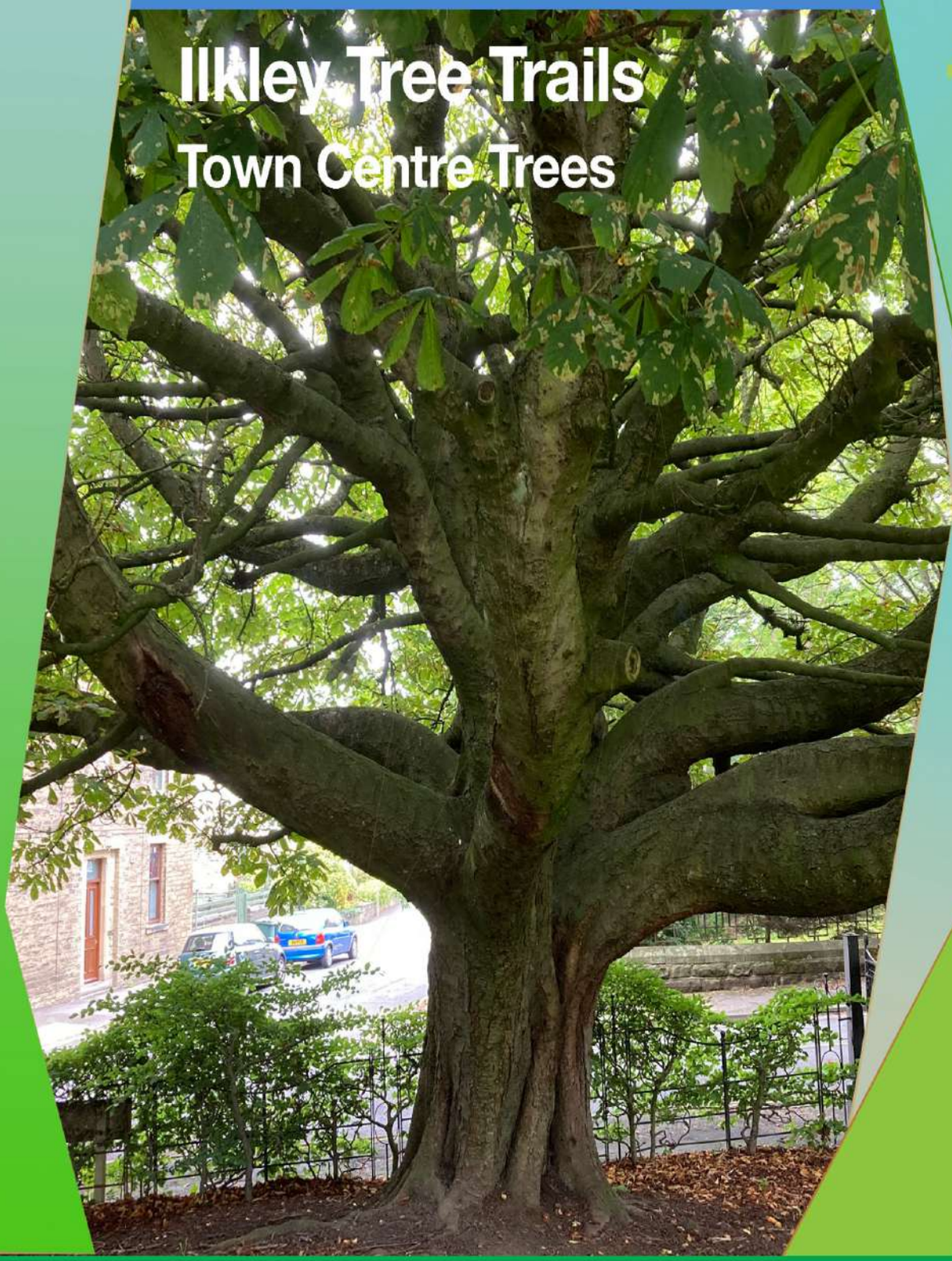
Ilkley Tree Trails

Town Centre Trees



Climate Action Ilkley

Printing thanks to Climate Action Ilkley

The trail starts in the south east corner of the central car park and visits 34 trees in the centre of town. It is about a mile long and takes around an hour.

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
If you follow the trail on your phone you might like to print a single page copy of the map.

Mar2025

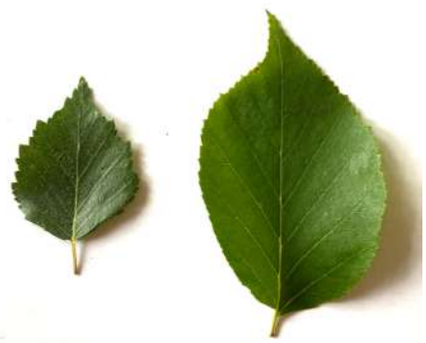
The trail starts in the south east corner of the car park next to Games Crusade and in front of the Vine restaurant - the four trees here with whitish bark are all number 1

1. Paper-bark birch *Betula papyrifera*

Non-native, from N America. Planted for its white bark which peels off in horizontal strips, revealing pinky-orange bark beneath. Its leaves are larger than those of our native Downy and Silver birch, and the tree is less graceful with its stiffly upward branches (compare with tree 4). In spring the long male 'lambs-tails' catkins and the shorter, thinner female catkins can be seen together on the tree. The female catkins are upright until pollinated, after which they hang down.

Paper-bark birch bark

male and female catkins



Downy birch (L), Paper-bark (R)

The row of trees next to the birch along the car park edge include 2 - 5

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

Non-native, from N America. The oval leaves are very glossy and turn bright orange-red in autumn. The branches have many long sharp thorns, said to resemble the spur on a cockerel's leg, hence its name. It has red berries in autumn.

Cockspur Thorn

Autumn leaves and berries

3. Black matipo, also known as **Kohuhu** *Pittisporum tenuifolium*

The original tree no.3 was an ornamental crab apple, growing in the pavement between trees 2 and 4. It was removed in 2023. Close to where it stood, in the planted bed to the left is a Black matipo, a small multi-stemmed tree native to New Zealand. It is evergreen, the leaves are glossy, thin and wavy - like crisps, and young leaves are hairy. The whitish midrib is very visible. The trunk and shoots are dark, its flowers are purple and smell like honey, especially at night. The foliage is often used in floristry.

Black matipo

wavy leaves and purple buds

4. Silver birch *Betula pendula*
Although native to the south of England it is widely planted all over. It is an elegant tree, with drooping twigs. This one is particularly 'droopy' so may be a weeping cultivar. The white bark develops rough black diamond shapes with age. The leaves are triangular. Leaves of Downy birch, native to the north, have a more rounded base.

Downy birch (L), Silver birch (R)

Silver birch bark

Between 4 and 5 is another Cockspur thorn

5. Japanese flowering cherry *Prunus serrulata*
Planted for its spring blossom. Cherry is easy to recognise by its distinctive bark with horizontal bands, often orange coloured – 'tiger stripes'. The leaves have coarse teeth. Our native wild cherry has white blossom. This non-native cherry cultivar has deep pink double blossoms and the early leaves are bronze coloured.

Cherry bark

Cherry blossom

Early bronze

Cross diagonally over towards 5th Avenue shop on the corner. The first tree you come to is 6. The three other trees in the group are two birches and 7.

6. Norway maple *Acer platanoides*
Non-native, from Europe. Leaves have five lobes, each with a few pointed teeth with whisker tips -more spikey looking than common sycamore and field maple. The winged fruits are in pairs, sometimes called 'helicopters', the angle between them greater than those of sycamore but less than those of field maple. The tree has good autumn colour.

Norway Maple (autumn)

Sycamore

Field Maple

winged fruit, Norway maple

7. Common Lime *Tilia x europaea*
Native. The leaves are heart shaped and 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. The highly scented flowers followed by round fruits hang down in clusters. 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.

Leaf

Fruit

shoots at base

Head across the car park towards Bettys and Whistles to a row of three trees - 8, 9, 10

8. Common pear *Pyrus communis*
Non-native, from SE Europe, introduced probably in the 10th C. It has upright branches. The leaves are shiny, slightly leathery, oval and pointed and have tiny forward-pointing teeth round the edge.
The leaf stem is long and slightly red. The leaves are pale green in spring, darkening later. Its white flowers are out earlier than apple blossom.

Pear leaf

Pear blossom

9. Common whitebeam *Sorbus aria*
It is native to the south of England but widely planted everywhere. The leaves are thick and toothed, the underside white because it is covered in white woolly hairs. Further along the trail is Swedish whitebeam (29)

Common whitebeam

Leaf underside

Flowers and new leaves emerging

10. Bird cherry *Prunus padus*
Native. Common in the north but rarely seen in the south. The leaves have a similar outline but much finer, sharper serrations along the edge than the wild cherry, and the bark does not have horizontal stripes. The scented flowers are clustered in long spires, upright when they first start to open in April, drooping down in long tails later. The fruits are black cherries, very bitter, but eaten by birds.

Bird cherry leaf

Wild cherry leaf

Bird cherry blossom

On a grass bank adjacent to the outside seating area of Bar T'At are two large trees, 11

11. Silver maple *Acer saccharinum*
Native to North America. A common urban tree. Leaves five lobed, the lobes much more deeply cut than the Norway maple (6), jaggedly toothed, bright silver grey underneath with some fine down. Good autumn colour.

Silver maple leaf - top and underside

Head out of car park via the entrance opposite the Clarke Foley centre, passing a large Silver maple on your right, and turn left towards the Grove. In a hedge on your right beyond the former Morten's and the Design Emporium is a pair of 12

12. Lawson cypress *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*
A native of California but widely planted in UK. The crushed foliage smells of parsley. It has brown (initially green) ball-shaped pea-sized cones. Easily confused with Leyandii but the cones of Leylandii are much bigger (1-2cm across). The crushed leaves smell of parsley.

Lawson cypress leaf spray

Lawson cypress cones

At the Grove turn right. On your right in the centre of a grass square is 13, at the far corner away from the road is 14, at the far corner next to the road, covered in ivy, is 15

13. Purple Norway maple *Acer platanoides* 'Crimson King'
A variant of Norway maple (6)

Purple Norway maple leaf

14. Portugal laurel *Prunus lusitanica*
Non-native but widespread. More commonly seen as a large shrub. It has evergreen, very glossy, finely toothed leaves. Long tails of small creamy-white flowers appear in early summer and the fruits are like tiny purple/black cherries but are toxic. Cherry laurel, which is also very common and is growing as a bush under this tree, looks similar but its leaves are brighter green, thicker than Portugal laurel and have a more rounded tip

Portugal laurel

Cherry laurel

15. Common Walnut *Juglans regia*
A magnificent tree, non-native, introduced by the Romans who valued its nuts. It is tall with twisting branches, late coming into leaf. Leaves are shiny and leathery with 2-6 pairs of oval leaflets and one large leaflet at the end. New leaves are red-coppery colour, turning green. Fruits have a hard green shell, and inside a brown wrinkled walnut, but this only matures in long hot summers.

Walnut leaf & fruit

Continue along the Grove and enter the Memorial Gardens. Walk along the avenue of limes to a large tree to the right of the memorial, 16

16. Horse Chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum*
Not a native tree but introduced into the UK in late 16C from Turkey. This one is very old and has a huge girth of 4.07M. Each leaf has 5-7 large leaflets. Blossom in spring is on large upright 'candles' – the centre of the flower is yellow at first, changing 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

Horse Chestnut leaf

Horse Chestnut Flower

Cross over the central area to a palm tree, 17

17. **Chusan palm** *Trachecarpus fortunii*
Also known as Chinese windmill palm. One of the hardiest palms and will survive in the UK even in severe winters – it grows at high altitudes – up to 2,400M in its native China. The trunk is covered in coarse fibrous material. The long leaf stalks have two rows of spines. The leaves are fan-shaped, divided into many linear segments. The plaque records it was planted in memory of those who served in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and the Mediterranean.

Chusan palm

fan leaf

double row of spines

To the left of the steps is 18

18. Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*
Non-native. Introduced to the UK possibly by the Romans or perhaps in the Middle Ages and now very widespread. The leaves have five lobes with many coarse jagged teeth and are arranged in opposite pairs on the twigs. It is fast growing and sometimes considered a weed, but here planted as a memorial

Sycamore leaf

Exit the gardens via the steps and cross the road to Spence Gardens and 19

19. Indian bean tree *Catalpa bignonioides*

In spite of its common name 'Indian Bean Tree' this neither comes from India nor produces true beans! Its origin is the South Eastern United States. It is a big tree that looks dead for much of the year, coming into leaf very late - end of June, but is stunning when its pale green leaves and later its big white bell shaped flowers appear. The leaves are huge, up to 30cm long. Long thin bean like fruits are produced in autumn.

leaf and 20p piece

upright blossom

'beans'

In the area behind 19 are three of 20, one to the left by Grove Rd, two in the bed ahead

20. Japanese maple *Acer palmatum*

Native to Japan, Korea, China, eastern Mongolia, and southeast Russia. There are over 1000 cultivars. Very popular because of their elegant foliage and dramatic autumn colours. It is possible that the one illustrated has been braided – i.e. two trees twined together to give the twisted trunk.

Twisted trunk

Japanese maple leaves

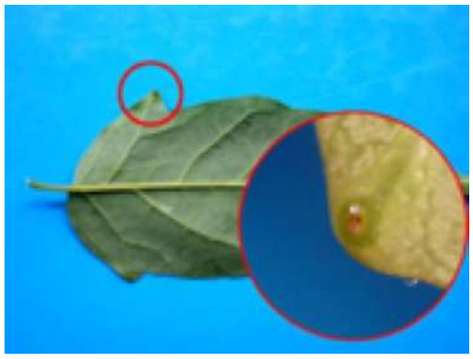
At either end of the bed ahead containing the two maples are 21

21. Tree of Heaven *Alanthus altissima*

Non-native, from North China. Very tall trees with twisted branches. The leaves are very long (1-3 feet) and consist of 11-21 leaflets, each with one or more big teeth at the base and these teeth have a gland at the tip that oozes nectar which attracts ants to combat leaf eating insects.

Tree of Heaven

leaves with many leaflets



gland at leaf tip

Take the path on the right alongside Kings Rd. On the right, just after some steps is 22

22. Western red cedar *Thuja plicata*
Non-native, from N 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. Unfortunately since the 1st edition of the booklet the lower branches have been removed so the foliage is no longer in reach.

leaf spray and cones

Continue on the path and at the corner take the uphill path. On the right are 23 and 24

23. Black pine *Pinus nigra*
Non-native. You should be able to find some fallen needles on the ground - these needles are in pairs and are approx. 13cm long. It is grown as a timber tree and in shelterbelts.

24. Scots pine *Pinus silvestris*
Our native Scots pine also has needles in pairs but they are not nearly so long as those of Black pine (only 2-8cm), nor does the tree grow so tall. Its bark is orange coloured especially in the top part of the tree, in contrast to the much darker bark of Black pine.

Black pine (L), Scots pine (R)

Needles - Black pine (L), Scots pine (R)

Return down the slope to the corner and turn right alongside the stream. On your right is 25

25. Laburnum *Laburnum anagyroides*
Non-native but commonly grown in the UK for its beautiful long strings of yellow flowers in spring, which give rise to its other names of golden chain or golden rain tree. The flowers are followed by long twisted seed pods. All parts of the tree are poisonous, especially the seed pods, which if eaten can cause serious illness including vomiting, diarrhoea and coma.

last year's seed pods and new leaves

Laburnum flowers

Cross over the red bridge and leave the gardens onto Grove Road. Cross the road and head towards the town centre. On your R in the garden of number three are 26 and 27

26. Red snake bark maple *Acer capillipes*

Non-native, from Japan. The bark has vertical green streaks. Red buds appear in January and the leaves start off red but change to green as they mature. The leaves are a different shape to the other acers we have visited so far (6, 11, 18, 20) – they are long with two little side lobes.

Green streaked bark

Mature leaves

Red buds

27. Irish yew *Taxus baccata* 'Fastigiata'

Irish yew grows very erect and unlike the common yew which has two flattened rows of leaves, one on either side of the stem, the Irish yew has very dark leaves that grow all around the stem.

Irish yew

Common yew

At the corner of Grove Road and St James Road, hanging over the wall is 28

28. Rhus/Stag's horn sumach *Rhus typhina*

A small tree, common in gardens. The shoots are like stag's antlers in velvet. The leaves have up to 25 serrated leaflets. Most garden trees are females like this one and have furry, crimson fruiting spires that may last until spring.

Rhus leaves

Fruiting spire

Continue along The Grove. Just after Martinez enter the sensory garden. On the R is 29

29. Swedish whitebeam *Sorbus intermedia*

Non-native, from the Baltic. A tough street tree. The leaves are serrated like the common whitebeam, but a different shape, more like an oak. They are woolly grey on the underside. It has creamy-white flowerheads followed by red berries.

Swedish whitebeam

Oak

Common whitebeam

Autumn berries

Continue straight ahead. In the corner on the R are two of 30

30. Cherry plum *Prunus cerasifer 'Pissardii'*
Originates in Iran but long grown in the UK. An untidy looking tree with upswept branches and very early pale pink/white blossom which appears before the purple leaves.

Cherry plum leaves

Cherry plum blossom

Follow the path round, passing a Cherry, a red Japanese maple and a Whitebeam on the R and stop at the tree in the grass on your L just before the exit onto Parish Ghyll Road – 31

31. 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.

Hornbeam (L), Beech (R)

Turn R, go a short way up Parish Ghyll Road and look to a tall, thin, pale-trunked tree in a garden on the other side of the road – 32

32. Eucalyptus *Eucalyptus sp.*
Native to Australasia. Also known as a gum tree. There are over 500 species and these include the world's tallest broadleaves and the fastest growing. They are evergreen. The leaves are long, thin and slightly curved. They hang vertically on the tree to reduce waterloss under a hot overhead sun. The bark peels off in strips and you may find bark strips and leaves on the pavement.

Eucalyptus trunk

Eucalyptus leaf

Return to the Grove and continue towards the station. All along the Grove are 33

33. Ornamental cherry trees *Prunus sp.*
The Grove was planted with cherry trees in the 1950s. Bradford Council planned to cut them down in 1991 and replace with pear trees, but due to local protests the trees were saved. In 2004 those in front of the shops on the north (Bettys) side were removed as they were damaging the pavement and had reached the end of their lives. 14 new cherries were planted -*Prunus* Accolade - an early flowering variety with semi-double, pink flowers in April and yellow/orange leaves in autumn. The other cherries are of various ages and varieties– the newest is at the Mill Gill end, planted to replace a tree blown down in 2020, and there are two originals from the 50s outside The Ilkley Dress Agency (west end of Grove), where you can see the problem with the pavement.

Cherry trees on the Grove

In the pavement ahead, almost opposite Smiths is 34

34. Yew *Taxus baccata*
Native, evergreen. This is a male tree – it has male pollen cones in winter but does not develop red fruits- these are only seen on female trees.

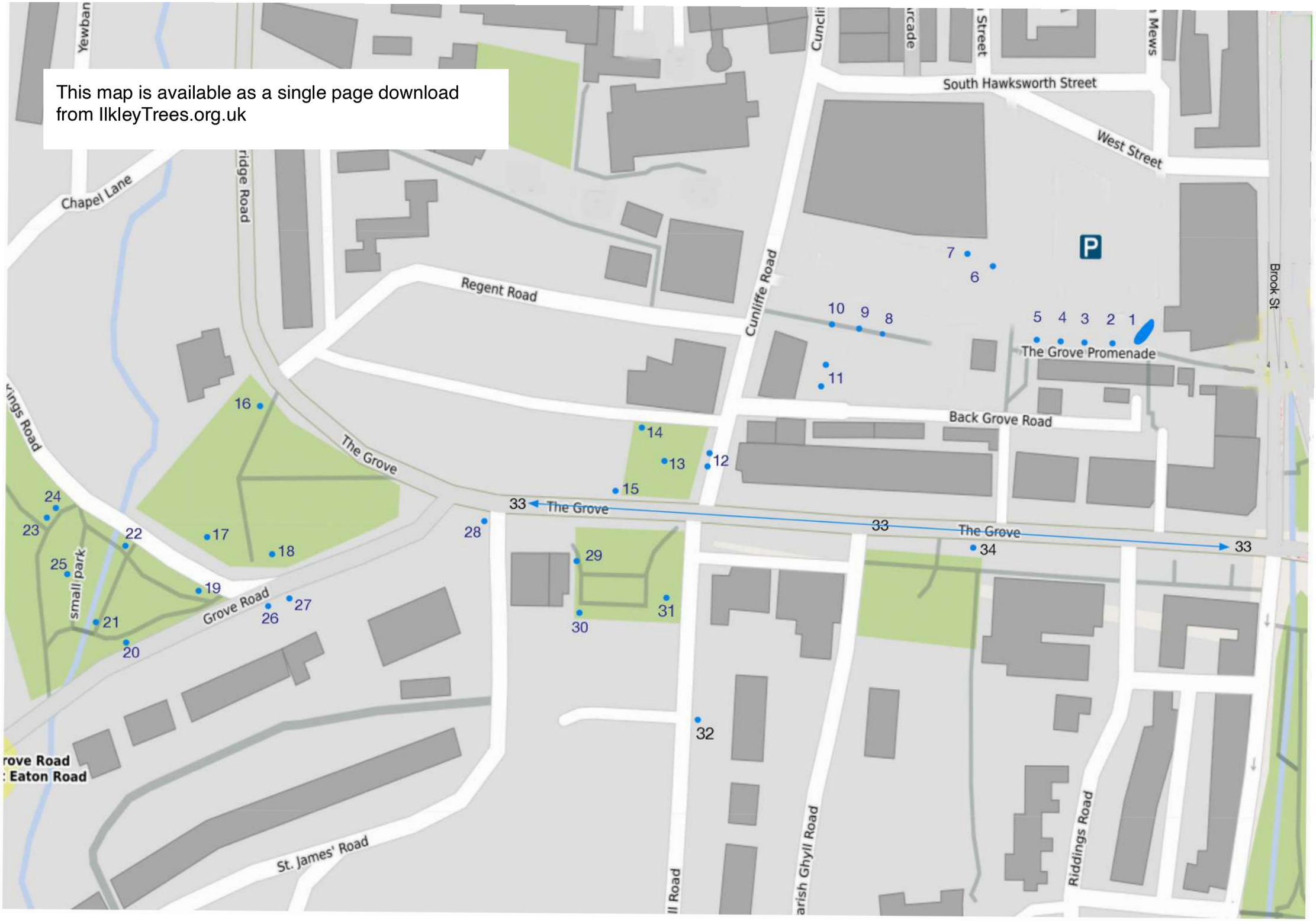
Yew tree

Male pollen cones

This booklet was produced in April 2021 and updated Feb 2022 and Feb 2025 by Sue & Neil Stevens. We hope you have enjoyed getting to know our town centre 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 Ilkley tree trails available:

Introduction to Trees
Darwin Gardens and the Moor
Ilkley Cemetery
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 from 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
Chapel Lane
Regent Road
Cunliffe Road
South Hawksworth Street
West Street
Brook St
The Grove Promenade
Back Grove Road
The Grove
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The Grove
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The Grove
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Grove Road
small park
St. James' Road
Riddings Road
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