

The Dunnington Tree Trail

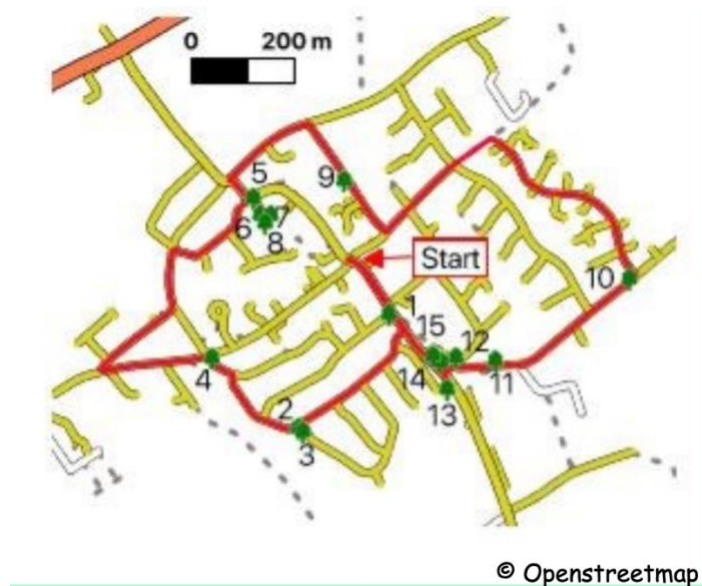


The Dunnington Tree Trail is a walk of some $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles around the village, describing trees of age, interest and beauty.

15 trees, most of which are native to Britain, are picked out to show something of their history, mythology and uses.

Dunnington has existed since well before the Domesday Book, in which it is described as Domniton. The trees described here form an excellent setting for the many old traditional houses near the centre of the village as well as the residential estates which have sprung up since the 1960s.

Map



Starting at The Cross Keys, go south down Common Road about 150m to the magnificent Copper Beech on the corner of Greencroft Lane.

Copper Beech



Like the common beech, which is green, this tree produces reddish brown beech nuts (known as beechmast). Beech leaves were used to relieve swellings, and make a poultice. Like so many trees, it encourages biodiversity by hosting 64 insect species in its leaves and its bark.

Continue a few metres down Common Road, and turn right into *Greenside*. Walk to the end of this road, where you will see a group of three Silver Birches.

Silver Birch



The Birch was one of the first trees to colonise Britain after the last Ice Age, so it is well adapted to different types of climate and soil. Its white bark is attractive, especially in winter, and is a good source of kindling. It is said to be the favourite tree of lovers.

Just to the left is a large Weeping Willow.

Willow

The willow thrives in wet conditions, alongside rivers or lakes. It is the source of wood for cricket bats and is regularly coppiced, or cut down to provide thin branches for basket weaving and fences.



This specimen is a Weeping Willow, whose Latin name is *Salix Babylonica*, based on the words of Psalm 137 which were included in the Boney M song *By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion*.

Turn right up Cedar Glade and just before you reach York Road notice two relatively small Hawthorn trees.

Hawthorn



Though most commonly used as a hedge, the hawthorn, if left to grow, develops into a sturdy tree. Its berries encourage birds and wildlife, and the

famous mayflower brightens up the hedges in spring. The berries are believed to have medicinal properties, and fair maids who wash in its dew on the first of May are said to become even fairer.

Turn left up York Road - and on the right hand side you will see an example of a traditional Hawthorn hedge.

Hawthorn hedge

The Hawthorn is extensively used as a hedge for gardens or farms. It is the same as the tree, but when regularly cut it forms a dense barrier to hold back animals or mark a boundary.

Continue along York Road and turn sharp right up Pear Tree Lane. This is a good example of an area where old trees have been retained to add to the attraction of newly-built large houses.

Walk past the school, noting where a large clump of mature trees form a visual screen and sound muffler for the adjacent houses.

Turn left into Church lane, and after 200m turn right into The Copper Beeches, where you will soon see another fine Copper Beech on the right.

Go through to St Nicholas Church, where a large cherry tree stands by the entrance.

Cherry



The white blossom of this sturdy tree marks the arrival of Spring. It is one of the two native cherries, the other being the Bird Cherry. (*Prunus avium* or *Prunus geana*).

The two trees just beyond it have pink blossom, and are of oriental origin.

Go round into the churchyard to see a selection of traditional if sombre trees.

Holly



The holly is traditionally associated with Christmas, and is a symbol of eternal life. Its thorns recall Christ's crown on the cross, and the berries the blood of his wounds. The smooth-leaved female is lucky for women, the prickly male (!) for men. The bright berries are an important source of winter food for birds and of decorations for Christmas puddings!

Yew



The yew, a symbol of immortality or doom - and for this reason often used in cemeteries - can live for more than 1000 years. Its heavy wood has long been used to make weapons, such as the longbow. The seeds, poisonous to humans, are distributed by the birds which eat the bright red berries.

Rowan

Noticeable for its relatively small size, the rowan also protects you from witches! This is another tree whose berries are an important source of winter food for birds. Their other popular name - mountain ash - is deceptive: they are not in fact related to the ash family.



Leave the Church and go up Church Street, turning right along Eastfield Lane. Note the line of hedge trees on the left, giving a dignified air to the new cemetery.

Turn right down Garden Flats Lane. Half way down on the right are two large trees, the second of which is an Ash.

Ash



The ash, distinguishable in winter and spring by its big black buds, is now threatened by the lethal Ash Dieback disease. Should the disease eventually kill all ash trees, the species will be sorely missed. But work is going on to help it survive. Its hard, flexible wood is used for tool handles, furniture and sports equipment such as hockey sticks. More poetically, it has been associated with good luck and true love.

Turn left into Petercroft Lane, cross Holly Tree Lane where it becomes Horsfield Way, and follow the footpath until it bears right into Kerver Lane.

As you go down this lane, notice how, particularly at the end, a number of old existing trees have been retained to give the area a settled look; and how the visual appearance of the estate has been enhanced by the planting of newer trees of varied shapes, sizes and colours.

Go to the end of Kerver Lane, on the corner of which is a fine example of the Oak.

English Oak



Possibly the best known of British trees, the oak has been used for hundreds of years to build boats, houses and all kinds of furniture and tools. Its leaf and its seed - the acorn - are well known symbols of countryside pursuits. The building of Nelson's flagship, the *Victory*, required 2000 mature oak trees from 100 acres of forest. Think of the song, the official march of the Royal Navy, *Heart of Oak*.

Turn right along Intake Lane, passing the Millennium wildflower garden set among three Red oaks, and a group of allotments, just before which is a Lime tree.

Lime

This tree was often used to form an avenue leading to a large country house. It can grow very large - up to 30m. At one time, the boiled leaves were used to treat skin complaints, but nowadays the drips of honey dew produced by lime aphids are the bane of motorists!



In front of the last house in Intake Lane, on the right, is an ornamental cherry tree.

Pink Cherry



The bright pink blossom of this tree of oriental origin complements the white of the native cherries like the one in front of the Church.

At the end of Intake Lane turn left and enter Julia's Garden on the other side of the road.

Just opposite the gate is an Apple tree.

Apple



The Apple is commonly grown in domestic gardens for its colourful white and pink blossom and for its fruit, but is also a valuable source of food for birds.

As you leave the garden, ahead of you on the right is the area known as the Green, with several large trees and two new, young ones

The first tree you come to is a Sycamore.

Sycamore



This hardy tree thrives in urban areas, especially parks. As it is not native (introduced only several hundred years ago!) and is easy to grow, it is not highly regarded, but it is tolerant of wind and pollution, makes a good display in parks, especially as it ages, and its strong timber is used for making furniture and kitchenware, as it doesn't stain or taint food.

And its 'helicopter' seeds are a source of fun in autumn.

The third of the large trees you come to is a Horse Chestnut.

Horse Chestnut



Another 'recent' tree, (16th century!), but a common sight in parks, streets and village greens, where its bright white flowers are a joy in Spring. It is a rich source of nectar and pollen to insects. Deer and other mammals eat the conkers, with which children play endlessly in Autumn. Its timber is soft, and so ideal for carving. This is another species threatened by pests and diseases, notably the leaf mining moth which disfigures the leaves throughout the summer.

The three smaller trees- whitebeam, rowan and crab apple - were planted recently to replace those damaged in a storm.

Go up Common Road back to the Cross keys.

The value of trees

As well as their aesthetic value, trees have a large part to play in improving the health of the environment - and of the human race.

Clean air

They absorb carbon dioxide and emit oxygen.

Flood prevention

They absorb and hold back water, especially in the upper reaches of rivers, slowing down the rush into cities which often causes flooding. York has been a particular victim of flooding in the last few years.

Fuel

Dry, seasoned logs provide a relatively cheap, clean and comforting source of heat, especially when burnt in efficient wood-burning stoves.

Wild life

Berries and other fruits are a valuable source of food for a wide range of birds, animals and insects. Shelter from predators encourages wildlife to thrive and so increases biodiversity

Timber products

Oak, beech, ash and cherry are just some of the trees that provide a wide range of furniture, tools and other products.

Recreation

Woodland walks, benches with woodland views, play areas and dens are some of the ways trees can help people of all ages to relax and enjoy themselves. Dogwalkers know that their charges revel in a wooded environment.

Education

Watching and studying trees gives an example of and an insight into phenomena such as growth, propagation, reproduction and animal behaviour.

Property value

Estate agents claim that trees, a hedge or even a solitary tree in or close to a property can make it more attractive to potential buyers. Studies suggest a 7% increase is not unusual.

Shade

Not only for wildlife, but humans also - even in the fickle British climate it can sometimes be hot enough to make shade desirable!

Health and peace

More studies suggest that patients - in hospitals and at home - recover more quickly when they have a view of trees through their windows or from balconies.

Overall economic benefits

By their ability to reduce air pollution and flooding , as well as their overall value in increasing people's physical and mental health, millions of pounds per year are saved on the cost of the NHS, drainage and sewerage.

And more..

Trees came before homo sapiens, who has always relied on them for protection, food and leisure, and revered them as symbols of growth, death and rebirth. They constantly occur in

Folklore: the Tree of life, the sacred fig, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the homes of tree spirits.

Childhood memories: Climbing (and falling out of) them; swinging; dens and hiding; 'scrumping'

Literature and the arts - The Ents from The Lord of the Rings; Winnie the Pooh's honey tree; Robert Frost's *Stopping by woods...* Hockney's trees on the Wolds

Walking with or without dogs - dogs love trees too

Forest bathing taking in the physical and mental benefits of the forest.

Organic fodder - an increasing use of woodland for chickens, sheep and pigs to browse off woodland grass and leaves.

BUT

Our woodlands are threatened by increasing development of housing, and of rail and road networks.

Don't miss

Hagg Wood

This is an area of some 100 acres of mixed woodland, to the east of Dunnington and accessible via cycle route 66 and Intake Lane. The woods were protected from sale by the government in a campaign by villagers in 2006 and are now designated as a Community Woodland.

Hassacarr Nature Reserve

To the south of Dunnington village on the northern edge of the industrial estate is the Hassacarr Nature Reserve, designated as a statutory Local Nature Reserve. This small reserve which celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2018, is a haven for wildlife, including Kingfisher, water vole, numerous species of dragonfly and other insects, newts and other reptiles as well as common and rare wild plants.

Churchyard

There are many more trees than the three described on the trail. Well worth a visit to experience the sense of peace the trees convey.

Julia's garden



This garden was designated in memory of Julia Graves and designed by local floral expert Fiona Hogg, who had entered the garden into the RHS Tatton Garden flower show in 2007. Some of the large trees have been heavily pollarded (cut back) to avoid causing damage.

Useful contacts

- Dunnington Parish Council www.dunningtonparishcouncil.gov.uk
- City of York Council www.york.gov.uk
- Woodland Trust www.woodlandtrust.org.uk
- Tree Council www.treecouncil.org.uk
- One Planet York oneplanetyork.co.uk



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