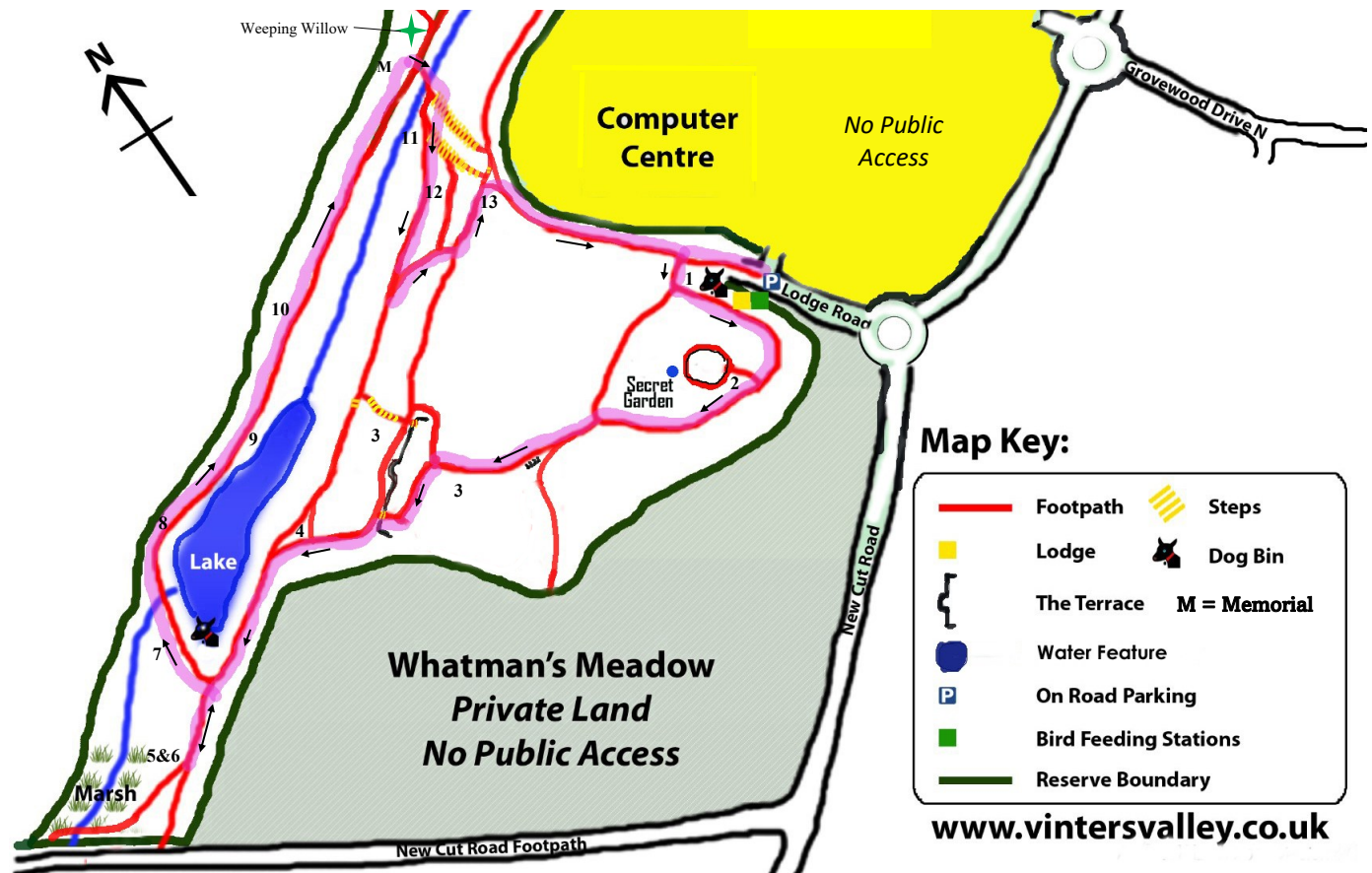


An Arboreal Amble in Vinters Valley Nature Reserve.

Southern Walk Sept 2025

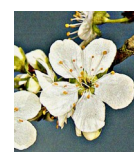


The route is highlighted in purple. From Lodge Road walk through the Reserve gate & down the gravel track. Take the first L & in a few metres turn L again. Ahead on your L is a **Goat Willow 1**. Continue along the track as it curls to the right passing the Secret Garden at the entrance to which are spindly **Damson trees 2**. Proceed along the track & just before the turning to the R is another Goat Willow. Turn L & pass across the RHS of the concrete stone bunkers. In a few paces on your L is a large hybrid **Black Poplar tree 3**. Past this you soon come to the Terrace where facing you are three more Black Poplars adorned with Mistletoe. Bear L & descend the steps at its south end then continue ahead passing through a number of old **Yew trees 4**. The track leads down to the south end of the lake. Turn L passing a gate & 'Town Centre' sign & in 100m where the track forks is an old **London Plane 5** on your R & a fallen ancient **Oak 6** on your L. Retrace your steps towards the lake & bear L just past a large **Crack Willow 7** then walk round the west side of the lake. You soon pass on your L an enormous Beech tree **8**. Along this stretch there are several Evergreen Oaks but the largest is on your R **9**. Continue walking Northeast for 80m & on your L is a tall **Spanish Fir 10**. Lower down it is obscured by the growth of ivy but if you look upwards you can see the distinctive foliage. Just before you reach the large Weeping Willow, turn R. Facing you are two small Yew trees, the L one is a male & the R female. Don't climb either set of the steps, but keep R along the lower path. Either side at the foot of the second set of steps are the remains of two **Box Trees 11** decimated by Box Tree Moth in 2023. Walk along the lower path & you shortly come to a massive **Coastal Redwood Tree 12** on your L. Follow the path to a junction where there are two more Coastal Redwoods & some Bamboo. Turn sharp left uphill passing more Bamboo. Ignore the minor track on your L & keep going uphill. At the top turn L along part of the **Lime Tree Avenue 13** at the end of which is a bench. Turn R over the small bridge & follow the track back to Lodge Road.



1 Goat Willow. Aka Sallow / Pussy Willow. *Salix caprea*. The leaves have short irregular toothed margins & a short twisted point. There are separate sex trees but both produce fluffy grey buds that turn yellow in March. Goat Willow is a very important source of food for larval & adult stages of butterflies & moths.

2 Damson *Prunus domestica sub sp insititia* This used to be called a 'damascene' & it is a subspecies of the Plum. There are many different varieties. The leaves alternate & have toothed edges. They are smooth green on the top & downy below. The leaves & flowers appear together in the early Spring.



3 Black Poplar. This is most likely to be one of the many hybrids that have come from crosses between European *Populus nigra* & the American *P. deltoides*. The leaves are triangular to diamond shaped & finely toothed. They are shiny green on both surfaces. The catkins appear in April & the males are reddish while the females are greenish. The bark is gnarled & has tuberosus growths projecting from it.

4 Yew. *Taxus baccata*. There are many in the Reserve. Older trees have long twisted trunks with peeling bark showing red-brown patches. The leaves are needle-like, spirally arranged but flattened to lie in rows either side of the twig. Male trees have clusters of globular anthers that release pollen in February. Female flowers are green & very small & only become noticeable in September when the red fruit forms.



5 London Plane. *Platanus x hispanica (x acerifolia)*. This is a hybrid between American & Oriental Planes first noted in the mid 17th Cent. The thin, flaking, grey-brown bark is a distinctive feature. The large, 5 lobed, palmate leaves are variable. Male & female catkins grow on different parts of the same tree. The latter develop into pendulous brown fruits. Common in London they tolerate compacted soil, pollution, & are disease resistant.

6. Pedunculate (English) Oak *Quercus robur*. The leaves are on very short stalks & are deeply lobed. The first flush of leaves are rapidly eaten by the several hundred species of moth larvae that feed on the tree. The leaves are replaced in mid-summer - a so called 'Lammas' growth. Male & female greenish catkins appears with the leaves in Spring & the acorns have long stalks. Oak timber has for centuries been widely used in building.



7 Crack Willow *Salix fragilis*. The leaves are long & glossy on top but less glossy below. They have finely toothed margins. Male catkins are yellow, female are green & both open with the leaves in Spring. This is a common tree in damp areas and easily hybridises so doesn't always conform to guidebook descriptions. The twigs snap easily & broken pieces readily take root so a line of trees along a river bank may have all been derived from the same sex parent tree.

8 Beech *Fagus sylvatica*. One of the last native trees to colonise Britain after the Ice Age. The buds are long & pointed. Leaves are oval & pointed with a wavy edge. Male flowers hang in clusters at the ends of twigs. Female flowers produce 3 sided nuts enclosed in a prickly case. The timber is used for furniture making as it does not last outdoors. The dense canopy & thick leaf litter prevent much undergrowth although fungi & orchids can be found. The larvae of the Lobster Moth *Stauropus fagi* feed on Beech leaves but very few other insect larvae.



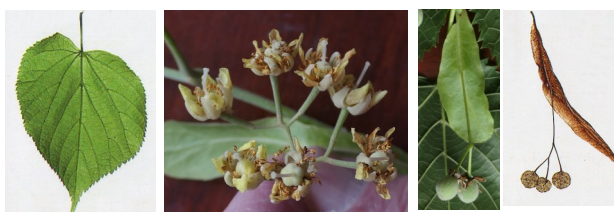
9 Evergreen (Holm) Oak *Quercus ilex*. This was introduced from Southern Europe circa 1500. Although termed 'evergreen' the leaves are shed throughout the year. Their shape is variable. Usually oval with a pointed tip & rounded base but young leaves may be Holly-like with spiky edges. The buds are minute. Golden male catkins appear in Spring & the acorns are deeply enclosed by the cups. The bark is brownish-black or black & often cracks into square thin curling plates.

10 Spanish Fir aka Hedgehog Fir *Abies pinsapo*. This was introduced from Spain circa 1839. Originally it was known as the 'soap pine' as the twigs were crushed in water to form a 'soap'. You will need to crane your head backwards to see the branches of this tree as lower down it is covered in Ivy. The leaves are short blunt needles densely arranged around the twig. The cones are clustered at the top of the tree. Male cones are red & shed pollen in late May. The persistent female cones are initially green & form upright clusters.



11 Box *Buxus sempervirens*. (This info is included in the hope that the trees might eventually recover.) Box trees are native to dry calcareous slopes in Europe & possibly Britain although most of the forty Box Family species are tropical. They have been widely planted in Britain & several cultivars exist such as these variegated type. Being evergreen, the smaller leaved varieties are popular for hedging & topiary. Most are shrub sized, but the timber from larger trees is very dense & highly prized for turnery.

12 Coastal Redwood *Sequoia sempervirens*. These evergreens were introduced in 1843 & in their native California they grow into the tallest trees in the world many over 100m high. They can live to 2,600 years old although most are between 700 & 1000. The bark is reddish brown with many deep ridges making it feel soft & velvety to the touch. Leading shoots have clasping scale-like leaves whereas side shoots have longer flattened needle-like leaves in two rows. Drop-shaped male cones on the tips of leading shoots release pollen in February. Female cones are bigger & globular. The timber is of little value as it is very brittle.



13 Lime *Tilia x europaea*. This is probably a hybrid of small-leaved & large-leaved limes & is possibly native to Britain. The buds are reddish-brown. Leaves have an asymmetric heart-shaped base & have a pointed tip. The upper surface is dull green but it is paler below. The yellowish-white flowers have 5 petals. The pea-like fruit is round & hard. These trees suffer from aphid infestation resulting in copious honeydew. The wood is good for hand carving but not durable outside.