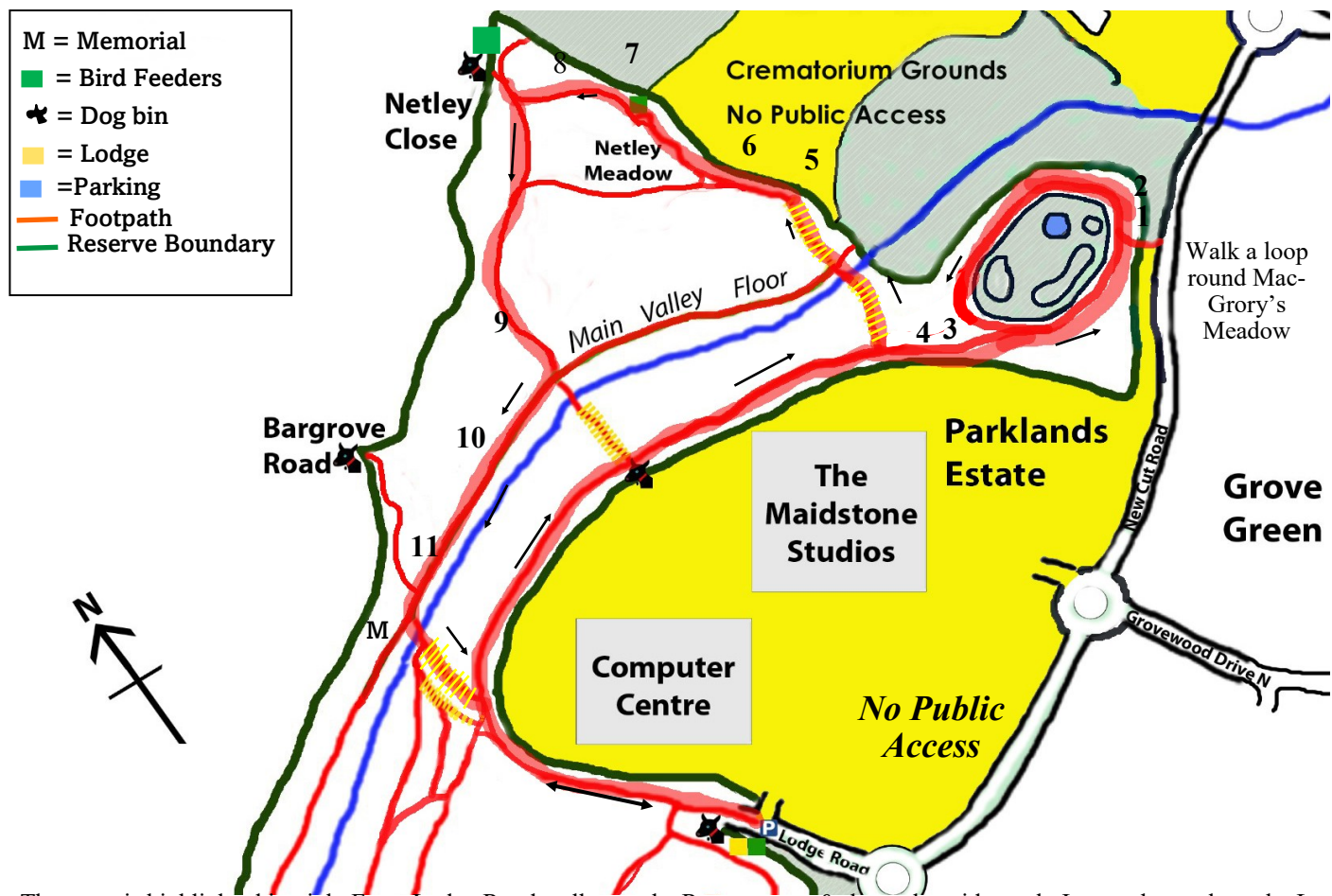


An Arboreal Amble in Vinters

Valley Nature Reserve

Northern Walk Sept 2025



The route is highlighted in pink. From Lodge Road walk past the Reserve gate & down the wide track. Ignore the track on the L & continue to where the track bends to the R don't cross the bridge but keep to the R & walk parallel to the Computer Studio fence. Walk past the log piles built to provide habitats for wood-boring insects & on past the turning to the Top Steps. Keep R at the fork & walk round the fenced MacGrory's Meadow whose hedge contains Briars, Hazel, Blackthorn, Hawthorn & Field Maple. In the hedge just beyond the exit path to New Cut Road are a **1** Guelder-rose & a **2** Spindle Tree. Continue round the meadow with a row of tall Pines on your R. Complete the loop walking back to the the Top Steps past a large leaning London Plane **3** & an **4** Oak tree fenced off on your R. Turn R & descend the steps to cross the stream & Main Valley Floor then ascend the steps on the other side. At the top of these on the R is a large Beech **5** & a little beyond this at the path junction is a **6** Field Maple. Walk round Netley Meadow to pass the bird feeding station just beyond which & behind a Cherry tree is a **7** Turkey Oak. On your R close to the path junction to Netley Close is a **8** Wellingtonia tree. Half way down the path towards the Main Valley Floor & on your R stands a **9** Swamp Cypress. At the bottom turn R & walk with large Hornbeam trees on your R **10** to just beyond the Bargrove Road path to reach the elegant Weeping Willow **11** tree. Just beyond this you turn L & L again to climb the first set of steps. At the top is a bench at the end of the Lime Tree Walk & from here you retrace your outward steps back to Lodge Road.



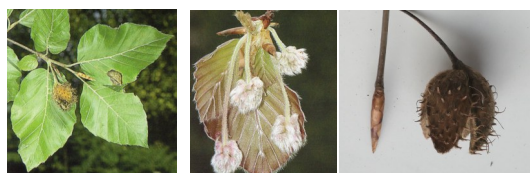
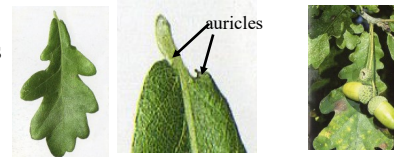
1 Guelder-rose *Viburnum opulus*. This is more a shrub than a tree. The leaves have 3 to 5 irregularly toothed lobes & the flat white flower heads resemble a Hydrangea. The outer flowers are sterile. The fruit is a shiny translucent red berry. The name comes from the Dutch Province of Gelderland where a cultivar known as the Snow-ball Tree is said to have originated.

2 Spindle *Euonymus europaeus* The leaves are oval with a pointed tip & sharply toothed edges. The flowers are small, 4 petalled & yellowish-green. They develop into pink, 4 chambered fruits containing 4 orange seeds one of which is visible in the photograph. Spindle wood is good for carving & charcoal made from it is high quality & used by artists. The entire plant is poisonous.



3 London Plane *Platanus acerifolia*. This is thought to be a hybrid between the Oriental & Western Plane trees & since 1650 has been widely planted for ornamental purposes The leaf shape is extremely variable even on the same tree with deeper lobes & more teeth. The timber is dense & used for veneers. The peeling bark efficiently removes particulate pollutants from the air of cities but the durable leaves can clog drains.

4 Pedunculate (English) Oak *Quercus robur* The characteristic leaves are lobed & at their base have two projections called 'auricles'. The acorns have long stalks in rough cups only enclosing a third. From its girth measurement this tree is at least 260 years old but likely to be much older. 700 to 800 years is not uncommon. This species & the Sessile Oak, *Quercus petraea*, are our only two native Oak species.



5 Beech *Fagus sylvatica* Leaves oval & pointed with a wavy margin. Female flowers are in pairs on short stalks. Males flowers are on longer stalks at the shoot tips. Nuts are 3 sided & enclosed in pairs in a prickly case. Buds are very pointed. Timber used for furniture but not durable outdoors. The leaf litter prevents much undergrowth but certain orchids & fungi are common.

6 Field Maple *Acer campestre*. Leaves have 3 lobes & small tufts of hair where the veins join the mid-rib on their underside. The leaves turn bright yellow then reddish-brown in the autumn. Both sex flowers are borne in yellow-green clusters in April/May at the same time as the leaves open. The winged seeds are similar to those of the Sycamore which belongs to the same genus.



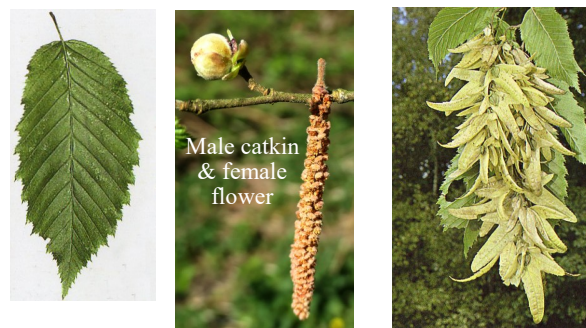
7 Wellingtonia aka Giant Sequoia. *Sequoiadendron giganteum* An enormous evergreen native of California introduced to Britain in 1853. Specimens grow over 100m tall, have girths over 27m & can live for up to 3,400 years. The distinct leaves are small green scales that clasp the shoots. They are supposed to smell of aniseed if crushed. Male cones are small & yellow. Female cones are green initially but become brown & woody. They take 2 years to ripen & may remain on the tree for several years. The bark is very thick, soft & fibrous.

8 Turkey Oak. *Quercus cerris*. Introduced from Europe to Britain in 1735. The leaves are variable but generally long & deeply lobed. The acorns are stalkless & are mostly encased in a deep cup which is covered with long upward curled scales. The bark has curvy vertical lighter coloured fissures & looks quite different to the English oak.



9 Swamp Cypress. aka Bald Cypress *Taxodium distichum*. This is another tree introduced in 1640 from South Eastern USA & is most famously associated with the mangrove swamps of the Everglades. It is one of the few deciduous conifers in Britain & in autumn the feathery needles turn red-yellow before they fall. When growing in its native swampland, the roots grow projections above ground called 'knees' or pneumatophores made of spongy tissue whose function is to absorb air.

10 Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*. The leaves are alternate, oval with a rounded base & are pointed. The edge has a double toothed margin & there are 15 pairs of parallel veins on the slightly hairy underside. The male catkins produced in April are up to 5cm long & are yellowish green with red outer scales. They turn yellow then gold in autumn. The fruits are clusters of 8 pairs of nutlets with papery, three-pointed wings. The Hawfinch is the only British bird able to crack open the tough nutlets. The wood is dense & durable & was used to make chopping blocks, wheel hubs & the hammers to strike the keys inside pianos.



11 Weeping Willow *Salix sepulcralis*. This beautiful tree is derived from the Chinese Weeping Willow which was traded along the Silk Route & eventually introduced into Britain from Syria in 1730. The Chinese tree grows poorly in Britain but the now common Weeping Willow is most likely a hybrid between the Chinese Weeping Willow & a White Willow which is a widespread native tree. The drooping yellow shoots give the tree its characteristic shape & colour. The trees are normally male only & the catkins are slender & curved upwards. They are propagated by cuttings & grow equally well in dry or damp soils & in suburban gardens.