

## TREE HISTORY

The last Ice-Age ended about 12,500 years ago and at about 6,100BC Britain broke free from Europe for good – the period described as the Middle Stone Age. Trees growing in Great Britain at that time are deemed to be Indigenous – meaning native trees. Other trees were brought to Britain during the times of the Roman Empire and especially after the discovery of the Americas and trade routes to Asia.

## BURNHAM PARK HISTORY

Burnham Park dates from 1965. The large triangular plot was originally fields and orchards. In c1824 The Priory was built, surrounded by gardens and shrubbery, with cottages and a market garden to the north. Sydney Jones of The Priory donated land for the new United Reformed Church in 1954 - it opened in 1964. In the 1960's the local council purchased the land excluding The Priory itself and the first Burnham Park Hall opened in 1965, with Burnham Library following in 1973.

There was a brick wall marking the site's boundary with Stomp Road and Windsor Lane and when it was removed in the 1960's the distinctive, white, single metal bar fence was erected in its place. Most trees in the front of Burnham Park Hall are relatively young, although there are some very mature trees within the Park.

## TREE TRAIL INTRODUCTION

The trail starts on the Village Green in the front of Burnham Park Hall, takes in the path at the front of Burnham Library and then follows the path around the perimeter of Burnham Park. There are 27 marker posts, each designating a tree and image of its leaf. Each post includes a QR code which enables a mobile phone user to learn more about each tree.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**SEGRO** owners of Slough Trading Estate, for funding the physical and marketing material associated with the trail.

**BURNHAM PARISH COUNCIL** members, officers and groundstaff for their enthusiastic support and ongoing care taken to protect the trees. If you would like more information on a particular tree on Burnham Parish land - get in touch via [www.burnhamparish.gov.uk](http://www.burnhamparish.gov.uk)

**PAM TAYLOR** who is a local botanical artist who has generously offered her scientific and artistic expertise.

**PAUL MITCHELL** for taking the photograph of the first tree on the trail which is featured on the front of the leaflet.

**SHARON HOLLIDAY** for help with marketing material, leaflet and the detail available on the Parish Council and Burnham Foundation websites

**THE WOODLAND TRUST** [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk) whose website provides the basis for most of the QR code information

**SHIRLEY SHAW** and **VIV NICHOLAS** the authors of this tree trail. Shirley is treasurer of the Burnham and District Heritage Society and Viv is chairman of The Burnham Foundation [www.theburnhamfoundation.org](http://www.theburnhamfoundation.org)

## THE VALUE OF TREES

Humankind would never have evolved on Earth without there being trees to provide food and shelter. Furthermore, the tree is embedded in our consciousness – The Tree of Life, The Tree of Knowledge, A Family Tree and perhaps also The Christmas Tree.

Trees play an important role in every community. Our streets, paths and gardens are often lined with trees that create a peaceful, aesthetically pleasing environment. Trees increase our quality of life by helping to bring the joys of the countryside, flora and fauna, into more urban settings. We can also gather under their cool shade when meeting family and friends to enjoy outdoor activities.

Trees contribute to the environment by providing oxygen, cooling the air and improving its quality, conserving water and preserving soil. Trees absorb carbon dioxide and emit oxygen whilst trees, shrubs and turf also filter air by removing dust and absorbing pollutants such as carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide. Rain then washes the captured particles into the ground.

As a society we may well, at present, be at risk of losing our anchor of understanding of the natural world. We hope that this tree trail will, for all ages, make a contribution to stimulating a greater interest and regard for trees, nature and the environment.



**SEGRO**



Red Oak (24)

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The trail starts with a type of Cedar tree, **Cedrus Deodara (1)** native to The Himalayas which was planted in 1997 by our groundsman Jim Wotherspoon. This tree was presented together with the Dashwood Trophy when Burnham was runner up in the Best-Kept Village in Bucks competition - a competition which Burnham won in 2019. It is remarkable to reflect on this tree's growth since planting when it was only six feet tall. But its shape will continue to change as it grows into a mature tree like the line of Cedrus Deodara which can be seen in the main park along the park's boundary with Windsor Lane.

**The Scarlet Oak (2)** is native to central and eastern USA and is the symbol of Washington DC.

**The Common Beech (3)** is the first native tree on this trail and is regarded as The Queen of British Trees. Look out for our tree's six stems.

The first of the line of six trees in front of Burnham Park Hall is a mature **Japanese Cherry (4)** Look out for its startling array of pink blossom in the Spring.

The last of this line of trees is a **Red Norway Maple (5)** Its familiar 5-pointed leaves are a favourite with caterpillars and its seeds are eaten by birds and small mammals. Once pollinated by insects, female flowers develop into winged seeds, known as samaras, which fall in autumn and are spread by wind.

**Bird Cherry Tree (6)** is a native tree with a white Spring blossom. Its bark produces an unpleasant acrid smell and was placed on people's doors to ward off the plague!

**Winter Flowering Cherry (7)** planted in 2018 to commemorate 100 years since women over 30 and men over 21 were given the vote in parliamentary elections. When established it will produce white blossom in the autumn/winter.

**Ash Tree (8)** Our third native tree but now threatened by a fungal disease known as Ash Die-back which is thought to have been introduced by imported ash trees which were themselves genetically immune to the disease.

**Sycamore Tree (9)** Our tree has four stems emanating from its single trunk. Like the maple tree – it also produces the winged seeds known as samaras but they have a smaller angle between the two wings

As you walk to the main entrance to Burnham Library you will see three silver birch trees. These are Himalayan silver birch but just past the main Library entrance is a taller tree which is a native **Silver Birch (10)** with its distinctive silver trunk.

**London Plane (11)** is a ubiquitous tree in London and a hybrid of the Oriental Plane and American sycamore developed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Planted in streets to reduce soot and smoke and popular also because it requires little root space. Berkeley Square in London – where the nightingales sang – has numerous London Plane trees which were planted in 1789. There are four London Plane trees in Burnham Park – can you spot them all?

**Horse Chestnut (12)** introduced to Britain in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century from the Balkan peninsula. Also known as the conker tree which flowers in May and the first mention of the conker game was in 1848. The tree is often planted in German beer gardens as it also has a low root system and provides shelter from the sun protecting the underground beer cellars.

Can you now spot the line of enormous cedar trees located close to the Park's boundary alongside Windsor Lane?

**Aleppo Pine (13)** ubiquitous around the Mediterranean Sea and its resin is used to flavour Retsina - a popular Greek alcoholic drink.

**Lime Tree (14)** look out for a corridor of 11 lime trees either side of the path leading to the Five Points corner of the Park. Note the plaque which refers to the lime trees planted after the 1987 Great Storm which felled an estimated 15 million trees all over England including lime trees in Burnham Park. If you look very carefully you will see that some of the lime trees appear to emerge from a small mound above the ground. These trees were not new trees planted into the earth but trees that actually grew out of the trunk of the fallen tree which rotted away as the tree matured.

Follow the path towards a mature **Red Oak (15)** and another **Horse Chestnut (16)**. Walking along the path alongside Priory Road – note two more mature Horse Chestnut Trees on the right and a hundred metres further along an English Oak which shelters a smaller Ash tree. The oak is titled the King of British Trees. It is regarded as a symbol of strength and supports more life than any other native tree species in the United Kingdom. Oaks also shorten with age to extend their lifespan.

When arriving at the second corner of the Park's triangle – just walk through the gap

and take a look at the **Wych Elm (17)** which is a magnificent and now somewhat rare native tree. Wych Elms and especially English Elms have declined significantly over recent years as they have been attacked by a bark beetle spreading a fungus which kills the tree. However, this Wych Elm appears to have developed an immunity to the fungus.

Returning into the Park – you see a copse on your left comprising around 80 small **English Elms (18)** which have grown as suckers and will not be attacked by the bark beetle until they reach a certain size

On the right is a native tree **Hornbeam (21)** whose leaves are similar to the beech tree but have serrated edges. Its wood is used in flooring and is the hardest of any European tree.

An **English Oak (22)** with its distinctive leaf comes next on the right just before the Children's playground before reaching **three False Acacias/ Blue Locusts (23)** False Acacias were originally shipped from the USA to France and then to Britain in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. American Indians used this wood to make their bows and it was a key wood in building the first settler homes on the eastern American coast. False Acacia provides the strongest timber in the USA and played a key part in the naval Battle of Plattsburg in the second war of American Independence in 1814. False Acacia wooden nails were used to pin the timber in American ships whilst English ships used oak nails. American cannons could shatter English ships' timber whilst American ships remained intact when under English cannon fire.

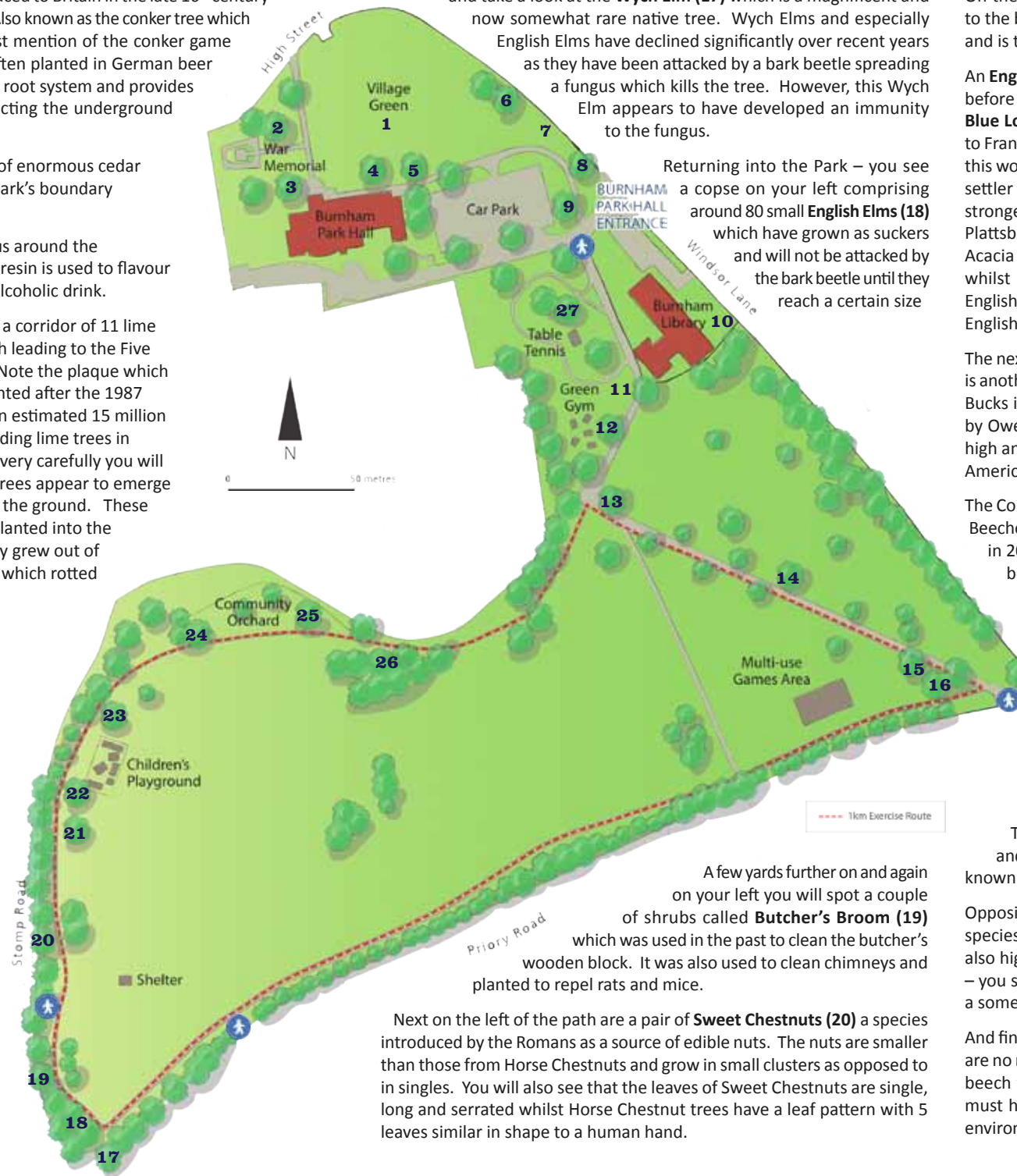
The next tree on the left of the path just before the Community Orchard is another **Red Oak (24)** and is designated as a "Champion Tree" of South Bucks in a book titled 'Champion Trees of Britain and Ireland', written by Owen Johnson and published in 2002. It is measured at 24 metres high and 160 cm in diameter. The Red Oak was introduced from North America and has more pointed leaves than the English Oak.

The Community Orchard was first planted with the support of Burnham Beeches Rotary Club in 2012 but was repositioned to its current location in 2016. Read all about the Orchard's fruit trees on the information board. On the other side of the path is the 'dinosaur' which is in fact part of the trunk of a fallen oak tree which fell in 2014. There were originally two oak trees that grew side by side – one fell and was removed – only for its partner also to fall but the trunk was retained to serve as a climbing frame for young children.

Just beyond the Community Orchard is another **Sycamore (25)** and moving forward and to the right we reach a small copse which has within it 8 young **Field Maple (26)** trees. This is the only native maple tree and its leaves are smaller and more rounded than the Sycamore and Norway Maple. The Field Maple along with the Norway Maple, sycamore, ash and hornbeam produces the distinctive winged 'helicopter' seeds known as samaras.

Opposite a green bench we then come to our first Walnut tree, another species first introduced by the Romans for its nuts. Walnut timber is also highly valued for making fine furniture. Before you leave the park – you should be able to spot three more **Walnut Trees (27)** growing in a somewhat tipsy fashion within a triangle.

And finally – take a look at some of the youngest trees in the park – they are no more than twigs growing out from the stump of a felled, weeping beech tree! The tallest is a small **Ash tree** and ash seeds (samaras) must have lodged in the stump and are thriving in its rich and fertile environment.



Next on the left of the path are a pair of **Sweet Chestnuts (20)** a species introduced by the Romans as a source of edible nuts. The nuts are smaller than those from Horse Chestnuts and grow in small clusters as opposed to in singles. You will also see that the leaves of Sweet Chestnuts are single, long and serrated whilst Horse Chestnut trees have a leaf pattern with 5 leaves similar in shape to a human hand.

A few yards further on and again on your left you will spot a couple of shrubs called **Butcher's Broom (19)** which was used in the past to clean the butcher's wooden block. It was also used to clean chimneys and planted to repel rats and mice.