



Tree Walks

in Alexandra Park, Hastings

Amenities & Leisure Services
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Our Jewel in the Crown - **Alexandra Park**

Alexandra Park is steeped in history; in 1850, still surrounded by farmland, the reservoirs were constructed to provide water for the 'growing town of Hastings'. A smallholding at the Southern end of the park was acquired by the Corporation in 1859 and landscaped as a garden for the residents of St Andrews Square, re-named St Andrews Gardens in 1864. In 1849 the railway line from Hastings to Ashford was constructed, effectively dissecting the park from the Town Centre, a pedestrian underpass was provided to maintain access to the gardens. By 1878 the Corporation had acquired much of the land and now wanted to stimulate development; to achieve this it decided to landscape a much larger park extending towards Silverhill and Buckshole Reservoir. The eminent landscape gardener Robert Marnock was commissioned and much of what we see today was created. In 1882 the new Alexandra Park was opened by the Prince and Princess Alexandra. Of huge significance in the new landscape was the tree collection, much of which was planted by Marnock. They shape the landscape and give a sense of splendour and serenity, their living presence a potent symbol of strength, resilience and continuity. It is thanks to the foresight of its designer Robert Marnock and subsequent generations of municipal arboriculturalists that Alexandra Park is now resplendent with large and beautiful trees, many of which are regarded as 'champions'.



Marnock loved the natural landscape and enjoyed manipulating it to good effect and incorporating the Victorians' love affair with rare species; set up collections of oaks, limes, maples, beeches and hollies, many of which survive today. Other trees planted during the Park's early years include pine, yew, red cedar, maidenhair and a monkey puzzle. The hundred years that followed saw the establishment of many more different species, both rare and common, so that now the Park is home to over 2000 trees of about 400 different kinds (including forms and cultivars), with yet more species in the adjacent woodlands.

This fine collection, which is nationally significant, means that Alexandra Park is probably one of the best public parks in Britain in which to see trees. Its sheltered valley and temperate climate allow an enormous variety to thrive, many of which have been able to grow to their full splendour. The Park currently includes nine champion trees (the tallest or largest of their kind in Britain and Ireland) and there are four more in the surrounding woodlands.

Like public parks all over the country, Alexandra Park had been, to some extent, neglected up until the late 1990s, but in 2000 the Heritage Lottery Fund helped restore the park, thanks to a £3.4 million grant. There is now a determination from both the Council and the Friends to sustain and wherever possible continue to develop and improve the park.

The tree collection is one of Hastings' great assets and the Friends of the Park will be championing its development and extension in years to come so that today's and future generations will always have beautiful trees to enjoy.



Alexandra Park Tree Walks

We love the trees in Alexandra Park and the aim of the tree walks is to introduce you to some of our favourites, and their stories. We hope we have provided sufficient information to help you identify not only the ones listed on the walks, but also other examples in the Park. To this end we encourage you to observe closely: What are the leaves like? What shape is the tree? What colour is the bark? What makes this tree different from others you have seen? (But please treat the trees with respect; for example, do not pull bits off.) The walks can be taken at any time of year but obviously the appearance of many of the trees, as well as whether flowers or fruits are present, depends on the season. Repeat the walks in spring, summer, autumn and winter and you will truly get to know the trees of Alexandra Park. We hope you will come to be as passionate about them as we are.

What is a tree?

A simple description of a tree is a woody plant with a single stem at ground level. This generally distinguishes trees from shrubs, which put up several woody stems at ground level. That said, the distinction is not always easy to make in practice as a tree's stem may divide very close to the ground and some individual specimens break the single stem rule. Trees themselves can be categorised in several ways. One division is between deciduous trees which lose their leaves in winter, often providing glorious autumn colour before they do, and evergreen trees which, as their name indicates, have leaves throughout the year. Another distinction that is often made is between conifers such as Pines, Cedars and Cypresses, the seeds of which are usually borne in cones, and the rest whose seeds are protected in a variety of different ways; for example in nuts, berries and fruits. Technically, conifers are Gymnosperms and most of them are evergreen and have needle or scale-like leaves. But some conifers are deciduous (for example, European Larch) while the term Gymnosperm includes Yews (which bear berries) and the Ginkgo with its fan-shaped leaves. The rest are technically Angiosperms.

Many of them are deciduous but their leaves, although taking many forms, are rarely needle or scale-like although Tamarisks are an exception here.

Some Notes on the Names of Trees

The familiar names of trees are their common names, such as Oak, Beech and Ash. But all trees (and indeed all plant species) have a botanical name. Botanical names are important because only the botanical name uniquely identifies a plant, whereas common names tend to vary. Some trees have more than one common name; common names themselves may vary from place to place; or the same common name may be applied to more than one species.

Botanical names are always written in italics and comprise a first name (starting with a capital), which is the name of the group to which the tree belongs (the generic name), and a second name (without a capital) which is the tree's individual name (the specific name). So Oaks, for example, all have *Quercus* as their first name, but different second names; the English Oak or Common Oak is *Quercus robur* and the Sessile Oak is *Quercus petraea*.

Things can get more complicated. In some cases a third name is added to the two part botanical name. Italics are used if it refers to a naturally occurring botanical form (f.) or variety (var.) or subspecies (ssp.) of that species, and quotation marks if it refers to a cultivar (garden variety) developed by gardeners. Taking Common Oak again as an example, *Quercus robur* f. *fastigiata* refers to a naturally occurring form which is very upright, in contrast to the usual spreading canopy of English Oak. *Quercus robur* 'Atropurpurea' is a cultivar which has purplish-green leaves, in contrast to the usual green ones. In other cases the two part botanical name has an 'x' in the middle because the species is a hybrid, a cross between two different species. For example, where English Oak and Sessile Oak grow together the two species can hybridise to produce a third and different species, *Quercus x rosacea* (which does not have a common name).

Finally, botanists do from time to time change the botanical names of plants as they learn more about them. The new botanical name will still uniquely identify the plant as the old name is dropped, but such name changes can be very confusing for non-experts. Every effort has been made here to use the most up-to-date botanical names. This means that botanical names used in older books could be different from those used here.

Tree Walk 1

Around the rose garden and tennis courts.

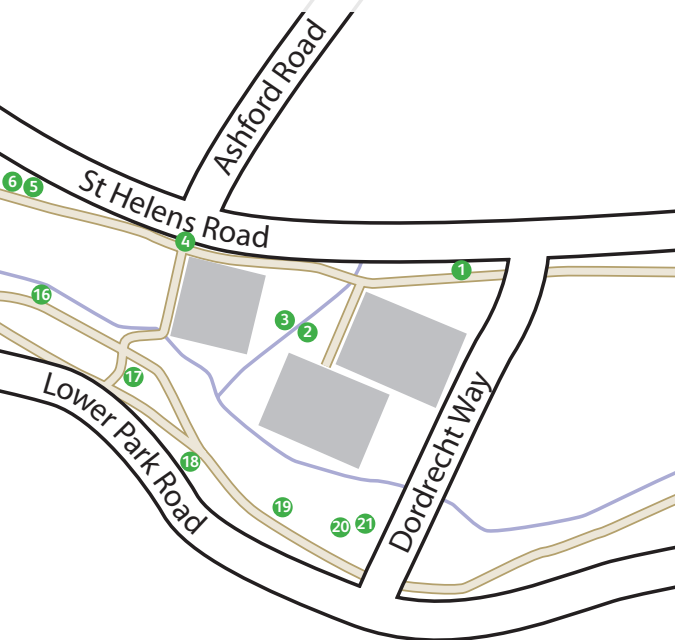
Starts at the St Helen's Road/ Dordrecht Way entrance to the upper park. Detailed descriptions of the trees can be found on the following pages.



The walk is one kilometre in length and will take 30-40 mins at a leisurely stroll; longer if you spend time closely observing the trees. There are a few gentle slopes but the route is generally suitable for disabled people. A Café and Toilets with full facilities are available nearby, in Lower Park on the other side of Dordrecht Way.

Adequate parking is available in Dordrecht Way at the start of this walk. Access by bus is available in nearby St Helens Road, the number 26A leaves Hastings Railway Station at 7, 27 and 47 minutes past the hour and terminates at the Conquest Hospital. The number. 26 returns to the Railway Station.

1. **Single-leaved Ash** (*Fraxinus excelsior* f. *diversifolia*)
2. **Snow Gum** (*Eucalyptus pauciflora* ssp. *debeuzevillei*)
3. **Manna Ash** (*Fraxinus ornus*)
4. **Cider Gum** (*Eucalyptus gunnii*)
5. **Cornelian Cherry** (*Cornus mas* 'Variegata')
6. **Maidenhair Tree** (*Ginkgo biloba*)
7. **Eucryphias** (*Eucryphia* x *nymansensis* 'Nymansay')
8. **Campbell's Magnolia**, (*Magnolia campbellii* var. *alba*)
9. **Gogun Tree**, (*Meliosma dilleniifolia* ssp. *tenuis*)
10. **Chusan Palms** (*Trachycarpus fortunei*)
11. **Blue Atlas Cedar** (*Cedrus atlantica* f. *glauca*)
12. **Western Red Cedars** (*Thuja plicata*)
13. **Tulip Tree** (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)
14. **Sawara Cypress** (*Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Filifera')
15. **Sweet Chestnut** (*Castanea sativa*)



16. **Copper Beech** (*Fagus sylvatica* f. *purpurea*)
17. **Oak Hybrid** (*Quercus* x *rosacea*)
18. **Holm Oak** (*Quercus ilex*)
19. **Cherries** (*Prunus* species)
20. **Fern-leaved Beech**, (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Aspleniifolia')
21. **Hawthorn**, (*Crataegus punctata*)

Tree Walk 1

This walk starts at the St Helens Road/ Dordrecht Way entrance to Upper Park.

1. Single-leaved Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior* f. *diversifolia*)

As you enter the park the first tree that you see on your right is a Single-leaved Ash which was planted in 1981. This tree is actually a form of our native Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), but you would not know so from the leaves. Native ash has leaves made up of 9 to 13 small leaflets on a single stalk (technically a compound leaf) but Single-leaved Ash, as its name indicates, has undivided leaves.

2. Snow Gum (*Eucalyptus pauciflora* ssp. *debeuzevillei*)

Continue along the path to the stone bridge. Don't go over the stream, but turn to your left. Walk a little way over the grass. Here you will see an Australian Gum tree, or Eucalypt - a Snow Gum which hails from the mountains of New South Wales. Three Eucalypts were planted in this area in the mid 1970s but this, the biggest of its kind growing in Sussex, is the only one remaining and it is unfortunately not healthy, as you can see from its lower trunk. But it has a beautiful spiral bark pattern and the peeling bark which is characteristic of many Eucalyptus species.

3. Manna Ash (*Fraxinus ornus*)



Return to the main path and cross the bridge. Walk to your left across the grass. The first tree you come to is a Manna Ash, also called Flowering Ash. This tree is most conspicuous in late May when it is covered in feathery white fragrant flowers. Its leaves are divided like those of the native Ash, but generally with fewer

leaflets. The Manna Ash hails originally from southern Europe and western Asia and has been cultivated in Britain since 1700. It is common in town parks and gardens but there is only one other example in the Park.

4. Cider Gum (*Eucalyptus gunnii*)

Return to the main path. The next large tree on the right is another Eucalypt, a multi-stemmed Cider Gum which bears fluffy white flowers in June. Its original home is Tasmania and in the UK it is one of the hardiest Gum trees, growing outdoors well into Scotland. Like all Eucalypts its leaves change as it gets older. The young leaves of the Cider Gum are round and waxy blue and popular with florists. If pruned hard (coppiced) in spring it can be maintained as a shrub with this attractive juvenile foliage. If left to grow it develops the adult leaves you can see here; they are green, and lance-shaped and leathery like those of all mature Gum trees. Apart from the Snow Gum, all the other Eucalypts in the Park are Cider Gums.

5. Cornelian Cherry (*Cornus mas* 'Variegata')

Continue along the path, looking to your right until you come across a small multi-stemmed tree with many leaves with more creamy white than green. This is a variegated form of the Cornelian Cherry. It is deciduous and its flowers appear in late winter, before the leaves, covering the tree in a strong yellow haze of bloom. The leaves themselves have veins which curve towards the tip of the leaf, which you can see if you examine them. The species is native to southern Europe.

6. Maidenhair Tree (*Ginkgo biloba*)



Next to the Cornelian Cherry is a large Maidenhair Tree, one of several growing in the Park. In 2001 its height was measured at 17 metres; it is regarded as a "Sussex Champion Tree". Look at the leaves the fan shape is unmistakable. In autumn their colour changes from bright green

to golden yellow. Maidenhair Trees have male and female flowers on separate plants. This example is unusual in being female and it bears greenish plum-like fruit that rot with a nasty smell. (This is why most cultivated trees are male.) 150-200 million years ago trees of this type were very common but the Maidenhair Tree is the sole survivor - in effect it is a living fossil. In the wild it is now found only in eastern China, where it is rare, but it is also widely cultivated. In China it is regarded as sacred and is much planted around temples and shrines. In the west, in contrast, it is regarded as a good town tree. Not only is it very beautiful; it is also very tough and tolerates polluted urban environments.

7. Eucryphias (*Eucryphia x nymansensis* 'Nymansay')

About 30 metres further along, and still on the right (behind the seat dedicated to Gladys Watts), are two Eucryphias planted close together, regarded as the finest in East Sussex. These slender evergreen trees with glossy green toothed leaves are not particularly obvious until August when they become wreathed in deliciously fragrant white poppy-like flowers. This particular Eucryphia is of Chilean ancestry, being a hybrid which arose from two species native to Chile which were growing in Nymans Garden near Haywards Heath in West Sussex.

8. Campbell's Magnolia, (*Magnolia campbellii* var. *alba*)

Walk another 15 metres or so. A huge Magnolia with thick grey shoots and large oval leaves grows in the private garden next to the Park. It is a white-flowered variant of Campbell's Magnolia which comes from the Himalayas. In Britain this tree is not much planted because it usually takes 30 years or so to flower and then frost, wind and rain at the wrong time can ruin the flowers. But in a mild March it is perhaps the most spectacular tree here, with its huge cup-shaped flowers looking as if a great flock of white doves has settled in its branches.

9. Gogun Tree, (*Meliosma dilleniifolia* ssp. *tenuis*)

Carry on until you come to the junction just before the iron bridge. The last tree on the right, somewhat dominated by a Holly, is another unusual one. It is a subspecies of the Gogun Tree. It has dark green toothed leaves and is most noticeable in July when its clusters of small pale creamy yellow flowers cast a strong fragrance. This subspecies comes from Japan, but the name Gogun is taken from the Nepali name for the species.

10. Chusan Palms (*Trachycarpus fortunei*)

Walk to the middle of the iron bridge. Look to your left to see the Chusan Palms (also called the Windmill Palm) growing by the stream, two on one side and four on the other. This palm is very hardy and can be safely grown outdoors in sheltered sites in much of Britain. Since it was first introduced from China in the 1830s it has been widely planted in parks and gardens. Chusan Palms were a favourite of the Victorians and might have figured on Robert Marnock's original planting list. Look for the large fan-shaped leaves on long stalks, with each leaf divided into many narrow strips, and from July the golden-yellow flower clusters. The fibrous looking 'bark' on the

stem is actually made up of the remains of cast off leaves; in China the fibre is used to make raincoats. Other Chusan palms grow not far away; you will have already passed two.

11. Blue Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* f. *glauca*)



Cross the bridge. Growing in the triangle of grass is a beautiful Blue Atlas Cedar. This is a blue form of the Atlas Cedar which hails from the Atlas Mountains in North Africa and is one of the few trees from that region that grows really well in Britain. Like all true cedars (*Cedrus* species, which actually belong to the Pine family) it has small needle-like leaves with the older ones arranged in dense “bunches” on short shoots. A covering of wax on the needles gives the foliage its blue-grey colour and also helps to prevent loss of water from the leaves in dry and windy conditions. Look out for the cones which start off small and green and ripen to a purple-brown colour. There are a number of Blue Atlas Cedars in the Park, including a taller one on the Pine lawn (Upper Park, above the model railway).

12. Western Red Cedars (*Thuja plicata*)

Follow the path past the triangle. On the bank to your left, about 20 metres apart, are two tall Western Red Cedars - native of forests in Canada and the United States. The red in the name comes from the bark, but *Thuja* species are quite different to *Cedrus* species. Western Red Cedar belongs to the Cypress family and its scale-like leaves are arranged in flat sprays. The foliage smells strongly. It is widely grown as both a specimen and hedge tree; there are about forty in the Park, and also several Chinese *Thuja* (*Platycladus orientalis*). But you may be more familiar with Western Red Cedar as timber; because it resists rotting it is widely used to construct garden sheds, greenhouses and other outdoor buildings.

13. Tulip Tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)

Continue along the path until it opens out with the old pumping station directly in front of you. Turn to your right where you will see the entrance to the depot. On the left side of that entrance is a large Tulip Tree, so-called because its greenish white flowers resemble a tulip. They appear in June



and you need to look up into the tree to see them. Its strangely shaped “squared-off” green leaves are unmistakable and in autumn they turn a beautiful rich yellow. The Tulip Tree was introduced from eastern North America in the late seventeenth century

and is now common in parks, but it is not a tree for the small garden!

14. Sawara Cypress (*Chamaecyparis pisifera* ‘Filifera’)

Now turn round and retrace your steps back to the triangle. The path forks; take the right fork. Almost immediately on your left you will see what looks like a small forest of red-barked cypresses but is actually a single tree; a cultivar of the Sawara Cypress known as *Chamaecyparis pisifera* ‘Filifera’. The ‘Filifera’ part of the name comes from the sprays of leaves which hang like long threads; this can just be seen if you look up into the tree but most of it has now reverted to the species.

As its name suggests the Sawara Cypress originates from Japan and was introduced to Britain in 1861. There are a number of Sawara Cypresses in the Park but only one ‘Filifera’, which is generally rare in cultivation.

15. Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*)



Continue along the path, which slopes down gently, until it forks. A large twin-trunked Sweet Chestnut grows where the path forks, recognisable from its long shiny toothed leaves. Its fissured bark spirals round the trunk, although not all Sweet Chestnuts have this obvious a pattern. Sweet Chestnut is native to the Mediterranean region and was introduced to Britain by the Romans; why is not known, but presumably for its edible nuts and its wood. Much later, particularly in the nineteenth century, many chestnut woods were planted in south east England to produce wood for poles and fencing by coppicing.

16. Copper Beech (*Fagus sylvatica f. purpurea*)

Now take the left fork of the path. About 30 metres along on your left is a large and well-proportioned Copper Beech. It is most attractive when the new pinkish young leaves appear in spring; as they mature they turn dark purple. This is a form of our native Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and has the same cigar-shaped leaf buds, 'wavy' leaves and smooth grey bark.

17. Oak Hybrid (*Quercus x rosacea*)

Continue along the path until you come to the path on the left. At the top of the Bank is a big Oak with ivy on its trunk. This is a hybrid between our two wild oak species, English Oak and Sessile Oak. If you walk to the next junction and turn sharp right you can get a closer look at the leaves, you will see they are very large, much larger than leaves of either of its parents. There is some dispute about how rare this hybrid is, in part because the leaves of both its parents can vary in shape depending on where the seed came from.

18. Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*)

Retrace your steps and return to the junction where on the right overhanging this spot is a big multi-stemmed Holm Oak. It looks quite unlike our native Oaks, being evergreen rather than deciduous and having leaves without lobes, but it does produce acorns. The leaves are dark green above and pale greyish-green underneath. Young leaves usually have teeth and are somewhat like those of Holly. This is reflected in the 'ilex' part of the Holm Oak's botanical name; Holly species have the first name Ilex. Holm Oak is very hardy and doesn't mind strong salt winds so it is often planted in coastal areas. It is perhaps prettiest in early summer when it flowers and its new leaves expand. It is common in the Park.

19. Cherries (*Prunus species*)

Now look down the bank again as you walk along the path. The bank overlooking the tennis courts is known as the Cherry Bank: here a variety of Cherries make a pretty display as they flower in spring. One that is not too difficult to identify is the Tibetan Cherry *Prunus serrula*, with its shining satiny reddish bark with horizontal brown markings. Its beautiful bark, particularly obvious in winter, and its compact size make it a popular garden tree. Despite its name it comes from western China. To the right of the Tibetan Cherry are two young trees with superficially somewhat similar leaves. The White Mulberry (*Morus alba*) has thin bright green leaves that vary in size and pinkish brown bark on the trunk; its leaves

are the preferred food of the silkworm. The leaves of the Handkerchief or Dove Tree (*Davidia involucrata*) are pointed and heart-shaped.

20. Fern-leaved Beech, (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Aspleniifolia')

Continue looking left as you walk along the path. Just before you reach Dordrecht Way two trees grow close together. The first, very large one (its height was measured at 17 metres in 2001), with branches hanging down almost to the ground, is a Fern-leaved Beech. This is a cut-leaved cultivar of our native Beech. It has jaggedly-toothed leaves, quite different in shape to those of the regular Beech. There are two more Fern-leaved Beeches in Upper Park, which are exceptionally beautiful in Autumn.

21. Hawthorn, (*Crataegus punctata*)

The last tree on the left before you get to Dordrecht Way is an extremely rare Hawthorn, *Crataegus punctata*. This is one of the biggest in Britain, superseded only by two growing in London Parks. In 2001 this tree was measured at 8 metres tall and 65 cm in diameter. It is related to our native Hawthorn or May (actually two species, *Crataegus monogyna* and *Crataegus laevigata*) which is common in hedges and woods, but its green leaves are not lobed like those of Hawthorn and its fruits or haws are crimson with white spots. It was introduced to Britain from Eastern North America in the mid-eighteenth century. As this tree is quite rare and not in very good condition, the Friends of the Park hope to propagate from it. This would have to be by grafting or taking cuttings to ensure the resultant offspring are true to form. Hopefully we can then replace the original, when it finally succumbs to its poor health.



Tree Walk 2

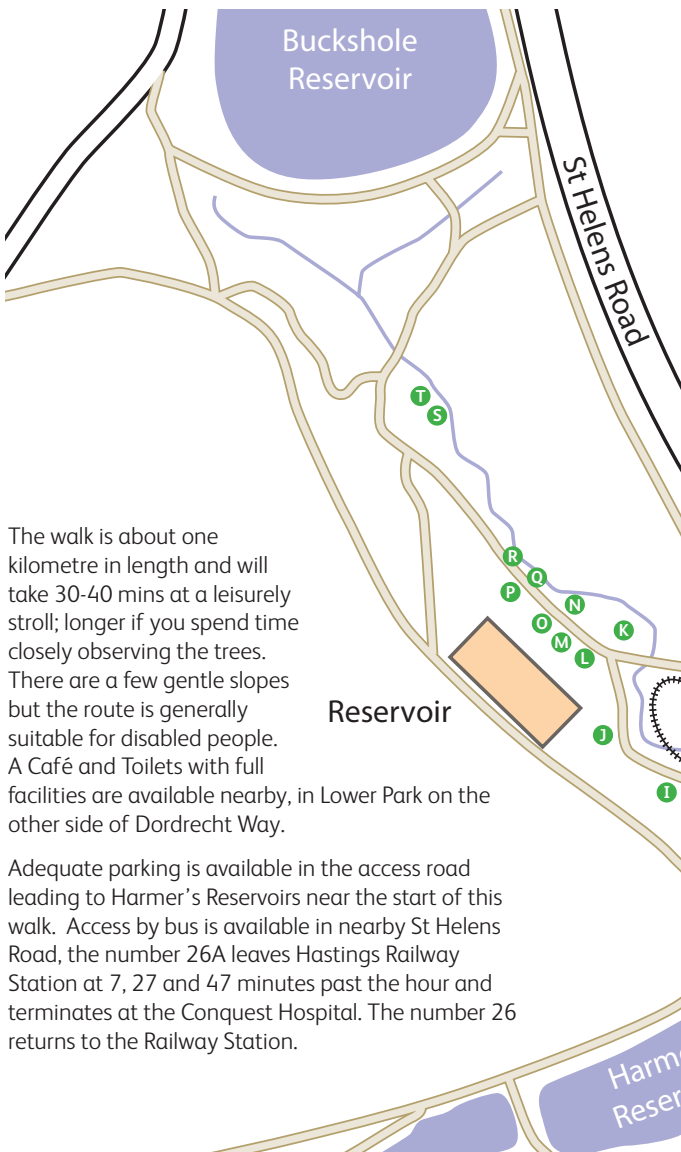
This walk begins in front of the Pumping Station and follows the main path to the left of the stream as far as the Chalybeate Well.



Tree Walk 2

Between Buckshole and Harmer's Reservoirs.

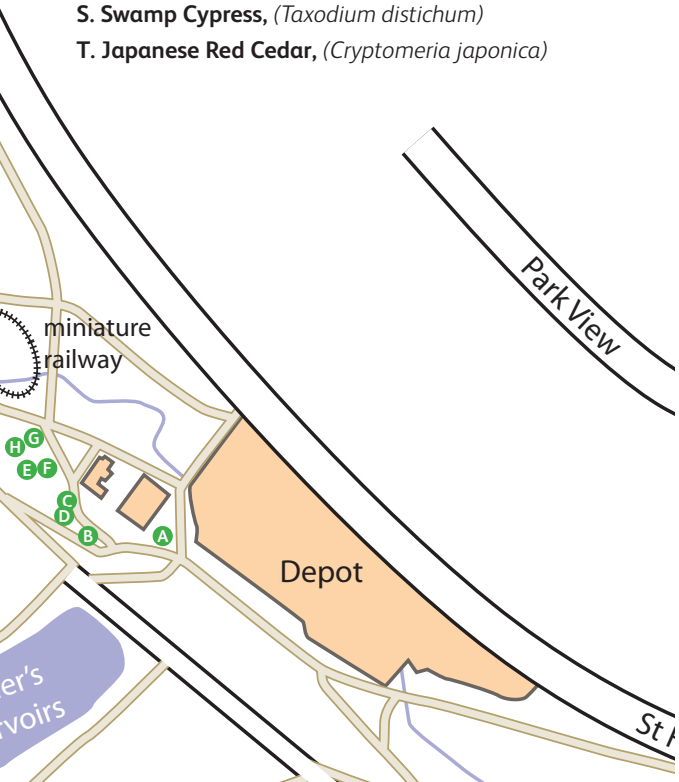
This walk begins in front of the Pumping Station and follows the main path to the left of the stream as far as the Chalybeate Well. Detailed descriptions of the trees can be found on the following pages.



The walk is about one kilometre in length and will take 30-40 mins at a leisurely stroll; longer if you spend time closely observing the trees. There are a few gentle slopes but the route is generally suitable for disabled people. A Café and Toilets with full facilities are available nearby, in Lower Park on the other side of Dordrecht Way.

Adequate parking is available in the access road leading to Harmer's Reservoirs near the start of this walk. Access by bus is available in nearby St Helens Road, the number 26A leaves Hastings Railway Station at 7, 27 and 47 minutes past the hour and terminates at the Conquest Hospital. The number 26 returns to the Railway Station.

- A. **Lawson Cypress**, (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*)
- B. **Western Red Cedar**, (*Thuja plicata*)
- C. **Sawara Cypress**, (*Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Plumosa')
- D. **Japanese Thuja**, (*Thuja standishii*)
- E. **Fastigate Birch**, (*Betula pendula* 'Fastigiata')
- F. **Pin Oak**, (*Quercus palustris*)
- G. **Hungarian Oak**, (*Quercus frainetto*)
- H. **Turkey Oak**, (*Quercus cerris*)
- I. **Turner's Oak**, (*Quercus x turneri* 'Pseudoturneri')
- J. **Lucombe Oak**, (*Quercus x hispanica* 'Lucombeana')
- K. **Dawn Redwood**, (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*)
- L. **Chestnut-leaved Oak**, (*Quercus castaneifolia* 'Greenspire')
- M. **Black Oak**, (*Quercus velutina*)
- N. **Willow Oak**, (*Quercus phellos*)
- O. **Bartram's Oak**, (*Quercus x heterophylla*)
- P. **Coral-bark Willow**, (*Salix alba* var. *vitellina* 'Britzensis')
- Q. **Oriental Plane**, (*Platanus orientalis*)
- R. **London Plane**, (*Platanus x hispanica* 'Pyramidalis')
- S. **Swamp Cypress**, (*Taxodium distichum*)
- T. **Japanese Red Cedar**, (*Cryptomeria japonica*)



Tree Walk 2

This walk begins in front of the Pumping Station and follows the main path to the left of the stream as far as the Chalybeate Well.

A. Lawson Cypress, (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*)

B. Western Red Cedar, (*Thuja plicata*)



On the Harmers Ponds side of the Pumping Station is a group of cypresses planted in late Victorian times. All these conifers have tiny leaves in fern-like sprays but differ in habit and aroma. On the right of the path looking northwards, the Lawson Cypress has hanging sprays and smells of parsley. On the left, two Western

Red Cedars have glossier foliage smelling of grapefruit (and similarly rich in vitamin C). Both originate from the rainforests of the American northwest and are abundantly grown in Britain.

C. Sawara Cypress, (*Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Plumosa')



Follow the path, with varied cypresses on your left, including four Sawara Cypresses. This is a Japanese species and this much-planted variant retains juvenile foliage (short spreading needles). In the wild, seedlings produce the typical adult, ferny foliage after a few years; this freak Peter Pan form never flowers or cones. Western

botanists, consequently, for a long time had no idea which kind of conifer Japanese gardeners had originally raised it from.

D. Japanese Thuja, (*Thuja standishii*)



The larger cypress up the bank is the rarest in this group and is again Japanese. Like the Western Red Cedar it has thick, sweetly-scented sprays of foliage, but these are a pretty sea-green, and the peeling bark is particularly colourful.

E. Fastigate Birch, (*Betula pendula* 'Fastigiata')



Also half way up the bank is a variant of the wild Silver Birch with vertical (fastigate) branches, which are scarcely elegant but are suited to a confined setting. Like the cypresses, this is a late Victorian planting and as such exceptionally old for a birch. In fact it is one of several Champion Trees in

Alexandra Park – the largest of its form currently known in Britain or Ireland.

F. Pin Oak, (*Quercus palustris*)



All the trees on the next part of the bank are oaks (*Quercus*). This is the largest and most diverse genus of temperate trees – all produce acorns, but the leaf-shape is highly diverse. Pin Oak comes from eastern North America and the lobes of its leaves (which turn red in autumn) are tipped with several sharp whiskers. It

luxuriates in southern England – this one was only planted in 1989.

G. Hungarian Oak, (*Quercus frainetto*)



From south-eastern Europe, this oak is notable for the size of its elaborately-lobed leaves. This young tree is dying back at the top because squirrels stripped the bark from the upper trunk to eat the nutritious cambium layer – a problem to which this species is particularly susceptible.

H. Turkey Oak, (*Quercus cerris*)



At the cross-paths keep left. The two big straight-trunked oaks halfway up the bank here are Turkey Oaks, again from southern and eastern Europe. Turkey Oak thrives in Britain and is now well-naturalised. Knopper galls (convoluted and deformed acorns of the native oak, abundantly seen today) only form when Turkey Oaks grow

nearby, because a tiny wasp, whose alternate generations feed on Turkey Oak, lays its eggs in the native oak's flowers.

I. Turner's Oak, (*Quercus x turneri* 'Pseudoturneri')



The small old oak just past the Turkey Oaks stands out in winter by holding onto its green leaves. This is a hybrid between the native Pedunculate Oak and the evergreen Holm Oak from the Mediterranean, and was found in the 18th century by Essex nurseryman Spencer Turner. It is one of the rarer survivors from the Park's late Victorian oak collection or Quercetum.

J. Lucombe Oak, (*Quercus x hispanica* 'Lucombeana')



Also evergreen is the big Lucombe Oak just in front of you as the path follows the curve of the stream. It was discovered, again in the 18th century, by William Lucombe of Exeter, this time as a cross between Turkey Oak (deciduous) and Cork Oak (evergreen). Lucombe was laid to rest, aged 103, in a coffin made from one of these new hybrids.

K. Dawn Redwood, (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*)



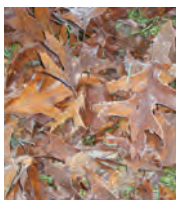
In front of you at the next path-fork are two Dawn Redwoods, a conifer which is critically endangered in its native China and was only discovered by science in the 1940s. Fortuitously, it has turned out to thrive in Britain, building marvellously convoluted fox-red trunks. As one of the very few deciduous conifers, its leaves also turn reddish brown before they fall in November.

L. Chestnut-leaved Oak, (*Quercus castaneifolia* 'Greenspire')



Turn left. The oaks on the Filter Beds embankment to your left were planted by John Tucker, a Borough Tree Officer who was keen to maintain Alexandra Park's role as a place to look at rare trees, to replace Victorian specimens lost in the Great Storm of 1987. Second from the path-fork is a Chestnut-leaved Oak, originating from forests in northern Iran and one of the most vigorous trees we can grow. This selection has steeply-rising branches.

M. Black Oak, (*Quercus velutina*)



Like the Pin Oak (6), the next oak comes from the eastern United States and has lobes tipped with multiple whiskers. It is much scarcer in cultivation, and the short velvety hairs covering the young growths help distinguish it.

N. Willow Oak, (*Quercus phellos*)



On the stream side of the path, the Willow Oak's allegiance is unlikely to be recognised until you find an acorn – its narrow, unlobed leaves do look much more like a willow's. In fact it is fairly closely related to the Black Oak, and grows in similar habitats in the wild.

O. Bartram's Oak, (*Quercus x heterophylla*)



The next oak on the left is very rare in Britain, and is imaginatively placed opposite the Willow Oak. It is a naturally-occurring hybrid of that tree with Red Oak, another American species whose leaves closely resemble the Black Oak's. *Heterophylla* is classical Greek for 'with various leaves': notice how most are boat-shaped, like the Willow Oak's, while others (at the shoot-tips) carry some of the other parent's sharp whisker-tips.

P. Coral-bark Willow, (*Salix alba* var. *vitellina* 'Britzensis')



This big willow, halfway up the embankment, comes into its own in winter sunlight when the young twigs shine flame-orange. It is a selection of the native White Willow (a grey-twigged tree), sharing its vigour and tendency to split apart at no great age – observe the first collapsing limb.

Q. Oriental Plane, (*Platanus orientalis*)



Opposite, by the stream, the Oriental Plane will have been one of the earliest plantings in this part of the Park. Specimens in its native Greece include many of Europe's biggest and oldest

trees. The five-fingered leaves suggest a maple's, but are carried one at a time along the twigs: maple leaves always come in opposite pairs.

R. London Plane, (*Platanus x hispanica* 'Pyramidalis')



The second big plane is a clone of the familiar London Plane – a hybrid of Oriental Plane with its American cousin the Buttonwood. The leaves have much shorter 'fingers', and the bark does not flake so brightly. This particular form was sold in Victorian times as 'Pyramidalis', in the hope - vain as it turns out - that the tree might grow as symmetrically as an Egyptian pyramid.

S. Swamp Cypress, (*Taxodium distichum*)



Growing near the stream opposite the Chalybeate Well, this Swamp Cypress is a deciduous conifer like the Dawn Redwood (11), but comes from the opposite side of the world. It is well-placed on this rather boggy lawn, as its native habitat includes the wetlands of the Florida Everglades. The red 'autumn' colour can last until Christmas.

T. Japanese Red Cedar, (*Cryptomeria japonica*)



This is the Japanese equivalent of the giant redwoods of California – note the thick rather spongy reddish bark, an adaptation against forest fires. It, too, has changed little since the time of the dinosaurs. It is a giant in the wild, but in contrast to the Swamp Cypress adjacent, is finding our waterlogged Sussex clay rather heavy going.



Some good books about trees

Johnson, O. and More, D., 2004

Collins Tree Guide, Harper Collins:
the most complete field guide to the trees of Britain and Europe.

Johnson, O., 2003

Champion Trees of Britain and Ireland, Whittet Books:
a guide where to find the tallest and thickest trunked trees.

More, D. and White, J., 2003

Cassell's Trees of Britain and Northern Europe, Cassell:
beautiful original drawings of trees and their parts and a text that requires little botanical knowledge.

Rushforth, K., 1999

Trees of Britain and Europe, HarperCollins:
a photographic identification guide that is just light enough to carry around, but the text is quite technical.

Johnson, O., 1998

The Sussex Tree Book, Pomegranate Press:
a guide to rare and important local trees and where to find them, including a number in Alexandra Park.

Mabey, R., 1996

Flora Britannica, Sinclair-Stevenson:
a wealth of stories about the wild plants of Britain; not only trees but flowers and other plants too.



Large Print versions of this booklet
are available on request.
Please call 01424 451066.

This leaflet was put together by members of Friends of Alexandra Park, but its compilation owes an immeasurable debt to Dr Owen Johnson. It draws to a great extent on material which he supplied and would not have been possible without his vast knowledge of the trees in Alexandra Park. Owen's generosity in allowing us to use his work is gratefully acknowledged.



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