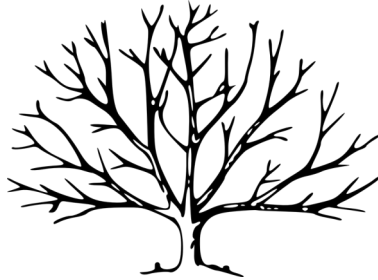


Winter tree trail in Abbots Bromley



Branches-151912_960_720png

The aim of this **tree trail** is to provide an outside learning activity to increase awareness of the many beautiful trees we have in Abbots Bromley. We have included mainly large deciduous trees as they are easier to spot in winter but have also added the only three native UK evergreens; Holly, Scots Pine and Yew.

The walk begins at the Bagot Arms, Bagot Street. WS15 3DB.

In all cases, the paths suggested are public rights of way. There are stiles along them so are not always push/wheelchair friendly, but we intend to produce another route that will be accessible to all later. Note that the Beech and Ash trees are in private gardens close to the pavements, so please be respectful of people's privacy. **There is a map of the route on the last page.**

Where to start?

Download the **Woodlands Trust App** onto your phone. This will provide visual guidance to the shape of the trees you are looking for.

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/british-trees/a-z-of-british-trees/>

The **Field Studies Council** produce an excellent fold out laminated leaflet called the **Tree Name Trail**. Perfect for families to follow. £4. [Trees Guide for Great Britain & Ireland | FSC Tree Name Trail \(field-studies-council.org\)](https://www.field-studies-council.org/trees-guide-for-great-britain-ireland-fsc-tree-name-trail)

Words you need to understand before you start:

- **Deciduous (De)** Trees that lose their leaves in Autumn.
- **Evergreen (Ev)** Trees that retain their leaves throughout the year.
- **Monoecious (Mono)** (muh-NEE-shuhs) Trees that have both male and female flowers on the same tree.
- **Dioecious (Dio)** (dahy-EE-shuhs) Trees that carry either male or female flowers so require two different trees to produce seeds.
- **Hermaphrodite (Herm)** Flowers that contain both males and female parts that are able to self-fertilise.

With your back to The Bagot Arms, walk down Mires Brook Lane.

(1) Beech (De, Mono)

- Can you spot the tall Beech tree on the front boundary of **Lake View** at the end of a Beech hedge? Beech trees can grow **40 metres** tall and have **smooth, grey bark**.
- Some **leaves** can remain on the branches well into winter.
- The buds are **slender, copper-coloured and torpedo shaped** and are at 60 degrees to the twig.
- Male catkins and female flowers will appear in **April/May** at the end of the twigs.
- The prickly **four-lobed brown case** that contain the **triangular seeds** of a Beech tree are called **Beech masts**. Look out for old Beech masts on the floor.
- The majority of Beech trees have green leaves that appear from the buds in the Spring but some will produce dark red (**copper**) coloured leaves. This is a **naturally occurring mutation**.
- For an example of a **Copper Beech tree**, you need to wait until you are in the Churchyard.

Fascinating fact:

The Beech is called the “**Queen of British trees**” and provides food and homes for many species. The seeds are eaten by mice, voles, squirrels and birds. Moth caterpillars eat the leaves.

Just beyond the Beech tree, at Sonoma, there is a tall Ash tree.

(2) Common Ash (De, Dio more commonly)

- **Ash trees** usually have **either male or female flowers**. However sometimes, a tree will have both male and female flowers on different branches and occasionally, a tree will produce female seeds one year and male seeds another.
- Both **male and female flowers are purple** and appear before the leaves in Spring, growing in spiky clusters at the twig tips.
- The tree in the front of Sonoma is covered in clusters of seeds, called **keys**. They hang **bat-like** from the branches. Only female trees **produce seeds**.
- There are many Ash trees in the village, but this might not be case in future as **Ash dieback disease** is spreading throughout the UK, killing the majority of trees it infects. The National Trust predicts that in twenty years, **up to 95%** of our Ash trees may have died due to this terrible disease.
- The Ash tree is easy to spot from a distance as its branches tend to **droop down** towards the earth, but then **the tips sweep back up as if reaching for the sky**.
- The twigs have **black buds**, a large one at the end of the twig and **opposite pairs** of smaller ones further back along the twig.

Mythology

Odin, the Viking god, was said to have **carved the first man** out of a piece of **Ash** wood. Vikings believed a giant ash tree called **Yggdrasil**, was the **Tree of the World**. It had its roots in the underworld and its crown in the highest point of heaven.



(3) Alder (De, Mono)

- On the opposite side to the Ash, there are **Alder** trees. Can you see the one with three trunks?
- There are several types of Alder in the UK with **Common Alder** such as these, being most often seen.
- The **bark** of young Alder trees is purplish brown but this darkens with age to grey-brown.
- Twigs tend to look purple with orange markings (lenticels).
- If you look in the branches of the Alder, you might spot twigs that have both **female ‘cones’** and **male catkins**.
- **The female “cones” are brown and woody in winter** and some will remain on the tree throughout the year. They are not real cones – only conifers such as pine trees have these.
- **The male catkins are greenish-yellow** and open to **bright yellow blossom** in January.
- If you are unable to see any “cones” on the tree, look on the floor and you will probably find some. Watch out also for **Alder catkins** as you continue on the trail both in the hedges in the churchyard and the Children’s playpark.

Fascinating facts and folklore

- Alder wood **does not rot in wet conditions** and becomes rock hard when emersed in water. However, it rots in dry conditions.
- **Green dye**, made from the **flowers of the Alder**, was used to colour and **camouflage the clothes** of outlaws like **Robin Hood**. It was also believed to colour the clothes of **fairies**.



Alnus incana drawing 1 png

4) **Scots Pine** (Ev, Mono)

- Just little further on from the Alder trees, there is a group of **Scots Pine** trees.
- Scots Pine are **one of the UK's three native evergreen** trees.
- Mature trees grow to 35m tall and can **live for up to 700 years**.
- All **pine trees have needles** instead of flat leaves.
- **Scots Pine** seeds are hidden in cones which remain on the tree for up to three years to allow them to ripen if squirrels don't eat them first. Can you find old cones on the floor?
- As they get older, the lower branches of Scots Pine die back, and the top of the tree becomes flatter.



Pinus_sylvestus_Silhouette_(oddssock).png

Fascinating fact

Scots Pine are used to make **telegraph poles** that carry telephone and powerlines. Most are grown in The **Orkney Isles**. Telegraph poles have a **testing cycle sign** attached. The one below was tested in **August 2006** on test cycle G. Look out for more on your journey.



Copyright: Telegraph Pole Appreciation society

Carry on up Mires Brook Lane and there is a tall Silver Birch tree on the right.

(5) Birch (De, Mono)

- Despite its delicate appearance, **Birch are one of the world's hardest trees** and can grow in conditions where other trees will not survive.
- There are at least two types of birch trees in the village with the Silver Birch being the most common.
- The Silver Birch has a **straight white trunk** and its branches **tend to droop** down at the end.
- The **Silver Birch** has male and female flowers on the same tree.
- The male catkins are **4-5cm long yellow brown** in colour. They hang in groups of two to four at the tips of shoots, like lambs' tails. Female catkins are smaller, **short, bright green** and erect.

Fascinating facts

- Years ago, Birch trees were **thought to be magical** and their twigs were used to "birch" (hit) those who were thought to have done something wrong in order to drive away **evil spirits**.
- **It didn't work.**

At the top of Mires Brook Lane, turn left and go down St Nicholas Way to the bottom. At the end, follow the little path that leads left towards the church. Before you go through the gate into the Churchyard, notice a female Ash tree on your right and immediately after the gate on the left, a Beech tree.

Follow the path towards the church. Before you go up the rise, can you see on your left, a plaque by an **(6) Oak tree**, that was planted to celebrate Abbots Bromley winning the Best Kept Village competition in 1978? This is a Red Oak. The same species stands by the War Memorial on the Village Green. Look for its leaves on the ground. They have a more spiky shape than English Oak leaves.

Walk around the front and side of the Church. Notice the (7) **Copper Beech** overhanging the wall. This tree's trunk has a circumference of 220 centimetres. A rough guide to age of a Beech tree is about half the circumference in centimetres. How old is the tree approximately?

Keep following the path round the side and back of the Church.
There are a number of Yew trees in this part of the Churchyard.

(8) **Yew** (Ev, Mono)

- Yew trees are thought to be the **longest-lived tree in the UK**.
- Some live to more than **2000 years old**.
- They are slow growing at slightly more than **1cm a year**.
- The leaves are **dark green needles** in two flattened rows.
- The bark is reddish-brown with purple tones and peeling.
- Male Yew trees have **small golden round structures**, like miniature Brussel Sprouts, on the underside of the twigs. These male 'cones' release pollen from Feb—April in yellow clouds.
- A **male Yew tree** hangs over the Church wall, on the left of the arched gate that leads from the Churchyard into the Vicarage garden. Can you see the **male flowers** hanging on the underside of the branches?
- Only **female trees** produce red 'berries' (**arils**) that appear in the Autumn. They are eaten by blackbirds and thrushes and other birds who later poop the seeds out so that new trees can grow.
- Parts of the Yew tree are **poisonous** to people and animals.

Fascinating facts

- Yew trees are associated with churchyards and **there are at least 500 churchyards in England** which contain Yew trees older than the buildings themselves.
- Yew trees were planted in churchyards to stop people grazing their animals on church land, as everyone knew that the berries would kill the cattle.
- Many **older buildings** in the village have Yew trees growing in their gardens. The one at **The Bagot Arms** is a beauty.

Follow the path round to the left, towards the stile in the far corner.
Before you go over the stile into the field, notice the large Sycamore standing on its own on your left.

(9) Sycamore (De, Mono)

- Sycamores are a common type of **maple tree**.
- They are not native trees. Some think they were brought to the UK **2000 years** ago by the **Romans**.
- They can grow as high as 35 metres.
- They are the UKs **fastest growing deciduous tree**.
- **Sycamore** flowers do not appear until late Spring.
- The **bark** of young Sycamore trees is usually smooth and silvery-grey but as the tree ages, the bark develops cracks, later having large peeling scales.
- Sycamores have **big green buds** at the ends of the twigs and **in opposite pairs along the twig**.
- Like Ash, Sycamore **seeds are called keys**. You may be able to spot keys hanging at the end of the twigs, lying on the floor, or more commonly in the winter, spot the **wispy skeletons** of the stems on the end of the twigs where the key was once attached.
- Look out for dozens of seedling sycamores in the grass under the tree in March/April, before they are cut off by the lawnmower.



Maple_161652_640.png

Go over the stile and into the field.
Walk along the Staffordshire Way path that runs almost parallel to the stream and towards the tall Oak trees in the far corner.

(10) **English Oak** (De, Mono)

- There are a number of different types of Oak trees. These are **English Oak**.
- Oak trees support the lives of 2,300 different species. **326** of these are entirely dependent on Oak for their survival.
- They have many branches and are often as wide as they are tall.
- The seeds of Oak trees are called **acorns**.
- Oak often retain some of their leaves well into winter.
- The **bark** of young Oak trees is smooth and grey-green but as the tree ages, its bark develops more and more ridges and furrows, often cross-fissured into rectangular and hexagonal shapes.
- The twigs are knobbly and branched and have clusters of **orangey-brown plump buds** at the end and along the length.
- It is said that Oak trees **grow for 200 years, live for 200 years and die for 200 years**. You can roughly estimate the age of an Oak tree by halving its circumference but this only works for the first 200-400 years. The largest tree has a circumference of 275 cm. How old might it be?

Fascinating facts

- The **Major Oak in Sherwood Forest** is thought to be up to **1,000 years old** and measures **1000cm around**. It is said that Robin Hood and his Merry Men slept underneath it.
- The Oak tree was sacred to many gods, including **Zeus, Jupiter and the Celtic Dagda**. Druids practised rituals in Oak groves and many ancient kings and Roman Emperors wore crowns of Oak leaves.



Cesar-151116_960_720.png

Leave the field by the stile next to the Oak trees and follow the path up the hill to the left. At the top, turn right and walk along the short path into “The Lowers”. Turn left once in the field and notice the tree stood on its own. This is a Willow.

_(11) Willow (De, Dio usually)

- There are **18 different species of Willow** in the UK and many more hybrids; a mix between different types of Willow.
- The tall tree that grows on its own on the left is a **Crack Willow**.
- The twigs and even the trunk of this tall tree are **brittle and break off with a ‘crack’**, giving it its name.
- The trunk becomes very rugged and cracked with age.
- Willows usually have either female or male flowers, but there can be exceptions.
- The twigs and buds are **olive-brown coloured, the buds flat against the twig and spiral around it**.

Fascinating fact

- You can always find broken twigs at the foot of Crack Willow trees. If you take a recently fallen twig and push it end first into the soil, it will often grow.

Follow the path, keeping the hedge on your left. As you do so, look over to the **far right boundary** of the field, beyond the all-weather pitch. You can see a long row of tall Black Poplars.

(12) Poplar (De, Dio)

- There are several types of Poplar in the UK, including **Black, White** and the **tall slim Lombardy Poplar**.
- These are **Black Poplars** and are **increasingly rare**.
- They have **heavy looking limbs**; the bark is grey, thick and gnarled, with deep cracks.
- **Buds are brown, fat and sharply pointed**.
- In March, **red male catkins** dangle down from the twigs of the male trees and **shorter green catkins** grow on female trees.

As you follow the path in the direction of Lichfield Road, notice the Holly trees in the hedge on your left.

(13) Holly (Ev, Dio)

- **Holly trees** are the third of our native evergreen trees.
- Their leaves are thick, leathery and usually **very prickly**.
- Both male and female Holly trees will have **small white flowers** in early Summer.
- **Only the female trees will have berries**, usually red, that birds, especially blackbirds and thrushes, love to feed on.



Holly_2957539_640.png

As you continue towards the road, notice in the hedge between the School and the playing field, a tall Horse Chestnut.

(14) Horse Chestnut (De, Mono)

- Horse chestnuts can live for **300 years**. They are not a native tree but were **introduced from Turkey** in the 16th century.
- Horse chestnuts have **large, sticky red buds**, the one at the end of the twig being especially large.
- The twigs have **girdle scars** where the leaf was once attached.
- This is **horseshoe shaped** and has what looks like the holes for the nails holding the shoe in place.
- The distance between two girdle scars represents **one year's growth of that twig**.
- Horse Chestnut seeds are called conkers and are enclosed in a spiky green case.

Fascinating fact

- The first record of the **game of conkers** took place on the **Isle of Wight in 1848**.

Continue onto the Lichfield Rd and turn left towards the Coach and Horses. Notice the large Crack Willow behind the bus stop. **Turn right into Radmore Lane and continue about 200 yards until you find the stile on the left that takes you onto a public right of way, inside the grounds of the school.**

As you walk between the tennis courts, look to your right to the (15) Scots Pine beyond the manège. These mature trees have lost their lower branches and have become flattened at the top.

You now walk through a group of tall trees that include Beech, Oak, Ash and Horse Chestnuts. **Continue to follow the path across “The Angelsey” field, towards the opposite diagonal corner.** Halfway across, on the left, you can spot beside the old Cricket Hut, two (16) Lebanese Cedar trees. Their shape is quite distinctive.



200px-pencilSketching13.png

Leave the field and walk down Swan Lane. At the end, cross over Schoolhouse Lane and follow the public footpath at the right-hand side of the Old School that leads into the field. Notice the thick (17) Beech hedge halfway along on your right. Beech is deciduous but often retains its leaves all winter making it perfect for a hedge.

Enter the field. As you walk through, notice the large Ash trees in the hedges to the front of you and into the distance. **Go through the gate on the left that leads towards the Village Hall.** In the hedge, on the opposite side to the 5-a-side football pitch, you will be able to spot a Hazel tree.

(18) **Common Hazel** (De, Mono)

- **Hazel shrubs** are often multi stemmed and have a pale grey-brown bark, usually with a bit of a sheen to it.
- The slim branches from Hazel were used for thousands of years, to make the **wattle and daub** needed to construct homes. **The first church in Abbots Bromley** is thought to have been made using wattle and daub. It has long since gone.
- The **female flowers are very small** and sit close to the branch.
- The male flowers are **long yellow catkins** and look like cats' tails.

Continue to walk down the path. As you pass the Village Hall, notice the pairs of Rowan trees in the grass verges in diagonal corners of the Basketball Court. One pair is close to the **Scout hut**.

(19) **Rowan** (De, Herm)

- Rowan trees are sometimes called **Mountain Ash** as their leaves are similar and they can live quite high up mountains.
- They are **not related to Ash trees**.
- They grow to 15 metres in height and can live for **200 years**.
- The bark is **smooth and silvery** grey with young twigs that start off hairy but become smooth later.
- **Buds** tend to be greyish brown with dense white hairs.
- Rowan is an **hermaphrodite**, meaning each flower contains both male and female parts.
- They have red berries in the Autumn.

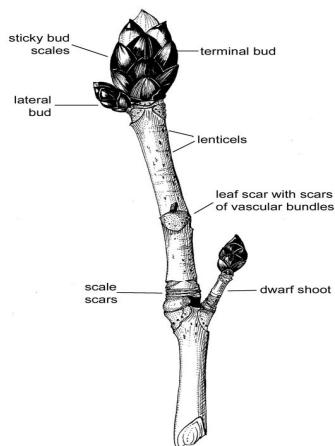
Mythology and folklore

Greek mythology says that Hebe the goddess of youth, lost her magic cup, so the gods sent an eagle to find it. A fight began and the eagle shed feathers and drops of blood that fell to earth where they turned into a Rowan tree, with its leaves like eagle's feathers and its red berries, drops of blood.



Follow the path down towards the road, keeping the Children's play park on your right.

Notice the Horse Chestnuts trees emerging from the hedge. These are a perfect size to look closely at the sticky buds and to observe the distance between the **girdle scars** that identify how much the tree has grown in preceding years.



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Continue to the **bottom entrance of the children's park** . Before you enter by the gate, notice the Silver Birch on the left. Can you see the “**Witches Broomsticks**” high up in the branches of the Silver Birch?

- These look like bird's nests but are usually caused by a fungus.
- They do not seem to harm the tree at all.

Inside the park there are many different types of trees. If you walk up the left side towards the top you might spot Hazel trees with their lovely yellow catkins, Silver Birch with their distinctive white trunks and catkins, Alders with their green catkins and “cones”, Poplars with their white trunks, Cherry trees and the English Oak at the top of the playpark by the exit gate.

(20) **Cherry trees** (De, Herm)

- There are many different types of Cherry trees that grow in and by the entrance to the Children's playpark.
- They can be easily spotted in winter as they have **many rings on the red/brown trunk**.
- Cherry trees have both male and female parts in the same flowers.
- These trees are grown for their beautiful blossom.

End of trail

If this pack has interested you in trees, you might want to take part in **Plant Britain**, a collaboration between **Countryfile** (BBC) and **The Woodland Trust**, that aims to encourage everyone to become involved in planting 750,000 trees in the UK this year to help the environment.

Finally

We are indebted to several villagers for their contribution to this booklet, in particular:

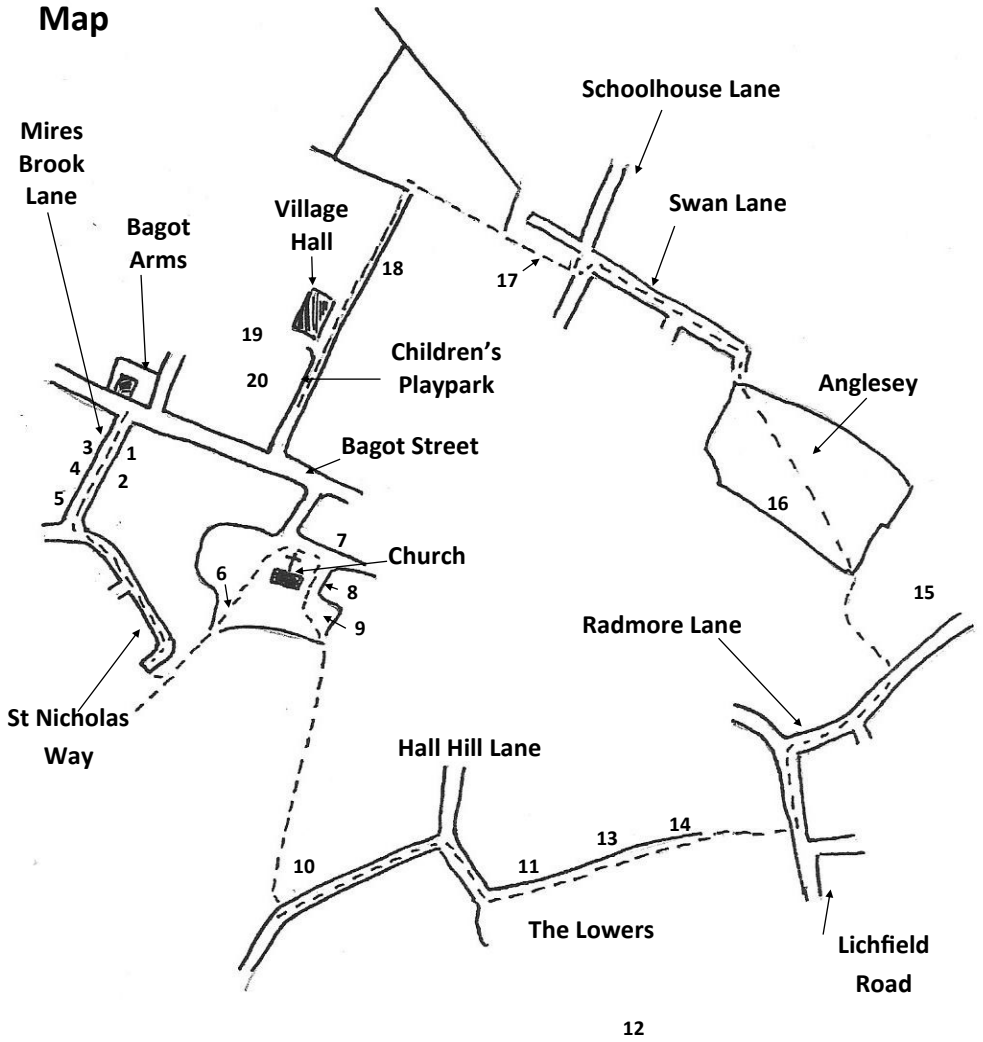
- John and Marilyn Hough, who provided many of the fascinating facts and offered numerous other wise suggestions.
- Simon Davis and family.

We hope we have correctly identified the trees but please email any suggested corrections to carol@clsmart.plus.com

Carol and Phil Smart, Spring Cottage, Bagot Street. March 2021

Illustrations in this booklet are included as permitted by the Creative Common Licence with attributions as required.

Map



- | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. Beech | 6. Red Oak | 11. Willow | 16. Cedar |
| 2. Ash | 7. Copper Beech | 12. Poplar | 17. Beech hedge |
| 3. Alder | 8. Yew | 13. Holly | 18. Common Hazel |
| 4. Scots Pine | 9. Sycamore | 14. Horse Chestnut | 19. Rowan |
| 5. Silver Birch | 10. English Oak | 15. Scots Pine | 20. Cherry |