



HASLEMERE'S NOTABLE TREES: TOWN WALK

Distance: 1.75 miles/2.75 kilometres

Estimated time: 2 hours, allowing time to look at the trees.

This walk will guide you to visit some of the most interesting and notable trees in and around Haslemere's town centre.

Start under the **horse chestnut** (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) outside the Georgian House Hotel in the High Street. Although common in towns and villages throughout the country, the horse chestnut is not native. This specimen was planted in 1782. In Spring, look out for its candle-like white flowers – the showiest of any tall tree – or its shiny brown conkers (seeds) in their spiky pods in the autumn.

Walk a little way north alongside the hotel and look across the High Street to see a **liquidamber or sweet gum** (*Liquidambar styraciflua*). Native of the south eastern United States, particularly swamplands, it takes its name from the amber coloured resin it produces when wounded. Cross over the road and have a closer look at the liquidamber's distinctive toothed leaves, which turn yellow, crimson and purple in autumn.

Head a short way north up the High Street to a row of three lime trees. The one in the middle is of particular interest – it is a **Mongolian lime** (*Tilia mongolica*). Note its flat coarse-toothed leaves. Continue up the High Street to the Haslemere Museum. Go in through the front door and straight ahead to the door leading to the garden. As you go out the door, pick up a Ten Tree Trail leaflet in the box on the wall to the left of the door. Turn to the right as you go out the door.

In the corner is a **maidenhair tree** (*Ginko biloba*). Dominant in the Mesozoic Era (252 to 66 million years ago) this is the most ancient species you will see on this walk. Note the unusual fan-shaped leaves with no central vein. The fruit is foul smelling when ripe, although the nut inside is edible. This tree is a male and was probably planted in the late 1700s. Next to the ginko is a pair of **monkey puzzle trees** (*Araucaria araucana*). These evolved long before apes, so would be more appropriately named 'dinosaur puzzle trees'. They are native of the mountains of Chile and Argentina. Cones develop on the tips of branches of female trees and open on the tree to release their shiny brown edible nuts.

Next to the monkey puzzle trees is a **coastal redwood** (*Sequoia sempervirens*), native of California and Oregon where it takes in part of its water requirements from the frequent fogs. Note the spongy red fire-proof bark and the small round cones attached to the tips of the leaf shoots. Now that the biggest Douglas firs and eucalyptus specimens have been felled, the world's tallest living trees are coastal redwoods.

The ginko and monkey puzzle are part of the museum's Ten Tree Trail and you can at this point choose to see the rest of the listed trees by following the path shown in the leaflet. It is well worth it – it will take around 20 minutes. This is not included in the overall time for the walk.

Exit from the museum and head back down the High Street. Just after the lime trees, turn left down Well Lane to the town well and past the Citizens' Advice Bureau. Follow the path ahead next to the wall on the left. This will take you to the well. Turn right and walk along the path above Swan Barn Farm fields. Straight ahead you will see a symmetrically shaped tree with a fan of upward angling branches. This is a 'fastigiated' **hornbeam** (*Carpinus betulus*). Fastigiation, meaning upright, is a genetic variation that occurs naturally but rarely in many other trees including hornbeam, oak, beech, tulip and pear. Because they are aesthetically appealing and take up less room, fastigiated specimens are cloned by tree nurseries and widely planted in parks and, increasingly, in urban streets. Hornbeam looks a lot like beech. There is a beech tree just further along in the grass. They can be distinguished in the summer by the leaves, which have more veins (10-13 pairs for hornbeam compared with 5-9 for beech) that are more deeply corrugated, and in the winter by the buds which lie flat on the twigs compared with the beech's buds that sit proud.

Continue straight ahead and you will walk between two large common limes, also known as linden (*Tilia x europeae*). Common limes are a hybrid of the native **small leaved lime** (*Tilia cordata*) and **broad leaved lime** (*Tilia platyphyllos*). The yellow-white lime flowers are fragrant and tea made from them is said to be calming – limes were often planted around mental institutions. The sprouting stems around the base of the trees is typical of the common lime.

Continue ahead to the gate into Swan Barn Farm, a National Trust property. Go through the gate and on our right you will see the orchard that the Trust has been restoring. There is a gate into the orchard about 100 metres down the fence. (Note: this area can be very muddy in the winter.) The Trust has planted the orchard with a number of traditional **apple, pear and plum** varieties, including Egremont Russet, Aldwick Beauty and Tydeman's Early Worcester. They are all labelled so you can wander round inspecting them at your leisure. When you are done (5 minutes are allowed for this in the timing of the walk), leave the orchard and head back up to the gate out of Swan Barn Farm. Take the stairs straight ahead next to the lime trees into the car park. Walk across the car park and back out into the High Street.

Cross over onto the traffic island with the war memorial. You will see a **tulip tree** (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) – a gift from Haslemere's French twin town Bernay in 1985, although it is a native of the Eastern United States. Notice the distinctive leaves that look as if the tips have been cut off. It takes its name from the yellow-green tulip shaped flowers that appear in the summer. Tulip trees can grow very large, as you will see later in the walk.

Cross over to the far side of the High Street, head in the direction of the Georgian Hotel and take the first turning left towards the car park. Turn right into Charter Walk, the alley that runs through to West Street. At the car park end of the alley is a young **green alder** (*Alnus incarna*). Like our **native alder** (*Alnus glutinosa*), which we will see later on in the walk, the green alder's female catkin flowers turn woody and look like conifer cones.

Carry on down Charter Walk and turn left into West Street. Pass Waitrose on your left and you will see a small tree across the road on the corner on the right. This is a **false acacia** (*Robinia pseudoacacia*). Note the pinnate leaves – the leaf stalks with pairs of leaflets plus one on the end – similar to rowan and ash. The pair of thorns at the base of the leaves and the way the leaves droop at night like those of a true acacia probably account for its common name. It is native of the eastern United States where its vanilla scented flowers are an important source of nectar for honeybees.

Carry on down West Street towards the fire station. Turn left at the fire station and go down the dead

end that runs alongside it. Just before the fenced in car compound, take the alley on the right. When you come out of the dog leg of the alley you will see an old **English oak** (*Quercus robur*) on your right that was probably a boundary marker at one time. Ahead you will see another fastigiated hornbeam in the children's play area. Take the left turn on the path before the playground and head up the left hand side of the Town Meadow.

Continue along the path at the top of the meadow, past a **goat willow** (*Salix caprea*) and **yellow-stemmed dogwood** (*Cornus stolonifera* Flaviramea) on your left, and you will find a **swamp cypress** (*Taxodium distichum*). It is a native of the swamps of the south eastern United States where it pushes up 'knees' – snorkel-like extensions of its roots to obtain oxygen. It is deciduous, so loses its soft, pale green foliage in the winter. Behind the swamp cypress are two common alders, which are often found in damp conditions like this or next to streams.

Just across the path, in the grass, are a native **common whitebeam** (*Sorbus aria*) and a **Swedish whitebeam** (*Sorbus intermedia*). Note the white finely-haired underside of the leaves. They produce clusters of the white flowers in May that develop into bright red berries in late summer. The wood is hard and white and was traditionally used for beams and cogs and wheels in machinery. Standing on its own in the centre of the Meadow is a **snake-bark maple** (*Acer* section *Macrantha*). This is a mountain forest species from East Asia and a curious planting in this position,

Continuing along the path you will pass an English oak on the corner, next to which is a young **red oak** (*Quercus rubra*). Note its large typically-lobed oak leaves, which seldom turn as red as in native setting of the Eastern Coast of the United States. Next to this is a horse chestnut, then a **paperbark birch** (*Bestula papyrifera*) – this specimen does not look in good health – which Native Americans used to make canoes.

In the corner next to the gate is a large **sycamore** (*Acer pseudoplatanus*). Sycamore is not native, but seeds prolifically so is now common throughout Britain, as well as Europe. Its large leaves are often dotted with tar-spot fungus and crimson galls. Its wood is without taste so used for kitchen items. Although not as loved, sycamore supports almost as much bird and insect life as oak.

Under the sycamore, is a **field maple** (*Acer campestre*), the only maple native to Britain. Modest in size, rarely above 20 metres, it often grows in this sort of position, in the under-storey, or in hedgerows. There is another specimen along the path under a large ash tree.

Head out of the Town Meadow gate and cross the road, which is called Tanners Lane, indicating the location of a bygone industry that probably got its tannin from local oaks. Immediately across the road is the entrance to Redwood Manor in whose garden you will see a magnificent **cedar of the Lebanon** (*Cedrus libani*) and, to its left, an equally magnificent **Wellingtonia or giant redwood** (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*). Cedar of the Lebanon is native of the eastern Mediterranean and was introduced to Britain in the 17th Century, when it became status symbol so is often found in the gardens of stately homes. This specimen is said to be 250 years old. The Wellingtonia, native of the west coast of the United States, is around 150 years old. Redwood Manor is a private retirement home – they are very proud of their trees, but you need permission to go into grounds. The three smallish trees on the right at the entrance are **box elders** (*Acer negundo*). Don't be fooled by their common name – they are in fact maples, and can be tapped for their syrup.

Head north along Tanners Lane for a few hundred metres. On your left you will see a pair of trees with pale grey bark either side of a driveway. These are immature **walnut trees** (*Juglans regia*). Continue along Tanners' Lane and turn left across the bridge over the railway line. Head up Church

Road. Turn left at the corner into Derby Road. A short way along on the left is a private residence, Tulip Tree House. It takes its name from the magnificent tulip tree at the end of the garden furthest from you. This is the size the immature tree you saw on the green in the High Street earlier could eventually become. Next to the tulip tree is fine red oak. At the Church Road end is a **pecan** (*Carya illinoensis*) and next to that, a maple.

Turn around and head back along Derby Road, but instead of turning back down Church Road continue straight ahead. In a garden on your left you will see some tall airy **aspens** (*Populus tremula*). The reason to mention these is that just further along is St Bartholomew's Church, burial place of Gerard Manley Hopkins who wrote one of the loveliest and most poignant tree poems, Brinsey Poplars ('O if we but knew what we do/When we delve or hew – /Hack and rack the growing green! ...'). There is a stained glass window in his memory in the church, next to one for Alfred Lord Tennyson, a former Haslemere resident, who wrote several poems devoted to trees.

Continue along Derby Road and turn into the Derby Road Cemetery on your left. There are a number of **Lawson cypress** (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*) and **Western red cedar** (*Thuja plicata*), as well as **Irish yews**, a fastigiata variety of yew (*Taxus baccata*).

Exit from the graveyard and cross over into the churchyard. If the church is open, you can go in and see the memorial windows to Gerard Manley Hopkins and Alfred Lord Tennyson towards the back. Continue through the churchyard and out into Church Hill. Turn right and then immediately right again into Tanners Lane. Cross over the railway bridge and continue for a short way down Tanners Lane until you reach the carpark on your left. Walk through the car park and you will see a **Monterey cypress** (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) before you. As you get up close, you will see that the two stems leaning over the car park are braced off the main trunk to keep them from splitting and falling. Monterey cypress will hybridise with the **Nootka cypress** (*Xanthocyparis nootkatensis*) to give us the **leylandi** (*x Cupressocyparis leylandii*), the fast growing, densely foliated tree favoured as a hedge.

Continue straight ahead along West Street until you reach the High Street once more.

The walk was devised by Clive Davidson for Transition Haslemere. He would welcome any feedback: c davidson@cix.co.uk.