BRIDGEND TREE TRAILS BOLLINGTON



A series of four circular walks to enjoy individually or combined celebrating the diversity and majesty of trees throughout Bollington's countryside

Bridgend Centre
at the ♥ of our community

104 Palmerston St. Bollington
Cheshire, SK10 5PW
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Bridgend Tree Trails

The Bridgend Centre has created four circular local walks to encourage us to really look at the grace, beauty and majesty of the trees that grow in our local countryside. Ranging from 3.5 to 7.5 miles, each trail starts and ends at the Bridgend Centre but can be easily combined with one or more of the other trails to create longer walks or even a 14 mile circumnavigation of Bollington!

All the walks are moderate with some climbing required in trails 1 and 4.

Each walk has numbered markers sited near samples of specific trees to help guide you in what to look out for as well as where to go!

We do recommend that you use the booklet in conjunction with a map of the local area such as the OS Explorer 268.

The walks have been tested but be aware that things change! Structures can become wobbly or be replaced, markers might be disguised by foliage, bad weather might obscure a view or dictate a diversion.

Be prepared, with appropriate clothing and fluids and use common sense and judgement should conditions require you to do so to stay safe.

For younger walkers on the trails there is an activity sheet that can be downloaded at https://bridgendcentre.org.uk/tree-trails/ to accompany each walk.

Tree trail 1 – 3.5 miles.

This walk has one steep ascent and descent, climbing up White Nancy, following the Kerridge Ridge and returning to High Street via Rally Road.

Tree trail 2 – 5.5 miles.

A largely flat walk crossing over the canal at Tinkers Clough before passing through Dumbah Hollow to Butley Town and returning past Lowerhouse. Can be muddy through the farmland.

Tree trail 3 – 7.5 miles.

Taking in farmland, woodland and the Middlewood Way, this walk leaves Bollington via Lowerhouse across pastures to Whiteley Green and then Adlington before visiting Styperson Woods and Pott Shrigley to return on Spuley Lane.

Tree trail 4 – 5.5 miles.

An undulating walk that heads up Spuley Lane before climbing to explore the up and downs of Harrop Woods then crossing the fields to Rainowlow to return along Ingersley Vale.

Within each walk section, you will find written directions for the walk with marker positions in the text and an outline map. There are anecdotes about the specific trees you will see – a mix of historic facts, folklore or simply bizarre snippets all about trees to get you wondering as you wander! We hope you enjoy your walk(s).

Contents

1 Bridgend Tree Trails

2 Contents

3 The Bridgend Centre

4 Tree Trail 1

9 The ash - *still common, not brash*

10 Trees and our environment

12 Tree Trail 2

18 The willow - *winning with wildlife*

19 The alder - *an environmental warrior*

20 Beautiful bark

22 Tree Trail 3

28 The oak – *numbers you wouldn't shake a stick at*

29 What tree is that?

32 Tree Trail 4

38 The birch - *broomsticks and blades*

39 The horse chestnut - *conkers and communication*

40 Image credits

Acknowledgements and thanks

To our resident artist Anna Barker (hard at work, pictured right) for the beautiful illustrations on walk markers and throughout the booklet.

To all of those that have shared their beautiful photographs of nature in Bollington and beyond (full credits on page 40).

And finally to Pete Thorp at VISUALmachine for many hours of creativity and work, designing, editing and bringing together our walk markers and this beautiful booklet.





@VISUALmachine_
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The Bridgend Centre

The Bridgend Centre is a local, independent charity, playing an active role at the heart of the Bollington community.



We offer many services and activities that help to promote quality of life for everyone.

Our range of walking activities and information provide a great opportunity for people to exercise in the great outdoors, which has been demonstrated to improve physical and mental health and wellbeing.

All the walk descriptions start and end at the Bridgend Centre, 104, Palmerston Street, Bollington, Cheshire SK10 5PW.

Parking is available at Pool Bank car park on Palmerston Street approximately 500m from the Centre.

Toilets are available at the Bridgend Centre during opening hours only.

At the time of publication our opening hours are;

Monday - Friday 10:00am - 4:30pm
Saturday 10:00am - 1:00pm

Drop in after your walk for tea and cake, or a browse in our Aladdin's cave of a charity shop…

Bridgend Centre at the ♥ of our community

Find out more at
www.bridgendcentre.org.uk
01625 576311
or follow us on Facebook

Tree Trail 1 - White Nancy, Kerridge Ridge, and Rally Road, Kerridge



Trees on this trail include Scots pine, English oak, hawthorn, cider gum, and holly

With your back to the Bridgend Centre, turn right and proceed along Palmerston Street. When you reach a mini-roundabout, turn right into Church Street passing St. John's parish Church on your right. In the graveyard next to the road is a magnificent row of **common lime** trees.

Common lime is the tallest broad-leaved tree in Britain, often growing to a height of 40 metres. With its brilliant green leaves and the sweet, heady scent of its flowers, the stately lime has been a favourite since Roman times, supplying fragrant shade to man and beast and vast summer supplies of nectar for hungry bees!

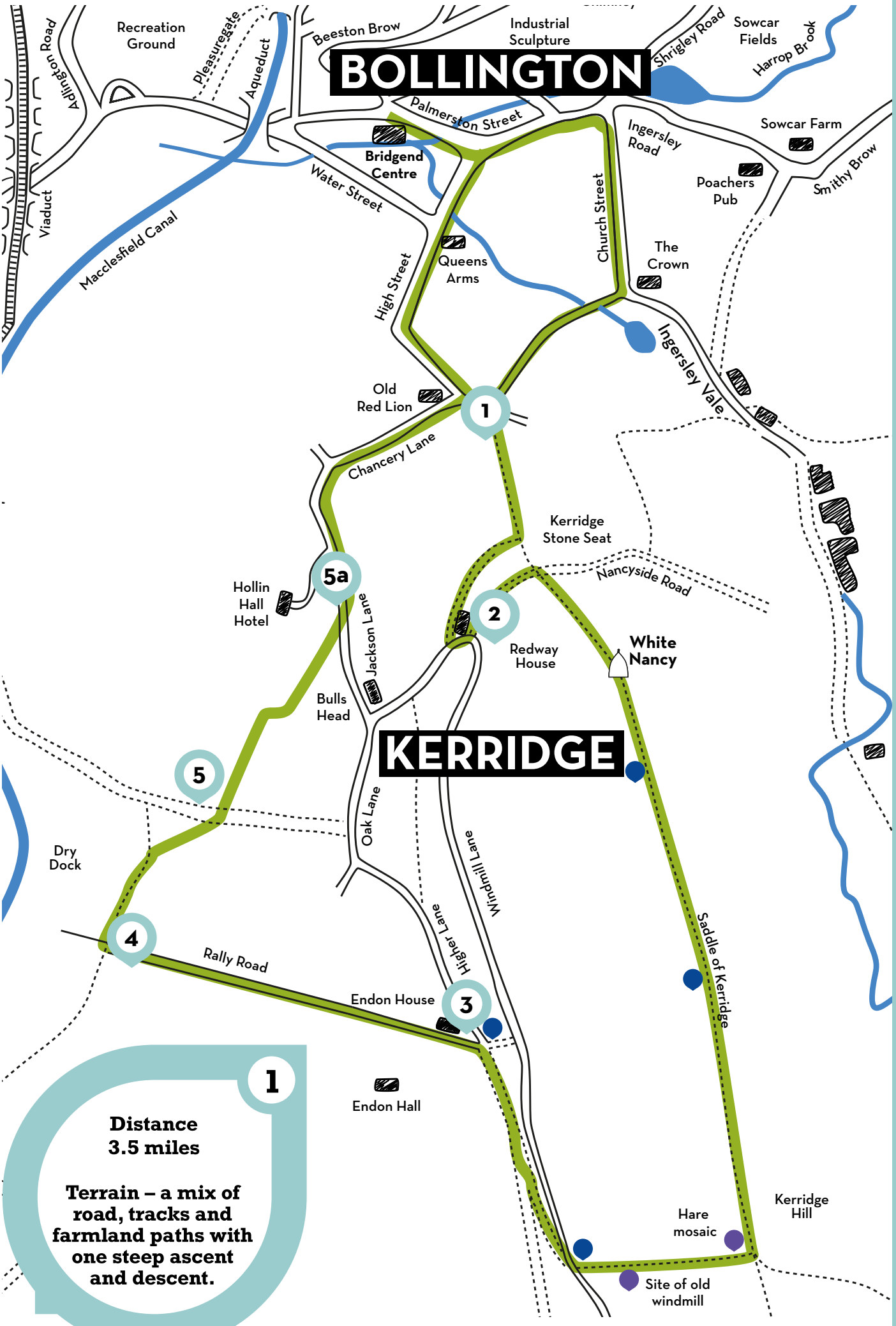
Now follow the street round to the right. This point links up with **Tree Trail 4**.

Climb to the top and as the road bends sharply right, go straight through the gate on the left by the water trough, up a stone-slabbed path. Climb steps to a kissing gate and take the stone path to the right. On crossing the boundary wall, look left to see a **Scots pine** (1) with a nesting box for a Kestrel, a bird of prey.



Scots pine

As the Ice Age ended and glaciers retreated in northern Britain, only one large conifer managed to survive – the resilient Scots pine. It has maintained this resilience and was voted Scotland's national tree in 2014!


BOLLINGTON
KERRIDGE
Recreation Ground
Pleasuregate Aqueduct
Adlington Road
Viaduct
Macclesfield Canal
Beeston Brow
Industrial Sculpture
Shrigley Road
Sowcar Fields
Harrop Brook
Palmerston Street
Bridgend Centre
Water Street
Ingersley Road
Sowcar Farm
Poachers Pub
Smithy Brow
Church Street
High Street
Queens Arms
The Crown
Ingersley Vale
Old Red Lion
Chancery Lane
Kerridge Stone Seat
Nancyside Road
Hollin Hall Hotel
Jackson Lane
Redway House
White Nancy
Bulls Head
Oak Lane
Windmill Lane
Higher Lane
Dry Dock
Rally Road
Endon House
Endon Hall
Saddle of Kerridge
Hare mosaic
Kerridge Hill
Site of old windmill
1
2
3
4
5
5a
1
Distance
3.5 miles
Terrain – a mix of road, tracks and farmland paths with one steep ascent and descent.

At the end turn left past Redway House and left again at a sign for White Nancy. 15 metres before the cattle grid, go right up the steps through the metal 'White Nancy' gates. Climb up through the wood, where the predominant trees are **oaks** 2

At the end of the wood go through a gate onto the hillside, with White Nancy ahead. Walk forward to be rewarded by spectacular panoramic views towards the Peak District, the Cheshire Plain and beyond.

Oak wood is heavy and dense. Until iron cutting tools were invented, humans had no means of chopping it! Then it became the principal construction material; in the 14th Century, Queen Elizabeth I even had to pass laws to restrict the numbers of trees being felled and instigated a planting programme to meet the ship-building demands of the Royal Navy. Some of these trees still grace our countryside today.



English oak

Now turn right at the folly, White Nancy, and walk along Kerridge Ridge. Keeping the wall on your left, go through two gates and continue along the ridge with the wall now on your right. The feathery trees on your left are **larches**.

Trees which lose their leaves in autumn are called deciduous. Larch leaves are needles, but unlike other conifers, which are called evergreen because they have needles all year round, the larch is a deciduous tree. Just before shedding its needles, its golden colours are spectacular.

Emerging from the trees, the village of Rainow can be seen down on your left. Pass through a gate and start the gradual descent along the Saddle of Kerridge. Glancing to your right, the vast quarry workings can clearly be seen. Ignore a footpath to the right, and with Kerridge Hill rising in front, you will reach a stone wall with a junction of footpaths. Noting the hare mosaic on the ground in the corner, take a sharp right in front of it down the hillside. Spot the old **hawthorn tree** on the left, arching over the path. Look at the size of the thorns!

More steps lead you down to a quarry track.

Turn left to reach Windmill Lane, where you should cross the road carefully and turn right, walking down the track and straight on at the gate. On reaching Endon Cottage on the right, look up the narrow path adjacent to its back wall to see 118 treacherous steps! These were part of a funicular railway that carried stone from the quarries down this incline.

Turn left 3 to continue following the Rally Road.

Just after the gateway a graceful **cider gum tree** can be seen on your right.



Cider gum



Cider gums grow to a maximum of 100 feet, although other members of the gum family are forest giants. If the bark of a gum tree is damaged, it will exude a resinous liquid, hence the name 'gum'. The Latin name for cider gum is Eucalyptus gunnii. When crushed, the leaves of some gums give off the distinctive smell of eucalyptus oil. Not so the cider gum – its leaves are odourless!

Walk down the path until you reach Oak Lane, passing Kerridge war memorial on your left (4) Cross over the lane and carry on ahead. On your left, you will see an impressive row of **ash trees**.

Turn right through a stile opposite a gate; walk through a field and over a bridge and then diagonally right, heading to a gate to the right of a short row of trees. This point links up with **Tree Trail 2**.

Go through the gate, cross over the track and pass through another kissing gate opposite (5) Continue forward, with a fence and a **holly and hawthorn hedge** on your left, then along a path with hedges on both sides. Go forward, following the row of trees on your right, to the kissing gate in the corner of the field (5a)

Turn left along Jackson Lane. At the corner, bear right into Chancery Lane and then left down High Street. Turning left at the bottom onto Palmerston Street will bring you back to the Bridgend Centre

Hawthorn is a fast-growing, sturdy tree that can be cut back and woven together to create an almost impenetrable hedge. Many of the hedges you can see today date back to the 1700s, when enclosure of arable land was made possible by Acts of Parliament.

The word 'ash' goes back to the Old English 'aesc' and the Latin name is 'fraxinus'. Both words meant 'spear' in their respective languages, because both Romans and Greeks chose tough ash saplings for making their spears. Ash is a valuable firewood as it burns well even when freshly cut.



Hawthorn



Holly

The ash

The ash is one of our tallest trees sometimes reaching 35 metres above its deep roots. Ash trees are a common sight throughout the British Isles. The third most common tree in the UK, its bark is smooth pale grey when young and develops long vertical, rough ridged grooves as it matures. The ash is one of the last trees to bud and so allows spring flowers and smaller trees below to flourish in the warm sunlight of spring, before its leaves overshadow the woodland.

Sadly, ash dieback, a fungal disease it threatening the ash. It causes the tree to lose its leaves and the crown to die, ultimately killing the tree. It was first reported in Cheshire in 2016 and with losses estimated in the tens of thousands it has the potential to change our landscape forever.



still common, not brash



There is an old saying 'a Crow in a crowd is a Rook, a Rook on its own is a Crow' and if you peer up into the higher branches of an ash, you may see scruffy-looking, twiggy nests. Any more than two nests is called a rookery, where these large, noisy black birds live and raise their young in sociable groups.

In spring, sprays of small purple flowers come out before the leaves. When the fruits appear the seeds are tiny but each seed has a long key shaped wing attached that hang from the branches in clusters.

The tiny seeds are dispersed by the wind, flying on their wings and landing on the ground. They make ideal food for small mammals like wood mice and voles.

Trees and our environment



Trees – the unsung heroes of our planet. Through millennia they have provided shelter against wind and rain or shade from the sun. They have fed us with fruits and nuts and fed the earth with carpets of leaves. We have made medicines, textiles, furniture and buildings from them.

Trees have helped shape our civilisations and our culture, from the common oak that built Columbus' ships to the maple that Stradivarius turned into violins. Now, as we become more and more aware of global warming and its effect on our planet, trees can play a vital role in combatting climate change.



In 2020 the UK has pledged to become carbon neutral by 2050 and the Committee for Climate Change lists the first objective towards achieving this is to increase tree planting – increasing UK forestry cover from 13% to at least 17% by 2050 by planting 90 – 120 million broadleaf and conifer trees in woodlands each year.

Trees act as absorbers and storage vessels – through the process of photosynthesis they 'breathe in' carbon dioxide, store it as carbon and 'breathe out' oxygen into the atmosphere.

As they age, the trees living and dead wood, its roots, its leaves and the vegetation it supports around its base continues to store the carbon, locking it away and reducing harm.

Beyond locking up carbon, trees also mitigate the effects of climate change in other ways.

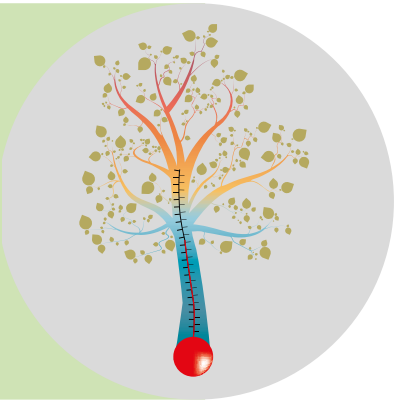


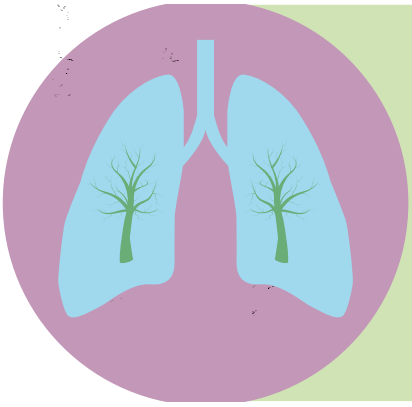
Trees help prevent flooding

Raindrops can evaporate off leaves so they reduce the amount that reaches the ground or bounce off the leaf so it doesn't hit the ground so hard. A tree anchors soil in place so that it doesn't run off and block rivers beds which can then carry less water. Roots soak up and hold water.

Trees help adjust temperature

They shade us from heat in the summer but also let the sun through leafless canopies in the winter to warm us up. They cool the air by soaking up water through their roots and releasing it as a vapour, a process called transpiration.



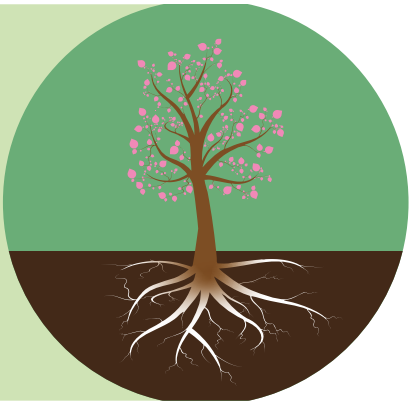


Trees can help reduce pollution

Particles, odorous and polluting gases that settle on the leaves of a tree can be absorbed through pores and removed from the air.

Trees enrich the soil

Some trees can fix nitrogen into the soil, thus providing nutrients for other plant life, and not forgetting the roots that help break up the soil structure and create channels for water and air to flow down.



But the benefits that trees dispense stretch as broad as the canopy of a mighty oak. They provide habitats for wildlife supporting a diverse range of both flora and fauna. Spending time under the trees, surrounded by greens and blues, helps us de-stress. We can meet, socialise, exercise and reconnect in the company of trees, noticing the change of seasons and passing of time but reassured by their strength and longevity.

Tree Trail 2 - Tinkers Clough, Dumbah Hollow, Butley Town, Lowerhouse



Trees on this trail include Beech, Rowan, Weeping ash, Black Poplar, and Sycamore

With your back to the Bridgend Centre, turn right along Palmerston Street, then first right into High Street. At the top turn right into Chancery Lane, then left into Jackson Lane. Cross over the lane, past Hollin Hall Hotel, and through the stile on your right. Walk forward, with the line of trees on your left, and go along the path in front, between hawthorn hedges. Then continue forward to pass through a kissing gate into a lane.

This point links up with Tree Trail 1.

Turning right, walk down the lane and notice holly and hawthorn hedges on your right.

Soon you will pass Bobbin Cottage on your left. Then follow the path to the left of Beehive Cottage and over the canal bridge (6) where Adelphi Mill can now be seen.

Do not descend to the towpath but go forward and right into Tinkers Clough. Many of the trees in this wood are very old **beeches**.

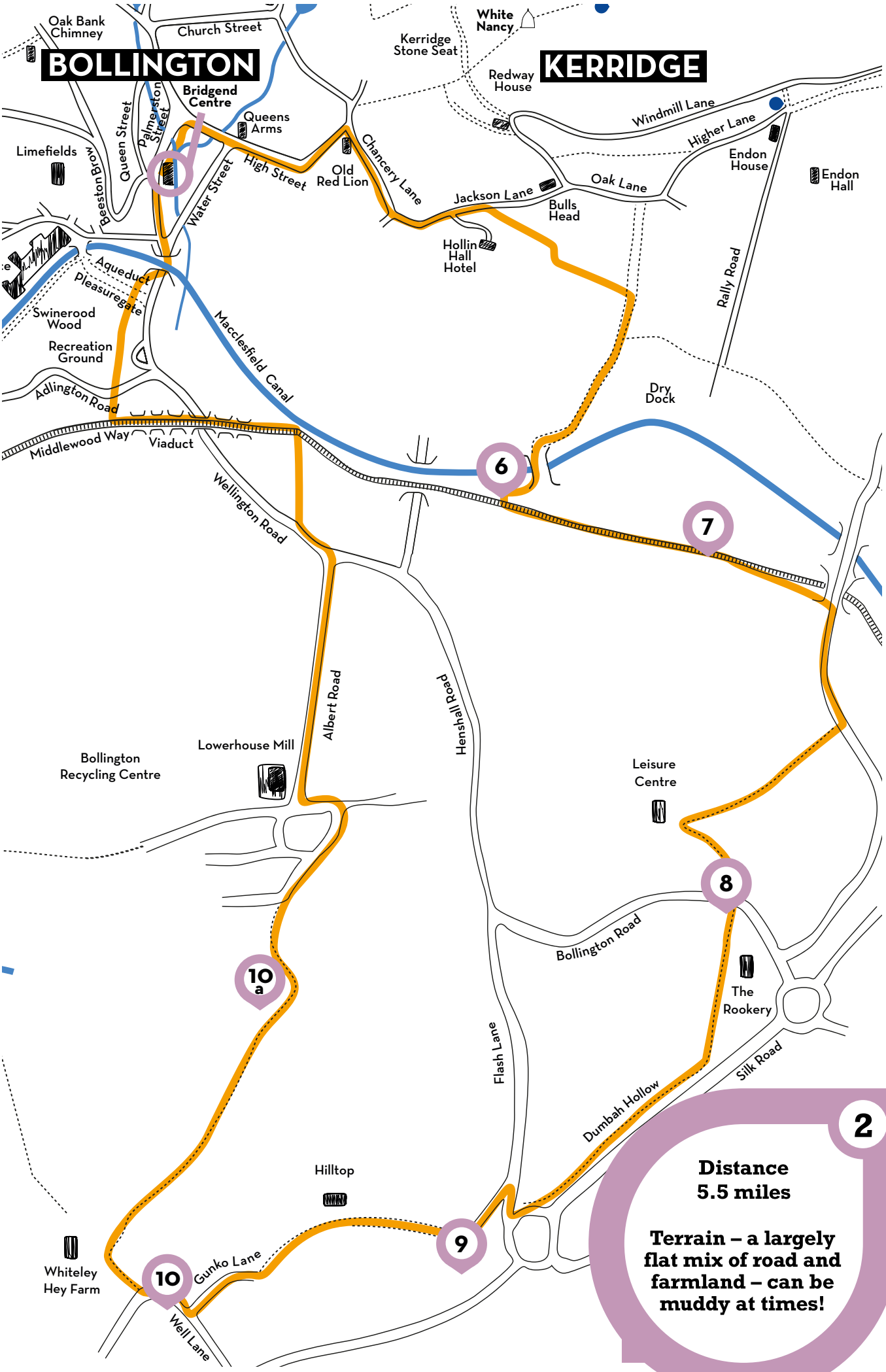
With its shiny, spiky, evergreen leaves and bright red berries, the holly is easily recognisable and associated with Christmas. But did you know that traditionally, holly trees were planted as protection against lightning strikes? Modern science has proved that the spines on holly leaves act as miniature lightning conductors, thus protecting things nearby – not just the stuff of myth!



Beech buds



The crown of a mature beech tree is so dense that hardly anything can grow beneath it. This leaves room for rarer species; look out for coralroot bittercress and wild orchids such as the red helleborine.


BOLLINGTON
KERRIDGE
Oak Bank Chimney
Church Street
White Nancy
Kerridge Stone Seat
Redway House
Bridgend Centre
Queens Arms
Limefields
Queen Street
Palmerston Street
Beeston Brow
Water Street
High Street
Old Red Lion
Chancery Lane
Windmill Lane
Higher Lane
Endon House
Endon Hall
Oak Lane
Jackson Lane
Bulls Head
Hollin Hall Hotel
Rally Road
Aqueduct
Pleasuregate
Swinerood Wood
Recreation Ground
Macclesfield Canal
Adlington Road
Middlewood Way
Viaduct
Dry Dock
6
7
Wellington Road
Albert Road
Henshall Road
Lowerhouse Mill
Bollington Recycling Centre
Leisure Centre
8
Bollington Road
The Rookery
10 a
Flash Lane
Silk Road
Dumbah Hollow
Hilltop
9
Whiteley Hey Farm
10
Gunko Lane
Well Lane
2
Distance 5.5 miles
Terrain – a largely flat mix of road and farmland – can be muddy at times!

Follow the steps, boardwalk and path and, as you leave the Clough, look up on the left to see the **wild pear tree** with its gnarled trunk, 12 metres after the marker.

Don't try to pick and eat a wild pear – the tree has thorns and the pears are bitter and gritty! Pear trees, like apples, often have mistletoe growing on them. Its sticky seeds are left on the tree trunk by birds. Mistletoe is parasitic, meaning it draws food from its host – the tree.

Go forward between buildings to meet the Middlewood Way, where you turn left. Go down the ramps. Continue forward for half a mile to the next ramp (7) on your right just before a bridge. This leads up to Clarke Lane, where you turn right, crossing the road to the footpath. There is a small **rowan tree** opposite the entrance to Kerridge Cricket Club.



Rowan leaf

The red berries of the rowan are prominent in giving it protective qualities against witchcraft and enchantment! People made crosses from twisting or binding the berries with red thread to carry in their pockets, sew into the linings of clothes or hang above lintels to protect themselves and their livestock. Even in the latter half of the twentieth century, people were warned not to remove or damage rowans growing in newly acquired gardens!

Cross over the road, and after the entrance to Mode Hill Barn, go right down a ginnel. Carry on along the track, which turns into a narrow path.

There are **elder trees** in the hedges.

Elders love soil rich in nitrogen, which is created as organic matter, such as dung or refuse, breaks down. This is why you often see elders near rabbit warrens and badger setts and even in graveyards! Birds love to eat the seeds, which are then dispersed through their droppings.

Turn left past the allotments and forward, with the hedge on your left, then through a wide ginnel **8** to emerge onto Bollington Road. Cross over the road and through the kissing gate to the right of the Rookery.

On your right is a **weeping ash**.

Ash dieback, a fungus that attacks ash trees, was first recorded in the UK in 2012. It is thought that up to 95% of our ash trees could be killed by this disease, having ongoing consequences for the wildlife that thrive on or under the trees and changing our landscapes forever.





Weeping ash



Go forward, following the fence, then through a kissing gate. Pass the pylon on your left, then walk slightly right to a kissing gate at the bottom corner of the field, close to the Silk Road. Go down the bank and over a stream, then up to enter Dumbah Hollow.

Follow the path over a hillock and through a kissing gate, keeping parallel to the Silk Road. At the bench, look right and you will see a lovely row of **crack willow** trees along the stream bed.

Though willow twigs are easily broken, charcoal made from them is not very brittle and is ideal for artists. Crack willow roots used to be boiled, producing a purple dye used to decorate hens' eggs at Easter.

Continue forward, ignoring the footpath to the right, to reach and descend steps. Go through two kissing gates and up more steps onto Flash Lane. Carefully cross over, and ignoring the footpath straight ahead, walk to the right and take the first road on the left. Turn right to Hilltop 9 and walk up the drive. Pass a house and cottages on your right and go through the kissing gate in front. Notice the massive **black poplar** ahead.

The wild black poplar is our most endangered native timber tree, with only around 7,000 trees left, of which around 600 are female. As there are so few, they are unlikely to pollinate each other, instead pollinating with cultivated trees, which does not produce a true wild black poplar.



Black poplar

Descend past a stile, bear left and follow the hedge to a kissing gate. Walk straight ahead to another kissing gate that leads into Gunco Lane. On reaching a green triangle 10 turn right into Well Lane. Look out for **Yew Tree Cottage** and any of its namesake trees along the lane.

Well known for the use of its wood in the construction of longbows, yew is a tree of contradictions. It is often seen in churchyards, where it may have been planted to sanitise those who died from the plague. Yet all parts of the tree are poisonous! Modern medicine now uses compounds from the yew tree that are harvested to make anti-cancer drugs.

As the road bends to the left go forward into the yard of Whiteley Hey Farm. Keep straight ahead, with the barn on your left, to go through the metal gate attached to the barn. Descend through another metal gate, taking care underfoot. At the bottom, bear right up the bank following the Peak & Northern Footpaths Society sign to Lowerhouse and Bollington.

This point links up with **Tree Trail 3**.

Descend diagonally right, with a very old row of trees on your left. The first tree is an old **sycamore**, followed by a row of **oaks**.

Sycamores are one of the commonest British trees. You may even see them at the seaside, because they are the only hardwood trees that can cope with salty winds. With a fine-grained, creamy wood, sycamore is popular for use as spoons and ladles as it won't taint the flavour of the food.

Go over a stile next to a stone slab, then right, following a fence and then a hedge. Go over a stile and along the track in front. This track can be extremely muddy. When the track takes a sharp left, continue ahead, over a field to a stile. Follow the path to the end 10a and then turn right into Moss Lane. Walk up to Moss Brow, cross the road and turn left.

Immediately turn right into Long Row and walk beside Long Row cottages.





Sycamore buds

At the end turn left, and at the end of that path turn right to walk up Albert Road. Turn left into Wellington Road. Opposite the post office, cross the road and go up the road in front. At the bridge turn left along the Middlewood Way.

After crossing Bollington viaduct turn sharp right, down the steps and round the right-hand edge of the car park to Adlington Road. Cross over and enter the recreation ground. Follow the path forwards, cross over the bridge on your right, turn left up the steps and along the riverside walk. Go over the bridge, up the steps and turn right. Cross the road and turn left under the aqueduct. Cross Water Street, walk through the Memorial Gardens and onto Palmerston Street, turning right to return to the Bridgend Centre.

The willow

Willows love water and often grow next to streams, rivers or in damp woods. It is often utilised to shore up banks and dykes.
All willows – goat, crack, osier, grey and white – have the ability to absorb heavy metals and may be planted to help decontaminate waste ground.

Crack willow is often coppiced – a technique of cutting a tree down to stimulate new growth – and the willow stems gathered are used to weave baskets, fences and even living furniture and sculptures!

Coppicing or Pollarding?

Coppicing and pollarding has been common in Great Britain since medieval times. 'To poll' meant 'to crop the hair'.



winning with wildlife



Willows are second only to oaks in the variety of wildlife they sustain. Caterpillars of the puss moth and willow ermine, amongst others, munch on the leaves while the grey and deeply ridged, almost flaky bark is home to insects and larvae.
Birds such as tree creepers or long tailed tits poke into the grooves and fissures to find food.

The crack willow is so-called because its twigs are very brittle. By the river, these break off and are swept along, only to become snagged on the bank further downstream. These twigs can then produce roots and grow into new trees.

The alder

an environmental warrior

Native to the UK, the alders favoured habitat is damp, cool ground, so is often found near rivers, ponds and lakes. The strong, knobbly roots sink deep into earth to secure the tree in place and in doing so helps protect riverbanks from soil erosion.

These roots have extraordinary swellings, or nodules, containing millions of nitrogen fixing bacterium *Frankia alni*. These can collect nitrogen from the air and convert it into a natural fertilizer allowing the alder to flourish on poor ground.





In winter, the alder remains identifiable through its cones. The fresh, brown ones are full of nourishing seeds and are a favourite of siskins. These tiny yellow-green and black finches have a longer, slimmer bill than other finches allowing them to reach into the cones crevices. Alder trees don't just nourish the soil and birds. In the natural world, alder leaves are considered to be really tasty and over 140 insect species like the caterpillars of leaf beetles, sawflies and the alder kitten moth feed on the leaves.

As with other members of the birch family like hornbeam, hazel and birch the alder produces catkins in spring. The long male and oval female catkins appear on the same tree and use the wind to both pollinate and then disperse the resulting seeds.

Beautiful bark



Bark, the tough outer layer of a tree or shrub's trunk, branches and twigs has many uses. If the bark is damaged and the wound becomes diseased it may prove fatal but if the bark is removed all round the trunk, the tree will certainly die.

Bark protects a tree from heat or wind and it wards off predators such as fungi or insects and mammals that want to feed on it sugary sap. The craggy grooves and channels play host to many species of insects and spiders that provide a diet for birds. The treecreeper can be seen crawling up tree trunks to extract bugs with its specially adapted, thin, curved beak. Bark supports plant life too with mosses, lichens and even ferns getting a foot hold in the deep fissures of an oak bark.

The outer layer of bark has a texture and pattern individual to each species that can help with identification. A new layer of growth is put on each year, giving us the rings that we see in a tree stump – count the rings to work out the age of the tree. Bark can be smooth, like a young hazel or deeply grooved like an old pine. It can peel off in ribbons like the shiny, dark red bands of a wild cherry or silvery grey of a birch. We might find patterns like the diamond shape in an aspen or the crisscrossed ridges of a crack willow.

The variety of colour, textures and patterns within tree barks are often utilised to add interest and structure to our winter gardens. Something to look at and to touch.



Tree Trail 3 - Whiteley Green, Adlington, Styperson, Pott Shrigley



Trees on this trail include Alder, Bay, Dogwood, Weeping Willow, Yew and Horse Chestnut

With your back to the Bridgend Centre, turn left and then left into and through the Memorial Gardens. Emerge to cross the road at the traffic lights and walk under the aqueduct, then cross over the road and enter the recreation ground. Turn left down the steps and along the path following the River Dean, with a handsome avenue of old **sycamore trees**.

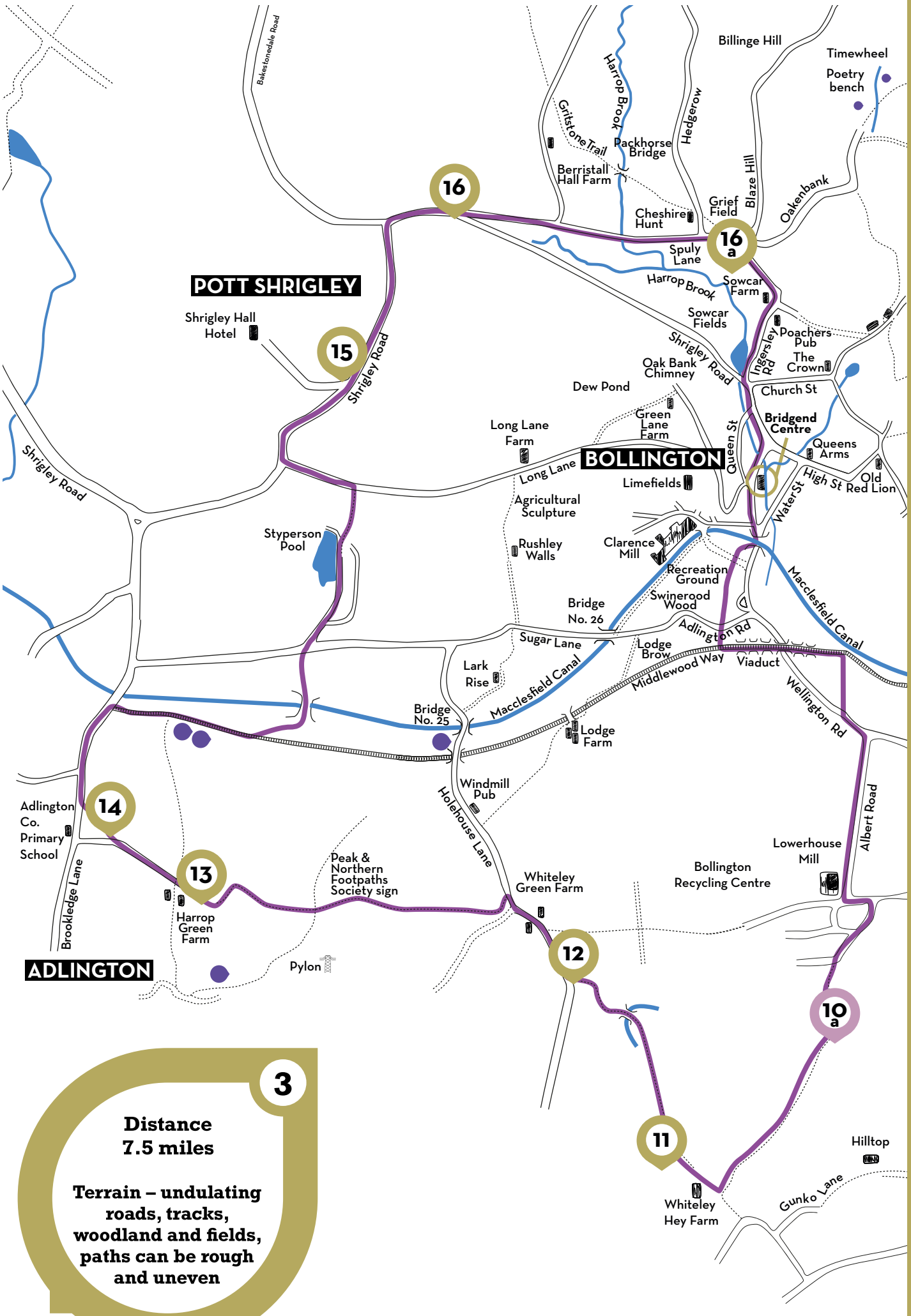
Think of a sycamore leaf as a hand – it has five 'fingers', or lobes, joined together. The twigs of the sycamore are rough, with big green buds in spring. In autumn, the seeds are winged. Pick one, throw it in the air and see it spinning to the ground. This shows how the wind disperses the seeds so new trees can grow.



Follow the right fork, go down the steps and over the bridge and turn left. Emerge from the recreation ground, cross over the road and go through the car park to climb the steps on the right onto the Middlewood Way.

At the top turn left and cross over Bollington viaduct, then follow the right-hand path above the Way.

At the bridge turn right and walk down onto Hawthorn Road, turning left at the bottom onto Wellington Road. Cross over and take a right down Albert Road, passing two schools. Just after the second school, turn left along a ginnel between houses, then follow right to walk in front of Long Row Cottages to where the track meets Moss Brow.



3

Distance
7.5 miles

Terrain – undulating roads, tracks, woodland and fields, paths can be rough and uneven

Take a left and then turn right to go into Moss Lane. As the road bends to the right, take a grassy footpath on your left 10a Follow this round to cross over a stile into a field. Keep forward to the left-hand corner, where you join a track going straight ahead, along the side of another field. (This track can be very muddy!)

Ignoring the turn into the farmyard, go ahead through the kissing gate with an upright stone in front and into a field, where you follow a hedge and then a fence on your left. Cross over a stile next to a stone slab and climb diagonally uphill, between a hedge and trees towards farm buildings. At the last tree go sharp right past the Peak & Northern Footpaths Society sign to Whiteley Green. This point links up with **Tree Trail 2.**

Walk downhill, follow the fence line on the left 11 and maintain this overall direction after diverting slightly to cross a stile to the right and go forward through a large metal gate.

Providing a green dye that was used to colour the clothing of outlaws such as Robin Hood, the alder has long been associated with hiding and secrecy. In modern times we now look to the alder to help regenerate post-industrial sites, their ability to grow on poor soil and improve it via nitrogen-fixing nodules on their roots, returning riches that mankind has stolen to the earth.





Alder fruit and male catkin

Cross the field, with the river on your left, to a metal bridge over the river, gated at each end, in the left-hand corner. To your right you will see a row of stately **alder trees**, hugging the river bank.

Cross over the bridge and go forward, with the hedge on your right. Follow the hedge sharp right and continue round to a stile next to a gate. This stile brings you out at a bend on Holehouse Lane 12 where you follow the lane to the right. Continue forward and look for the **bay trees** just above the holly hedge just before Holly Bank House.



Bay leaf

The bay tree, or true laurel, is known today for its leaves, which are used in many kitchens as a culinary herb. In the 16th century, however, the leaves were in much greater demand, as their sweet, pungent smell was believed to disinfect the air. Bay was prescribed for persistent coughs, rheumatism and earache and also placed under a pillow to enable you to see the future in your dreams!

Head slightly diagonally left across the field and go over a kissing gate on the left of an oak tree. Follow the hedge on your right to cross over a stile and bridge. Walk forward, keeping the hedge on your right, and still forward, past the Peak & Northern Footpaths Society sign, to the right-hand corner of the field, where a hedge comes in from the left. Keep straight ahead with the hedge on your right, continuing over a bridge and stile. Keep forward with a hedge on your right, then left down the track and over a stile by a gate, following this track round to the right (14) Before entering the farmyard there are **dogwood shrubs** on your right.

Walk through a gate next to Harrop Green Farm. Go straight ahead through a metal gate and then turn right through another gate and onto a track, where you go right.

Walk along the lane, passing Whiteley Green Farm on the right. Just after Rose and Laneside Cottages on the left, enter the ginnel between holly hedges and go forward into Whiteley Green wood.

Look out for **silver birch, oak, ash, holly and sycamore trees**. Emerging from the wood, go through a kissing gate and forward, with a couple of trees on your left. Now drop down steps to a bridge and kissing gate over a brook.



Dogwood flower

For most of the year the dogwood is an unremarkable shrub, but in late autumn it comes into its own with a beautiful display of blood-red shoots, red leaves and black fruit. Dogwood branches are very tough and straight, and from medieval times, the shrub was a countryside treasure! Its berries were used for lamp oil; its wood was burnt to make charcoal; butchers cut its twigs for skewers, or 'dogs', for meat and wheel spokes; and bobbins and mill-cogs were all crafted from the hard, white wood.

Ignore the first footpath on the right and, where this track bears left and uphill, go right over a stile then diagonally left over a field to cross a stile hidden in the hedge. Follow the fence on the right down to a stile and then straight ahead. Look for the **weeping willow** on your right. Carry on to a kissing gate in a holly hedge.



Weeping willow

At the end of the Ice Age small, creeping willows were one of first trees to recolonise Britain. Because they easily hybridise, many different species have evolved, the weeping willow being one. Napoleon loved the weeping willow and was buried beneath one. After his death the tree's popularity increased tremendously.

Cross over the road and turn right.

On the far side of the grass triangle take the permissive path into Hibbertbrow Wood in front and go through it, walking parallel to the road. You will emerge onto the road, where you turn left and almost immediately down steps onto the Middlewood Way.

Turning right under the bridge, you walk along the Way, with woods on either side, until you cross over a bridge. Soon the Trail arrives at kissing gates on the left and right. You can continue forward for 50 yards to see a **wild crab apple tree** in the middle of the two paths.

Returning, go through the kissing gate now on your right, and follow a holly hedge on your left to reach a stile by a gate and then a bridge over the Macclesfield Canal.

The wild crab apple might not seem too impressive, with its small stature and scrubby appearance, yet this species is mentioned in two of Shakespeare's plays and is the ancestor of all the cultivated apple varieties we eat today! In May the apple blossom is a beautiful sight to behold, with the sweetly scented flowers covering the tree like white froth and each petal delicately tinged with pink. A popular foraging fruit, the tart little apples make a beautiful amber jelly.

This track leads to Sugar Lane, where you turn right. After 100 yards cross the road and enter the track to Styperson. Where the track forks, go straight ahead, walking along the side of Styperson Pool, where you will see **rhododendron bushes**.

Go right up the steps, where you will find a chair carved to ressemble an oak leaf, then carry on then forward uphill. Keep to the right following the wall on the right and continue uphill to follow the main path round the edge of the quarry to reach Long Lane. Turn left and walk to the end of the lane, where you cross over Shrigley Road 15 turning right to follow the pavement into the hamlet of Pott Shrigley.

You are passing the wooded hillside, Holme Wood, in the grounds of Shrigley Hall Hotel on your left. Cross over the road just before the church and go through the gate into St Christopher's churchyard, graced with **ancient yew and lime trees**.



Horse chestnut

Rhododendrons were introduced into Britain in the late 18th century. The name derives from the Ancient Greek 'rhodon', meaning rose, and 'dendron', meaning tree. Some types are very invasive and crowd out our native wild flowers, shrubs and trees, so it can be regarded as a pest.



Yew berries

Leave the churchyard through the old lych gate, turning right down Shrigley Road, and take the left fork into Spuley Lane 16 After about 35 metres you will see an **old horse chestnut** on your left. A little further on carry on straight, passing a footpath sign to Charles Head on the left. This point links up with **Tree Trail 4.**

Continue along the lane for just over a kilometre, where you take the right-hand fork. Walk down Blaze Hill and round to the mini-roundabout at the end of Ingersley Road. Cross over Church Street and forward along Palmerston Street to return to the Bridgend Centre.

The oak

numbers you wouldn't shake a stick at

The mighty oak features across all the tree trails but perhaps most notably in Redway and Styperson Woods. The bunches of lobed leaves and acorn fruits in little cups are easily recognised but there are in fact two native varieties.

The leaves of the English oak have very short stalks and turn up at the base to form two small lobes, like 'ears'. The acorn sits in a scaly, long-stalked cup. By contrast the sessile oaks leaves have long leaf stalks and no 'ears'. Its acorn sits in a stalk-less cup.

Taking 50 years to produce an acorn and another 30 to gain full height, oaks go on to live for hundreds more years. The Major Oak in Sherwood Forest is over 500 years old – a mere acorn when the 18 year old Henry the eighth was about to marry his first wife!





Blue tits are able to feed a brood of up to 12 ravenous youngsters by breeding in early summer, coinciding with the time when maximum numbers of caterpillars, which they love to eat, are chomping the oak leaves.

A mature oak tree will produce a staggering 90,000 acorns in a good year! Up in the canopy these feed grey squirrels, jays, rooks, tits, nuthatches and wood pigeons.
Fallen acorns provide vital food for a different group of scavengers – mice, voles and vast numbers of insect larvae, especially nut weevils.
But it is a two-way street - squirrels and jays make hidden stores of acorns as a life-saving winter food supply, some of these get forgotten and germinate growing into new oak trees.

What tree is that?

From a miniature bonsai to a mighty redwood, trees vary greatly in size, shape, leaf and texture - so how can we use these different clues to identify which is which?

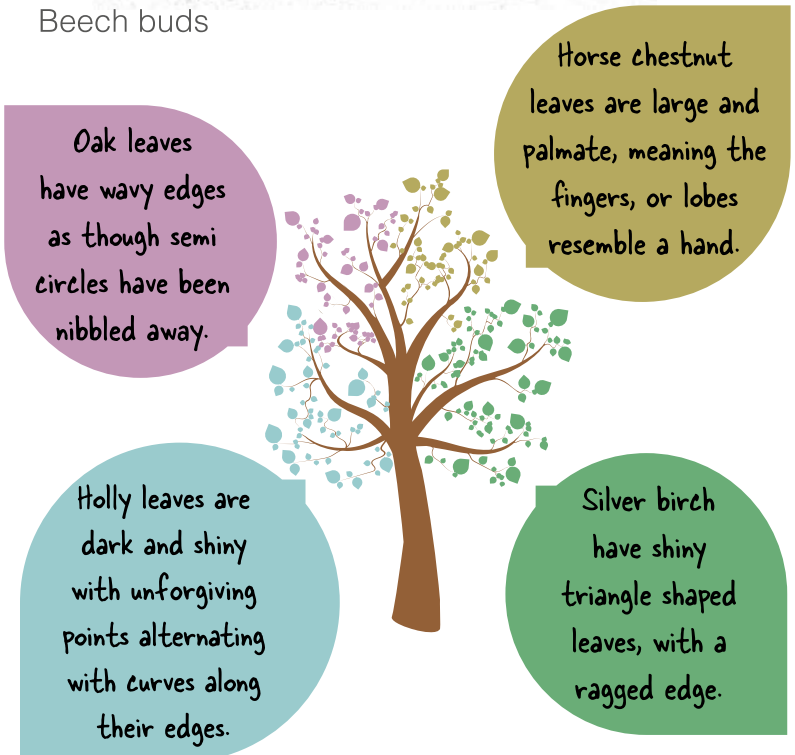
In the wintertime all can seem dormant but on closer inspection the end of a twig will offer help. Produced in the autumn and covered in hard scales to protect against winter weather are buds, packed full of leaves waiting for warmer weather. Some trees have very distinctive buds.





Beech buds

Even before winter finishes the buds start to burst open, pushing out fresh leaves of a great variety in size in shape. In the damp woodland of Harrop Wood, trees such as silver birch, hazel and hornbeam have leaves that are pointed at the end. This helps the rainwater to drip off the ends reducing the chance of fungal infections. Trees that are growing in drier areas have hairy leaves to help trap moisture.
The shape, texture and colour of a leaf all help to identify a tree.





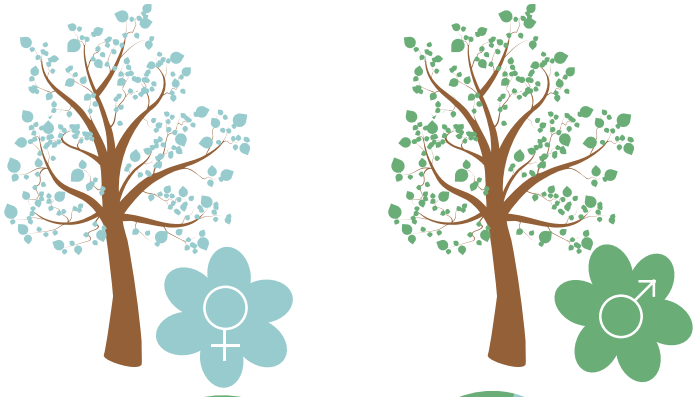
Silver birch leaves

To reproduce every tree produces flowers. These are pollinated to make fruit containing seeds that may start a seedling.

Fruit trees have flowers that we recognise; others are a bit more unusual and are formed to take advantage of the conditions when they are in bloom. The bees and insects pollinate the fruit trees when they flower in late spring, some others flower before the insects are abundant so use the winds of early spring to scatter their pollen.



Hornbeam male catkin

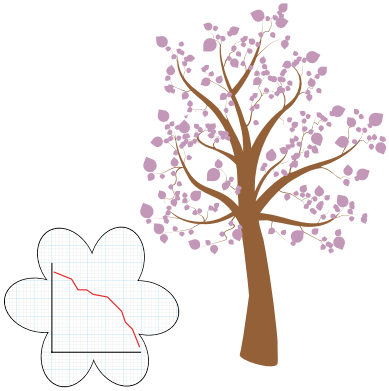


White willow is dioecious, meaning male and female flowers grow on separate trees. The male catkins are slightly longer and fatter than the female. Once pollinated the female catkins lengthen and shed tiny seeds encased in white down that helps them float in the wind to set seed elsewhere.

Hornbeams are monoecious, meaning the male and female flowers on the same plant. The tiny male flowers form pendulous yellowish catkins while the female flowers are longer, looser and leafy looking.



The black poplar is an increasingly rare tree, the male tree bears deep red catkins in March before the leaves burst open.



Like leaves and flowers, the fruit of a tree helps us identify what it is but as well as being colourful and delicious the fruit plays an important role in helping a tree reproduce.

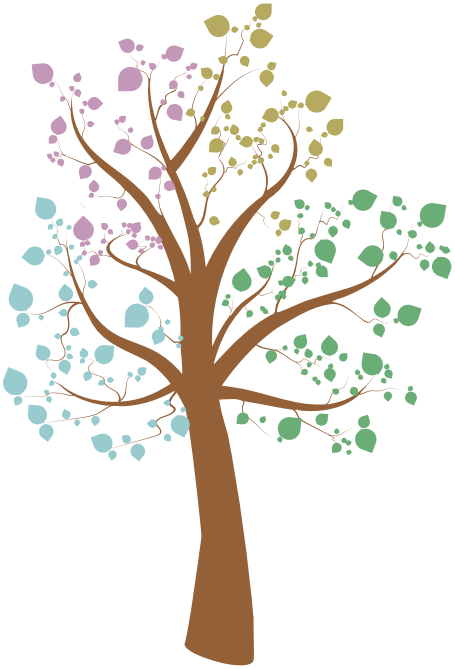
Berries are eaten by birds and animals and the seeds carried away from the parent tree before being excreted. Winged seeds or those encased in fluffy down like fibre rely on the wind to blow them away. Heavy seeds like conkers or beech mast fall to the ground and are moved by industrious squirrels or jays storing food for winter – those that get forgotten have the chance of becoming a new tree.



Yew berries

Yew trees enclose their seeds in a red, fleshy, berry-like ball known as an aril – please don't eat them like all parts of the yew they are poisonous.

Rowan, blackthorn and elder produce berries, too bitter to eat but they can be cooked to a make a jam, added to alcohol for a liqueur ready for Christmas or juiced to make wine.



Scots pine produces cones, packed tightly, as the fruit ripens the scales open to release a seed.

Oak trees produce acorns, bright green when fresh on the tree and drying to a rich brown as they age.

Tree Trail 4 - Harrop Woods, Billinge Head, Rainowlow, Ingersley Vale



Trees on this trail include Gorse, Silver birch, Hornbeam, Hazel, Hydrangea, Blackthorn and Common Lime

With your back to the Bridgend Centre, turn right and proceed along Palmerston Street. Notice the row of old **horse chestnut trees** on your left, behind the wall above Pool Bank car park. When you reach the mini-roundabout, cross over Church Street and carry on in the same direction along Ingersley Road. Follow the road as it curves to the left and starts to climb up Blaze Hill.

At the fork turn left into Spuley Lane 16a following the road sign to Pott Shrigley, and continue along the lane for just over a kilometre to a path signposted to Charles Head, on your right. This point links up with **Tree Trail 3**.

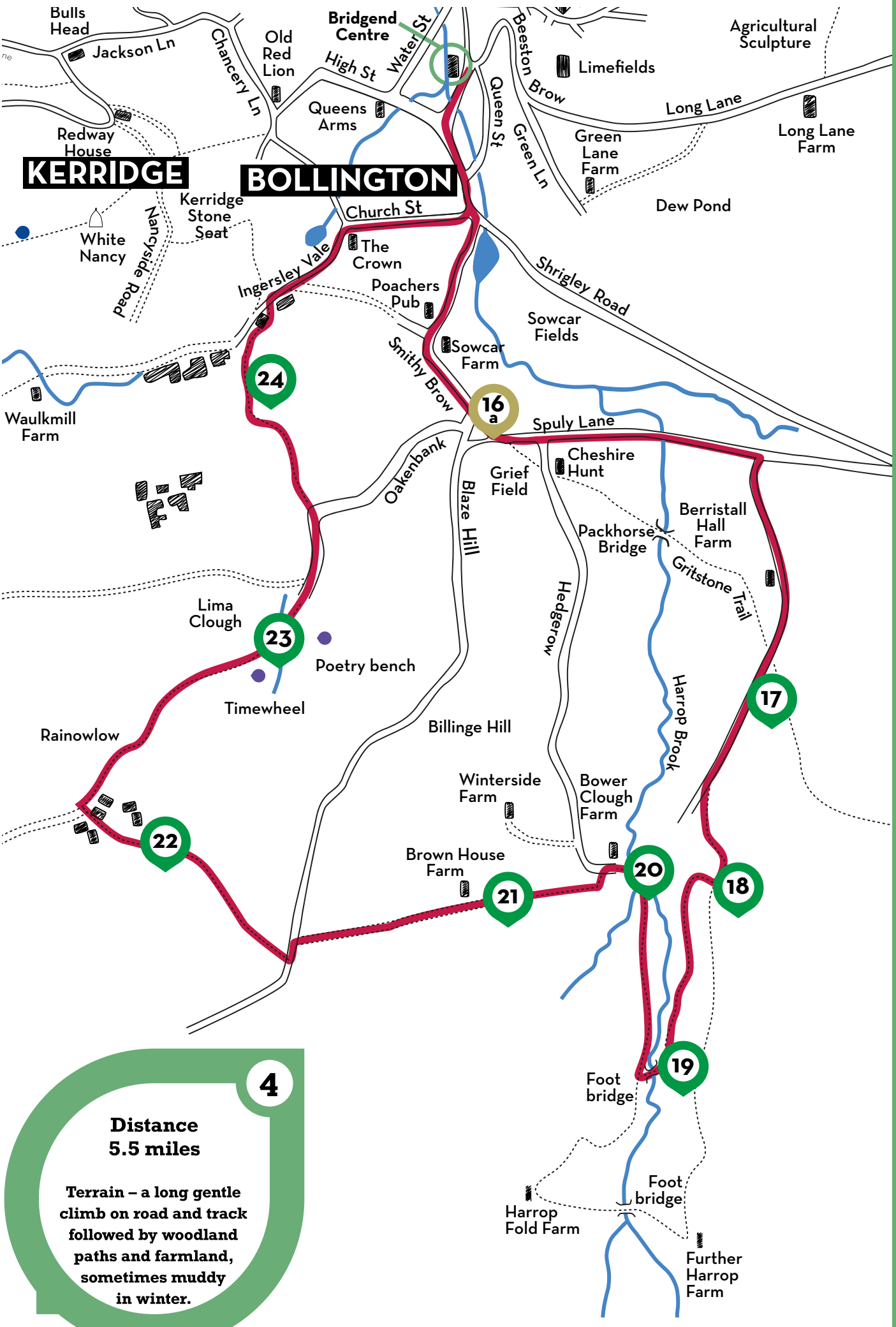
Go through the kissing gate, climb the steps and continue past the cattle grid and through another kissing gate. Keeping the wall on your left, go forward to join a track. Bear left here and go uphill, past Berristall Hall Farm on your right. As you continue along the track, notice the copse of trees above you on your left, predominantly sycamore and beech. Ignore the footpath crossing the track and carry on ahead to cross over two cattle grids 17 On both sides there are numerous gorse bushes.

Common gorse, with its yellow blooms, is a frequent feature found in all types of landscape. A spiky-leaved, hardy shrub, gorse has been used to fuel bakers' ovens and potters' kilns. It provides excellent cover for small birds such as linnets and stonechats that can hide safely amongst its dense growth. As the gorse's flowers are so fragrant, they are the perfect addition to salads or can be steeped in fruit tea.



Gorse flower





4

Distance
5.5 miles

Terrain – a long gentle climb on road and track followed by woodland paths and farmland, sometimes muddy in winter.

Shortly after a broken wall runs towards the path on the left, look for another broken wall heading straight ahead where the lane veers gently to the right. Follow this wall, keeping it on your right, and continue ahead to drop down and cross the stream via some stones, then up to a stile in holly bushes.

Follow the faint path round to the right (18) ignoring the path going up to the left. The path bends gently to the left and takes you through Harrop Wood. Throughout the wood, you can see **silver birch trees**, with their beautiful, papery bark.



Hornbeam



Hornbeam is a very attractive tree, which can reach heights of over 80 feet if growing alone, and can live for over 300 years! However, because hornbeams do not need much sunshine, they are often found in dense woodland, as in Harrop Wood, so are usually much smaller. The leaves are bright green and oval with thick veins and toothed edges. Look out for the male catkins in April or May, which are up to 2 inches long and droop down from the twigs.

The silver birch is one of our most recognisable trees, with its slender frame, beautiful silvery-white bark and masses of small heart-shaped leaves swaying gracefully in the breeze. It was one of the first trees to recolonise the UK after the last Ice Age. However, despite its frail appearance, the silver birch is actually an extremely hardy tree and produces wood that is tough and heavy enough for furniture and toys.



Silver birch



Continue forward, with Harrop Brook on your right, to go over a stile next to a gate, leaving the wood. Then go right across the field to cross the bridge over the brook.

Go to your right up the bank and over the stile (19) to re-enter Harrop Wood. Follow the path up and then turn right at the top to join a well-defined track. Continue through the wood along this track. As you walk along this ancient track, you will see rows of trees to your right. Their smooth, grey-green bark has vertical, wavy lines that are silvery in colour. These are **hornbeam**, which have been pollarded in past times and used for hedge-laying.

Diversion to waterfall: As you walk along the track, you will see a clearing on your right. A tiny path leads you down to a bench above a waterfall – a beautiful spot for a picnic.

Cross the stile at a gate and go forward along the sunken track all the way down, with Mellow Brook on your left. Bear left, and where Mellow Brook meets Harrop Brook, cross over the slab bridge on the left and climb the hill to go through a gate 20 into the yard of Bower Clough Farm.



Juniper berries



Hazelnuts

Hazel likes damp, dark conditions to grow. It is one of the earliest trees to produce catkins, which are long, yellow and woolly, and often called 'lambs' tails'. Try to spot these, covering the trees in February. When certain trees are cut just above the ground, this stimulates the growth of many more branches. This is called coppicing. Since prehistoric times, the pliable rods of hazel produced after coppicing have been used to weave baskets, and fences used for animal enclosures. Hazel rods are still used to find water by dowsing.

Cross over the stile on the left opposite the farmhouse and bear slightly right to pass a telegraph pole. Then cross over a muddy stream bed and follow the straggly, mixed hedging on your left to a stile at the end of the hedge. Continue forward uphill, following the line of the hedge, to arrive at a wooden gate and stile next to Brown House 21 Turn right on to the track, and just after the house you will see a row of **hazel trees** down on your right, following the stream.

Continue up the track to climb steadily until you reach a farm gate leading to a road. Go left and then cross over the road carefully to turn immediately right into Jumper Lane. Along the lane you will see a plantation of various species of fir trees along the track on your right. Walk along the lane until you come to a fork, where you take the right track, signposted Rainowlow. At the next fork 22 keep left. Against the high wall of the second house on the left, notice the **hydrangea**.

At the end of this track before the stone squeezer stile, turn right to cross over a wall and down some steps, to follow the footpath to Bollington. This track soon becomes walled on both sides and passes straight through two gates by the farmyard.

Cross the stone stile at the bottom, and continue forward, with a wall, then a hedge, and then a wall again on your right. Ignore the path off to the left and continue forward. Drop down to a stile by a gate with a stream on the left. Continue forward and cross a stream coming in from the right.

Immediately turn left, passing a little waterfall, and carry on with the stream on your right. Ford the stream at the massive stone slabs, slightly beyond which you can see **blackthorn bushes** up the bank. Walk forward, with the stream now on your left 23 and continue left onto a farm track signposted Oakenbank.



Blackthorn



Hydrangea

Cross the stile and turn right along Oakenbank, passing cottages on your right, until the road goes sharply right. Go forward here, over a stone stile next to a gate, and then through a kissing gate into the grounds of Savio House. Follow this track to reach a kissing gate, crossing the drive that is lined with **horse chestnut, beech and lime**, then through another kissing gate.
Now go slightly right across the field, through the gate ahead 24 and down steps, then right along a path.

From the steps, and running parallel with the path on your right, is **a row of poplars**.



Poplar leaf



Common lime



Beech buds

Follow the track through the copse, eventually passing a mill race below on your left. Drop down to a gate behind Rainow Mill Cottages and down the steps, where you turn right then forward along Ingersley Vale, passing a millpond on your left. At the bottom, turn right into Church Street.

This point links up with **Tree Trail 1**.

Continue to the end of the street, where you turn left into Palmerston Street and eventually return to the Bridgend Centre



Horse chestnut

The birch

broomsticks and blades

The birch tree has moved en masse into the valley through Harrop Wood that was once home to towering Scots Pine. The latter were felled as part of the war effort and the area left to nature. Silver birch and downy birch easily hybridize but both varieties provide a light open canopy that allows grasses, bluebells, wood anemones and wood sorrel to grow.



The open canopy also makes it easy to spot twisted tangles of twiggy growth. Looking like a birds nest, these masses of new shoots are caused by microganisms and so technically called a gall. Sometimes they grow in one direction leading to the common name of witches' broom- appropriate as broomsticks were often made from bundles of birch twigs!

Birch trees are a natural host to a fungi commonly known as the razor strop fungus. This can be a parasite to living trees, slowly killing them and then living on the dead tree for many years until the tree has rotted to nothing.



It has extensive medicinal uses - a tonic for the immune system, an antiseptic to clean wounds and promote healing, and a plaster that is microporous, antifungal and antiseptic. Its common name comes from the practice of cutting a strip from its underside for a final finish in sharpening cutthroat razors and in doing so, the barbers from yesteryear gave their blades an antiseptic wipe!

Birch trees produce male and female catkins on the same tree. The wind blows pollen from the male to the female and by autumn pollinated female catkins have swollen with fruit and turned red. As they open, the wind again comes into play and carries the tiny, almost weightless seeds far and wide.

The horse chestnut

conkers and communication

Introduced rather than native to this country, the towering horse chestnut is a familiar site in parks and country estates across the UK. It is easily recognisable from its large, sticky red buds that burst into five-lobed leaves with spires of pinky white flowers standing proud. Its most famous time however, is autumn, when glossy red- brown conkers fall to the ground to be hunted by deer, wood mice and humans alike!

There is no scientific proof that chestnuts in a corner of a room will deter spiders but as they dry out they emit a chemical called *triterpenoid saponin* so pop them in among your clothes to deter moths instead!

Horse chestnuts actively communicate with bees to indicate if their individual blooms contain nectar or not. In white horse chestnuts the blooms are white with creamy-yellow markings.





As the individual blooms are pollinated and fertilised the cream markings turn to ink and red indicating to the bees that nectar is no longer available here and not to waste their efforts but instead to focus on the still productive and rewarding creamy-yellow marked flowers. This makes sure that as many flowers as possible get pollinated.

Conkers are large because they contain enough food to feed the seedling for a long period of time. Being heavy, they fall straight down below the tree. However they must eventually be dispersed to stand a good chance of survival. A helping hand is given by small mammals and birds such as crows that take them away for winter food.

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[2] Phil Barnett
https://www.microcosmic.info

The Countryside Code

Respect other people

- Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors
- Leave gates and property as you find them and follow paths unless wider access is available

Protect the natural environment

- Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under effective control

Enjoy the outdoors

- Plan ahead and be prepared
- Follow advice and local signs

A full version of the code can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code



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