

# The Walks Tree Trail

King's Lynn



# Welcome to The

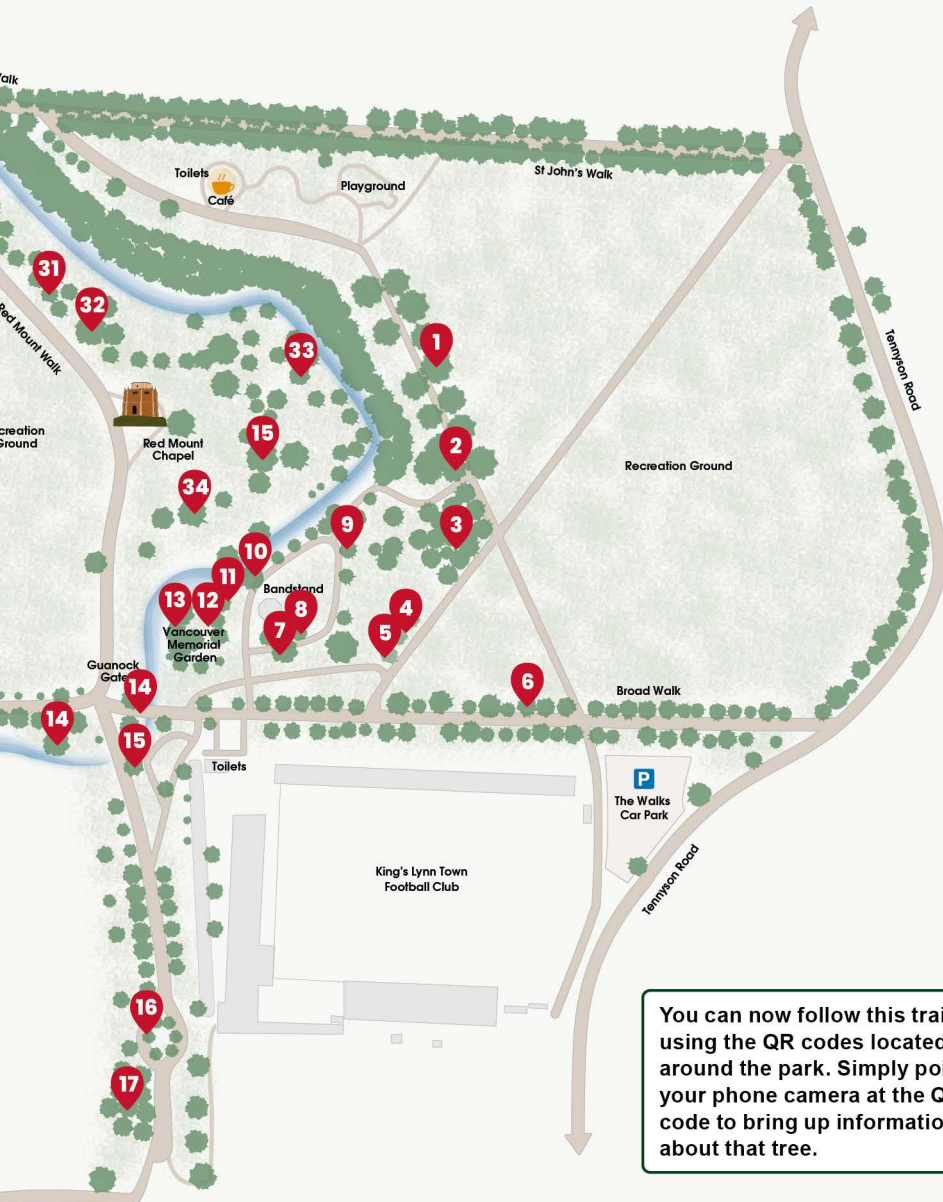
Follow the trail to learn about some of



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# Walks tree trail!

the fantastic trees growing in the park.



1



## Willow avenue

*Salix x sepulcralis* 'Chrysocoma'

There are many willow hybrids but this one, bred in Germany in the late 19th century, is generally the most common 'weeping willow'. This avenue of them beside The Walks rivulet looks particularly attractive when the new leaves flush bright green in spring.

2



## Dawn Redwood

*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*

This ancient genus of tree was only known from fossil records until 1941. Then, incredibly, a small population of the trees was found growing in south-west China! It has since been propagated and distributed to collections around the world. It can grow to 50 metres, but the tallest in the UK is still only 32 metres. How tall will this one get?

3



## Spaeth Alder

*Alnus x spaethii*

This alder is a fairly unusual hybrid of Caucasian and Japanese alder species, first bred in Berlin. We have a very attractive group of them in The Walks that display long catkins in late winter followed by glossy green leaves in summer. They thrive in this area, which sometimes floods in winter.

4



## Coast Redwood

*Sequoia sempervirens*

A tree that originally comes from the California and Oregon rainforest on the west coast of the USA. In its native environment it can grow to over 100 metres tall! It was first brought to the UK in the 1840s. A group at Longleat House are now over 50 metres tall. The leaves resemble a yew tree and the thick spongy bark can protect the stem from forest fires.

5



## Black Walnut

*Juglans nigra*

A tree from the eastern USA that is valued for its high-quality timber and edible nuts. Perhaps more attractive than the common walnut, the leaves have between 10 and 23 'leaflets', like a large ash tree leaf. It was first introduced to the UK in 1629 and can grow to over 20 metres tall.

6



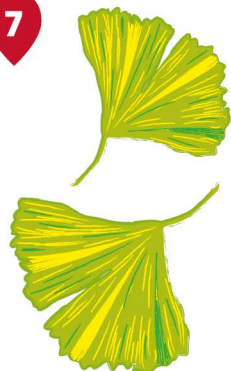
## Common Lime

*Tilia x europaea*

One of the main features of The Walks are the avenues of trees – which are mainly common lime, but also feature Horse Chestnut, London Plane and other lime hybrids. The first 'Walk' planted was the west end of Broad Walk (the section from London Road to Guanock Gate) in c.1713. It was extended to what is now Tennyson Road in the 1840s. St John's Walk was laid out in stages between the 1850s and the early 1900s. Trees along the Tennyson Road frontage were probably planted in 1906.

Common Lime is a hybrid of the native Small-leaved Lime and the Large-leaved Lime and was widely planted in streets and parks by the Victorians. The trees characteristically produce a mass of stems around the base known as epicormic shoots, which can be annoying to manage. They are also very attractive to aphids – which is why the pavements below are often sticky in summer (it's 'honeydew' – otherwise known as aphid pool!). There are now modern lime hybrids that are less susceptible to both of these issues.

7



## Maidenhair Tree

*Ginkgo biloba*

Ginkgo is the last species of an ancient generation of trees that were once common when dinosaurs walked the planet! It was first brought to the UK from China in the 18th century. The fan-shaped leaves are unusual to look at, with two distinct lobes (hence bi-loba). It is a 'dioecious' species (i.e. there are separate male and female trees, whereas most species have both flower types on the same tree). Ginkgos can survive tough conditions with heat and poor soils. They have therefore been used as street trees in cities like London and New York.

8



## Paper-bark Birch

*Betula papyrifera*

A less common birch in the UK – introduced from North America in the 18th century. Otherwise known as the ‘canoe birch’, as Native Americans used the waterproof bark to make their canoes. The bark is whiter than the European Birches, and peels horizontally. There are two good specimens here which have attractive autumn colours.

9



## Rowan

*Sorbus aucuparia*

A fairly small native tree, rarely growing above 20m. It prefers light soils and can grow in acid conditions – so can be found growing from Scottish mountains to Dorset heathlands. The leaves are made up of leaflets growing in opposite pairs (‘pinnate’ leaves), with serrated edges that look superficially like an ash (hence another common name – ‘Mountain Ash’). It has creamy white clusters of flowers in spring and bunches of red berries in autumn that many birds love. A very popular tree for gardens and parks.

10



## Horse Chestnut

*Aesculus hippocastanum*

There are some notable Horse Chestnut specimens in The Walks – mainly in the avenues. With their fat sticky buds in winter, large ‘palmate’ (hand-like) leaves, beautiful ‘candelabra’ flowers in spring and conkers in the autumn, they are one of our most recognisable and popular UK trees. But did you know they come from the Balkans and were only introduced in the 17th century? In recent decades, they have been afflicted with two problems. One is the *Cameraria* leaf miner moth, the tiny grubs of which burrow through the leaves and turn them brown long before autumn. The second is a bacterial infection that can lead to stem bleeds. Together these problems can weaken the tree and lead to other infections and decay. Stress from climate change may be another factor?

11



## Douglas Fir

### *Pseudotsuga menziesii*

A tree from the west coast of Canada and the USA where it once grew in vast forests with individuals up to 100 metres tall. It is a prized timber tree and is now grown as a commercial forest crop around the world. The first botanical record of the tree was made in 1793 by Archibald Menzies, who accompanied Captain George Vancouver (born in King's Lynn) on his exploratory voyages around the world. You are now standing in the Vancouver memorial garden! The tree was introduced to the UK by the Scottish plant collector David Douglas in 1827 – hence the common name.

12



## Monkey Puzzle

### *Araucaria araucana*

Another ancient type of tree that once grew all over the world. There are 20 different species of Araucaria remaining, all from the southern hemisphere. Monkey Puzzle, with its instantly recognisable form, originates from Chile and Argentina and is also known as the 'Chilean Pine'. First introduced to the UK in the 18th century, it was again collected by Archibald Menzies whilst accompanying Vancouver on his ship The Discovery. The trees are now quite common in UK parks and gardens, but sadly they are endangered in their home range.

13



## Sycamore

### *Acer pseudoplatanus*

A very versatile tree, adapting to almost all conditions and resistant to pollution and salt spray. The green buds are arranged in opposite pairs. The bark is very smooth on young to middle-aged trees, developing into craggier sections in later years. There are some very fine Sycamores in The Walks, including an interesting veteran south-east of St John's Church.

14



## Common Beech

*Fagus sylvatica*

A large, impressive native tree with a dense canopy which casts deep shade in summer months and often prevents anything growing underneath. (Bluebells have evolved to come up and flower early in beech woodlands – before the beech leaves block out the light!) Beech trees produce small edible nuts (known as ‘masts’), which gave rise to the traditional practice of ‘pannage’, where pigs were allowed to graze in woodlands in the autumn.

15



## Copper Beech

*Fagus sylvatica purpurea*

A naturally occurring mutation of the common beech. Variants can range from a royal purple to a muddy dark brown – and the colour may also vary throughout the leaf season. Some ‘good’ variants are grown as grafted stock on common beech root stock. This one may be from grafted stock.

16



## Small-leaved Lime

*Tilia cordata*

Lime or ‘Linden’ is a native tree and is used as an indicator of ancient woodland. The heart-shaped leaves are about 5–7cm long, smaller than other limes. On the underside of the leaf, they have red hairs in the vein axils, whilst other limes have more, light-coloured hairs. The flowers are very attractive to bees and the resulting honey has a distinctive flavour. There are several modern hybrids which have been selected for particularly good form and easy management. These seven trees are *Tilia* c. ‘Green Spire’.

A group of seven limes previously stood in this location in the early 19th century and we believe they gave rise to the ‘Seven Sisters’ name. Consequently, the former pub next door was also called the Seven Sisters.

17



## Silver Birch

### *Betula pendula*

This group of birch makes an attractive feature at the Seven Sisters entrance to The Walks. The silver bark, spring catkins and soft texture make them a popular garden tree. The seeds are distributed by the wind and easily germinate. This gives them a colonising advantage and they are regarded as a 'pioneer species', often establishing in newly disturbed areas before any other trees or shrubs.

18



## Dove Tree

### *Davidia involucrata*

This tree also goes by the name of Handkerchief Tree or Ghost Tree. All three names refer to the large white bracts (modified leaves) that hang around the purplish flowers in late spring. The fruits turn into a hard, inedible nut that hangs throughout the winter. First recorded by a French missionary, Père David, in China in the 1860s, some UK specimens have grown to over 20 metres tall.

19



## Persian Ironwood

### *Parrotia persica*

This tree originates from around the Caspian Sea area in northern Iran and is related to Witch hazel. It is generally grown for its attractive autumn leaf colours but also has small maroon flowers in late winter.

20



## Norway Maple

### *Acer platanoides*

Originating from Scandinavia, it is a dependable large tree and has become common in parks and gardens, partly due to its attractive autumnal colours. The buds of the Norway Maple are reddish-brown (as opposed to the green of sycamore). Also see the group of different maples located north of the multi-use games area. This is known as the 'Mayors Grove' and was planted by former civic leaders to mark completion of a £4.3 million restoration of The Walks in 2009.

21



## Swedish Whitebeam

### *Scandosorbus intermedia*

This tree from the Baltic region has become a favourite landscape tree as it is medium sized, with a compact crown, pretty flowers in spring and fruit that birds love in autumn. The leaves appear white on the underside due to many tiny hairs.

22



## London Plane

### *Platanus x acerifolia*

A hybrid of Oriental and Occidental Plane probably bred in Spain in the 17th century. It has proved to be resilient in polluted urban settings and is widely planted in European cities – hence the common name. It can grow into a very large tree with big palmate leaves and an attractive scaly bark on the trunk with grey, brown and cream colouring. Round seeds hang like baubles throughout the winter. The stems can be swollen and burred and take on impressive girth (see the specimen amongst the gravestones near St James' Park). This may be caused by a viral infection.

23



## Oriental Plane

### *Platanus orientalis*

A less common but equally large and impressive plane tree from southern Europe. The bark is similar to the London Plane but the leaves are finer and perhaps more attractive with slender finger-like lobes. The round seeds also hang in strings of 3–6, smaller than London Plane. This is a magnificent specimen.

24



## Flowering Cherries

### *Prunus spp*

Around St James' Park there are several large old cherries that provide a magnificent display of blossom in the spring. The white flowering cherry near the swimming pool is *Prunus Tai-Haku*, whilst there is a very large *Prunus Kanzan* near the nursery school. A winter-flowering *Prunus x subhirtella Autumnalis* has been planted near to St John's Church.

25



## Red Oak

*Quercus rubra*

A tree from the eastern USA. It has a smooth, silvery bark and its leaves have pointed lobes. It has large 'cut' leaves and brilliant autumn colours of reddish orange. It is grown commercially as a timber crop due to its fast growth.

26



## English ('Pedunculate') Oak

*Quercus robur*

There are two native oak species in the UK. The most common in the English lowlands is the 'Pedunculate' oak, which is identified by having virtually no leaf stalk, whilst the acorns do have a short stalk. It prefers rich deep soils and in open positions can grow into a very large, spreading tree. (The 'sessile' oak, *Quercus petraea*, does have a long leaf stalk, but the acorns have no stalk. It also grows in Norfolk, but prefers poorer, acid soils.) Historically, oaks have perhaps been the most important UK source of timber for building, furniture making and many other uses – synonymous with strength and resilience. They can be very long-lived, with UK examples known to be over 1,000 years old!

27



## Tulip Tree

*Liriodendron tulipifera*

Another fast-growing tree originating from the USA, where it can reach heights of 60m. It has leaves that are the same shape as a Tulip, but its name comes from its flowers which are also Tulip-like and popular with bees. It is tipped as a large tree that might cope well with climate change in the UK.

A little way to the north of this tree is a second unusual Tulip Tree with variegated foliage.

28



## Common Walnut

### *Juglans regia*

A tree originally from south-eastern Europe, first introduced to Britain by the Romans and now naturalised in southern England. It can grow to 30m and has large pinnate leaves usually with seven leaflets (but between five and thirteen). The edible nuts need a hot summer to ripen in the UK – but this may become more normal with climate change. The wood is valued for furniture making. The leaves and the husks stain black; they were used to make hair dyes in the past.

29



## Silver Maple

### *Acer saccharinum*

A fast-growing maple from the eastern USA planted for its pretty silvery leaves that flutter in the wind. The leaves also turn an attractive buttery yellow in autumn. It can be susceptible to wind damage. This specimen supports mistletoe in the crown.

30



## Indian Bean Tree

### *Catalpa bignonioides*

Despite the name, this showy tree was introduced from the southern USA in the 1700s. The impressive large leaves flush bright green in springtime, followed by large orchid-like flowers in June/July and the characteristic 'runner bean' seed pods later on. There was once an avenue of Catalpa along the Red Mount Walk, planted by Town Mayors, but they have proved susceptible to wind damage. Two remain and a new one was planted in 2024.

31



## Holm Oak

### *Quercus ilex*

A potentially large evergreen tree introduced to the UK from the Mediterranean region in the 1500s. It is very resilient, surviving exposed seafront locations (like Holkham), poor soil and urban settings. The dark green shiny leaves are superficially like holly, but not spiky. There are pretty yellow catkins in early summer that are the male flowers.

32



## Yew

### *Taxus baccata*

A UK native tree, long associated with folklore and tradition and typically occurring in churchyards and other ancient sites. Like oaks they are very long lived, with some UK specimens known to be more than 1,000 years old. The strong, flexible wood was traditionally used to make archery bows. The dark evergreen foliage has been used extensively in English garden design – especially as hedges and topiary features. The seeds (which are poisonous to humans) are covered by a red, berry-like 'aril' which birds love to eat in autumn. There are more than a dozen yews alongside the Red Mount Chapel.

33



## Giant Redwood

### *Sequoiadendron giganteum*

By volume, some specimens of Giant Redwood are now considered to be the largest trees on earth. 'General Sherman', the largest living specimen in California, stands at a mighty 83.8m tall with a circumference of 31.3m at its base and is estimated to weigh over 1,900 tons! First introduced to the UK by the collector William Lobb in 1853, some have now reached over 50 metres. Several at Sandringham House are around 40 metres. Ours is a future giant!

34



## Turkey Oak

### *Quercus cerris*

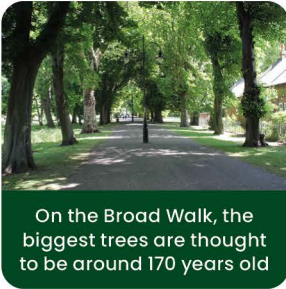
This oak was introduced to the UK from eastern Europe in the 17th century. It is fast growing and resilient and there are several excellent specimens in The Walks. The foliage is notably dark green, leaves shiny and often with an angular 'cut leaf' form. Acorns are stalkless and the cup has notable 'whiskers'. Some *Q. cerris* are said to be semi-evergreen (keeping some leaves all year), but apparently not the specimens in The Walks. Perhaps this will change with warmer winters?

These 34 specimens are just a few of the types of tree to be found at The Walks. See if you can test yourself further by identifying some of the other species and varieties in our wonderful collection!

## About the age of trees

How old are the trees in The Walks? If a tree has a massive trunk, it must be 'ancient', right? But what is a 'veteran' tree? The following notes may help.

Some features within The Walks are obviously medieval – including the Red Mount Chapel and the remains of the town defences. However, there is no evidence that any of the nearby trees are that old. There are records of the town wall being planted with an avenue of elm trees – but there are none there now. They may have been killed by Dutch Elm Disease (a fungal disease spread by a beetle which killed thousands of large elm trees in the UK between the 1920s and 1970s).



On the Broad Walk, the biggest trees are thought to be around 170 years old

It is known that the main avenues of trees in The Walks were laid out in phases between c.1713 and 1906. But it appears that the original c.1713 trees were replaced in the 19th century. The oldest present-day avenue trees are thought to be around 150–170 years old. Other large trees in the park are probably a similar age.

The size and girth of a tree does not always reflect its age. Some trees naturally assume great size and have large stems (e.g. oak, beech and plane trees), whilst a hawthorn or apple tree could be very old and still not very big. Soil conditions, rainfall, exposure to wind and disease will also influence tree size.

'Ancient' and 'Veteran' are specific terms. An 'ancient' tree is a tree that is old in comparison to other trees of the species. It is generally considered to be in the final stages of its life and will show key characteristics such as a flattening canopy shape, hollow trunk, and/or old branches close to or leaning on the ground. An oak tree might be over 400 years old before it is considered 'ancient'; a yew tree might be 800 years old!

A 'veteran' tree may be relatively young for its species, but has developed some of the characteristics of age. These might include holes and hollows in the stem, dead branches and/or the presence of fungi and other plants such as moss, lichen and ferns. They are important for wildlife and are sometimes seen as 'ecological islands'.

We do not have any 'ancient' trees in The Walks but we do have a lot of 'veterans' and it makes the park very important for a wide range of species especially insects and birds.



The massive trunk on this Plane tree near County Court Road is probably the result of previous damage or disease rather than great age. It is probably 150–200 years old.

## Look out for some of our urban wildlife!

The trees in The Walks provide excellent habitat for a wide range of wildlife. You can regularly see and hear Great Spotted and Green Woodpecker, Nuthatch and Mistle Thrush. Jackdaws and Stock Doves nest in holes in older trees.



Mistletoe grows in many of the Lime trees in The Walks. Birds eat the berries.

If a tree dies, the Parks team have a policy of leaving some of them standing where they provide habitat for a range of organisms – from fungi and mosses to wood-boring beetles and other insects which in turn provide food for birds like Woodpeckers.

Some tree species are particularly valuable for biodiversity. Ecologists estimate that Oak trees often support over 2,000 other species (including birds, bats, insects, fungi, bryophytes, and lichens).

Sometimes other organisms give rise to particular features of the tree. 'Oak apples' are

found on virtually all oak trees but they are not the natural fruit of the tree (which is an acorn of course).

Oak apples are caused by a number of different species of small wasp that lay their eggs in the leaf buds. When the eggs hatch, the tiny grubs begin to eat the leaf bud and at the same time

secrete chemicals that affect the bud's normal growth. The tree forms a hard lump of tissue (a 'gall' or 'oak apple') which the growing grub lives within. The grub then pupates, emerging from a small hole in the gall. Look at one on a tree, and if it has a hole, the young wasp has already emerged.



If you see odd-shaped acorns like this, they have been caused by the tiny Knopper gall wasp

There are many types of gall wasp and the oak apple varies in shape with the species. Other insects prey on the gall wasps – an intricate food web!



Great spotted woodpecker

If you see some unusual wildlife in The Walks – please email Friends of The Walks at [secretaryfow@gmail.com](mailto:secretaryfow@gmail.com). We would love to hear your reports or see your photographs!



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