

Arborfield Green - Nightingale Fields Tree Walk





Come and see the wonder of the trees around Nightingale Fields in Arborfield Green and celebrate these magnificent plants.

1. Start near to the junction of Rowcroft road and Sheerlands road, around the community centre with the white willow, which was cut down at some point, however branches are growing from its' trunk, forming a dwarf willow. It can be hard to tell apart from a pile of cut branches, but you can go and look under the branches to see the trunk. It is approximately two and a half meters, means the tree is over 100 years old, it might be planted around the end of the First World War.

2. Look for a trunk near the willow; this is what remains of an ash tree that has been cut down probably because of rot in the trunk, it's around 100 years old and still kicking.

3. The nearby cypress is also a great example of its species, and it's tall enough to walk under its branches.



4. The sycamore tree on the left is a veteran (WDVTA defines veteran trees as those that have reached full maturity and are showing signs of ageing. The age at which this occurs varies with species so an oak tree, for example, will take many more years to mature than a silver birch. Learn more: https://wdvta.org.uk/veteran_trees.php) It was planted around the same time as the willow.

5. Go across Sheerlands road, on the informal path to the right of the bus stop which goes along the Scots pines. This is which is the only native pine species in the UK and can live for up to 700 years. There are also Leyland cypresses, these ones are a little over 100 years old. This line of trees was most likely to be used to keep the livestock inside the grassland on either side but could also help travellers to find their way before GPS.

6. When you pass the white house with a big chimney, you should arrive in a clearing, then turn left heading towards the magnificent oaks and the playground. On your left, you can see two oaks next to each other. The enormous English oak tree is more than 200 years old. Just imagine, a lot has happened since 1825...

7. Its little sister behind you is just about 120 years old. It was planted around the last years of Queen Victoria's reign.

8. Turn around and cross the road to the other giant English Oak tree on the other side of Ambler Drive. This is the twin sister of the previous one, also about the same age. They can support more than 2300 species per tree. Did you know that in the 17th century weddings were often held under Oak trees to make the marriages long-lasting and happy? The oak was regarded as a symbol of strength.

9. Go forward along the path which runs alongside Glover Crescent, then follow the road as it turns right towards the pair of Oaks next to the 3-storey building. Gaze in wonder and their wonderful skeleton-like branches. Did you know the oak's bark has been used to colour and treat leather since Roman times? These two English Oaks are more than 150 years old. Planted after the Great Exhibition (1851) but before the end of the Victorian era.

10. Now continue your walk as you turn right, and across Ambler Drive, you can see short and multi-stemmed oaks. These are younger than the previous two, at just around 110 years old. Their shape is also very different because they were probably pollarded (removal of the upper branches of a tree and left to regrow) a long time ago.



11. Take a slight left. On your right, you can see a great example of an English Oak in its older years. Around 150 years old, most of its canopy is bare, but there is still lots of life in and around the tree. Go further and see the giant Holly, the Christmas tree of the woodland.

12. Holly trees can live for up to 300 years. Notice how glossy its leaves are, and if you are lucky, it is in its full glory with some bright red fruits. Provides a very Christmassy atmosphere, don't you think? It's also worth visiting in spring or early summer for its white flowers, which are gorgeous with the green leaves. Watch out though, the leaves are very spiky!

13. The next spectacular tree is an Ash. Did you know the Ash is in the same family as olive trees and are closely related? Ashes contain a very similar oil to those produced by olive trees: olive oil!

14. If you go forward, what do you think about the shape of the 150-year-old Oak on your right? Personally, it always reminds me of broccoli.

15. Go forward on the path until you meet the Eucalyptus. The species is not native to the UK; it originates in Australia. This is a fast-growing tree, approximately 40-60 years old. My personal favourite.

16. Double back on the path and turn left, then turn right towards the playground and the giant Oaks. At the playground, turn left and go on the path towards Sheerlands Road. Walk alongside the little lakes and you can see more noble Oaks in the distance. Admire these fine examples of English oaks; they have been standing here for over a century, remaining us Wokingham was used to called Oakingham.

17. Now you have reached the Sheerlands road, which has been a path for many travellers for centuries. Turn left. Next to the road, there are more Oaks; they've all been here for approximately 150 years. Go further, turn right, and you are back to the starting point.

I hope you enjoyed the tree trail and learned something about the wonderful trees around us. Don't forget to protect, admire, and love the environment around you! It's good for them and good for you, too!