

## **Welcome to Carisbrooke and Newport's Histree Trail**

*The Champions and Churchyards Histree Trail is a linear trail 6.4km (4 miles) long. The trail begins at Carisbrooke Castle and ends at Medina Arboretum, Newport. This trail is an easy, accessible downhill walk, following mostly street trees with mainly hard surfaces throughout.*

### *Getting There*

*Bus: 6, 38 and Medina Breezer to the trail's start at Mountjoy. 5, 9 and 29 from Fairlee Road at the end on the trail.*

*Car: There is limited parking available on Whitcombe Road opposite Carisbrooke Priory.*

**Follow the text and use the map to explore the Champions and Churchyards Histree Trail. Visit magnificent trees, pay your respects to a veteran Yew, wonder at the Weeping Beech, promenade along The Mall and visit the birthplace of 'conkers'.**

The Champions and Churchyards Histree Trail begins the south side of Carisbrooke Castle. Before setting off you will see a cluster of **Horse Chestnut** trees in the field to the west (below). Why it is known as 'Twelve Trees' is a mystery, as there have ever only been eleven.

Head north to join the footpath which runs alongside Whitcombe Road. At the fingerpost turn left onto footpath N193, pausing at the path crossroads.

Towering above you stands a magnificent **Beech** tree located up on the bank, marking the top of The Shrubbery, formerly Clerken Lane **(1)**. The Shrubbery was planted in the 18th century on the orders of Lord Bolton (1720-1794) a

British nobleman, naval officer and Governor of the Isle of Wight.

There are many impressive **Beech** trees on the banks of the lane, which was used as one of five emergency retreat routes to the castle when a French invasion threatened. Also, the monks of the old Carisbrooke Priory - which stood on the site of the current St. Mary's Church - would use Clerken Lane to travel to Sheat Manor where they maintained a holy cell.

Before joining Castle Hill pause to view the **Beech** trees behind you to your left - they are among the tallest on the Island. **Beech** woods are uncommon on the Island and this one does well as it is sheltered from prevailing, salt-laden south westerly winds.

Turn right onto Castle Hill heading towards the mini-roundabout, take care here as there is no pavement. Cross over **Cedar Hill** and a few steps down the hill should reveal views of the enormous tree after which the road is named **(2)**.

This huge **Cedar of Lebanon**, with its dense, spreading canopy is the largest of its kind to be found outside the Osborne Estate and is likely to be a contemporary of those first introduced to the Island in the mid 1750s. The tree certainly pre-dates the house (built 1899).

The road was named after the **Cedar** tree in 1885 with an announcement featured in the IW County Press May 9th 1885 submitted by Newport Town Council. For many years, it was customary to guess the girth of this champion tree at the annual summer fête held at the house. The closest estimate would receive a prize – the circumference at the widest point just pips a whopping seven metres.

Retrace your steps towards Spring Lane. The establishment of a livestock market in Newport preceded the advent of piped water in the town by 300 years. By law, all animals were watered here upon entry and exit to the town (right).

At the High Street, turn immediately left to Carisbrooke Pond. This was formally known as the Priory Pond because the Old Priory water mill once stood here. The pond is currently under a restoration scheme by local groups and volunteers and is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) as it is an important feeding area for several bat species including the nationally rare Daubenton's Bat. There has been a pond here since at least medieval times and it is thought it may possibly date back to Roman times. To discover the legend linked to the pond go to the stone sculpture which tells a tale of greed, fear and buried treasure.

The **Weeping Willow**, here with its cascading boughs, is among the largest on the Island. It provides welcome shade in summer for visitors and inhabitants of the pond **(3)**. The **Weeping Willow** is said to have come to this country in the 1700s when some green twigs found in a delivery of figs from the Far East were planted. However most of the **Weeping Willows** that we see today originate from an ornamental hybrid produced by a German nursery c.1900.

Continue a little further around the pond and over the bridge, to the next tree of interest. The **Alder** is a native, water-loving tree, recognisable by its small cones and catkins **(4)**. Its wood was used for clog making, charcoal production and was considered the best wood for manufacturing gunpowder.

From the pond, head back to the High Street and cross the road via the pedestrian crossing.

Go to the stone steps which lead up to St. Mary's Church. The churchyard is home to the Island's earliest individual tree depicted in an illustration. The Newport Ligger or Town Ledger Book, held in the custody of the IW County Records Office features an engraving dated 1567. It shows the area from Carisbrooke Castle down to the River Medina at the time of an imaginary naval assault. A church, with architecture matching St. Mary's, is clearly shown in this picture; a lone tree stands to the right.

This is the very **Yew** tree featured in the engraving **(5)**. It is a veteran tree, undoubtedly more than 500 years old, as it appears to have been a mature tree when the engraving was made. The tree's girth is just over five metres, making it the largest single stemmed **Yew** tree on the Island. The St. Mary's **Yew** is a very special tree and most likely the Island's oldest.

Before leaving the churchyard, try and find 'the hand in the wall'. This mysterious carving is near the ivy growth on the east-facing wall at the back of the churchyard. It will help you with next direction to take.

Leave the churchyard via footpath N54 and at the pond, turn right onto footpath N60. Alongside this footpath you will pass several **Ash** trees, some which are multi-stemmed which tells us that they have been coppiced. Coppicing is a traditional management technique which encourages regeneration and often prolongs the life of a tree.

After crossing Wellington Road, and continuing on the footpath you will pass the remnants of the former West Mill Pond to your right. This was once an impressive four acre lake but is now filled with **Alder** and **Willow** carr. This type of wet woodland thrives in waterlogged soils.

Leave the footpath and turn right into Recreation Ground Road. Before reaching the main Carisbrooke Road you will cross over Lukely Brook. Back in the 1600s there were no less than seven working water mills on the Lukely. Continue ahead and at the main road, use the pedestrian crossing to reach the triangular shaped green. This area is known as Simeon Monument. The trees located towards the back of the green are the oldest.

**(6)** These boundary trees include a **Hornbeam** tree and two large **Monterey Pines**, both unusual in an urban environment. A town house known as Little Gatcombe once stood on this site; it was owned by Walter Langton, a local brewer.

From Simeon Monument, cross back over the road to begin your stroll along The Mall **(7)**. The Victorian villas have gardens planted with trees and hedgerow shrubs, popular at the time, such as **Laurel** and **Holly**. The Mall however, predates this era and was constructed to emulate a seaside promenade. The raised platform, clear of the dirt and mud, enabled locals to elegantly parade up and down. The Mall was once lined with mighty **Elm** trees; today it is an avenue of ornamental trees including **London Plane** and **Sugar Maple**.

At the end of The Mall, cross Drill Hall Road, then use the pedestrian crossing to make your way to New Street. On the corner of New Street and Pyle Street, the remains of a milestone can be seen with the inscription 'NP' for 'Newport Parish'.

Continue on New Street, then take the second road on the left into Chapel Street followed by the next turning on the right into Union Street. Cross over Trafalgar Road to join Bignor Place

and to the churchyard of St. John's in Terrace Road.

**(8)** A magnificent **Copper Beech** tree greets you; an ornamental variety of the **Common Beech** with its burgundy flush of leaves. This is closely followed by a fine **Weeping Ash** tree almost as high as the church itself. This tree, with its cascading foliage, is an ornamental variety of the **Common Ash** and often features in churchyards.

Go to the end of Terrace Road and use the zebra crossing to reach the park, known as Church Litten. Church Litten means 'burial ground' and was in use as such during Tudor times; the magnificent Tudor gateway still stands on the northern boundary to the park. Due to a lack of space, the burial ground was forced to close and, in 1858, new land was allocated to the north of Newport at Fairlee.

Before being laid out in 1930 as the public open space with the many fine native and ornamental trees we enjoy today, it was recorded that Newport Football club played here. The players changed in the local public house and would have to clear the cows from the green before play could commence.

There are many trees of interest here and much history. The first tree is a **Horse Chestnut** standing beside the south entrance **(9)**. This tree once stood in the grounds of a doctor's house which was destroyed during a World War II air raid.

The very first game of the autumn playground favourite 'conkers' was recorded as taking place in Newport in 1848. Conkers involves playing an opponent using the fruit of the **Horse Chestnut** or the conker tied to the end of a piece of string. Each player takes it in turns to strike their

opponent's conker – the winner is decided when one of the conkers is smashed to pieces. Previously the game used hazelnut shells and sometimes even snail shells. The word 'conker' derives from the French word 'conch' meaning shell.

Following the tarmac path into the park, you will pass a mature **Holm Oak**, **Sycamore** and **Plane** trees, again features of the doctor's garden.

Continue on the path and near the heart of the park is a magnificent **Weeping Beech (10)**. This is the finest tree of its kind on the Island.

Although usually smaller in height than the **Common Beech**, this species has masses of drooping branches and provides welcome shade during the summer. In winter, once its leaves have dropped, the contorted, sculptural form of the boughs and silvery-grey bark can be admired.

These pendulous or weeping 'trees of sorrow' were recommended as suitable cemetery trees by John Loudon, the designer of the UK's first commercial cemetery in Liverpool. Although the **Weeping Beech** was planted after the relocation of the burial ground, it was probably chosen as both a striking landscape feature and a poignant reminder of the land's previous use.

From the **Weeping Beech**, join the pavement and head towards Medina Avenue, crossing the road via the pedestrian crossing. Go along Medina Avenue and, upon reaching the bridge, take footpath N218. Drop down beneath the bridge and pick up the footpath alongside the River Medina where you will see the common wetland tree species of **Willow** and **Alder**.

**(11)** Opposite the Old Mill, you will find a wonderful old **Bramley Apple** tree to your left. This English variety was first recorded in the early 1800s. This tree would have been part of the fruit orchard in the Old Mill. Its fallen fruit is found scattered nearby in late summer. Bramleys are tart when raw and are best used in cooking.

Just a short distance ahead stands a landmark **London Plane** tree; the most impressive urban tree of its species on the Island **(12)**. The **London Plane** is a hybrid between the **Oriental** and the **Western Plane**. It is commonly found in urban parks and gardens throughout the UK.

Continue ahead, passing a pair of **Weeping Willow** trees on the riverbank and at South Street, cross the road. Keep to this side of the road, crossing two more side streets until reaching County Hall.

Directly in front of County Hall stands a large **Eucalyptus** tree **(13)**. Despite only being planted in 1973, it has put on tremendous growth and is another of the town centre's landmark trees. 'Eucalyptus' comes from the Greek for 'well covered' and most keep their leaves all year round.

From the **Eucalyptus** make your way towards The Quay, then turn right beneath the flyover – the River Medina will now be to your left. Continue along The Quay until reaching the steps on your right which lead to the western entrance of Fairlee Cemetery.

**(14)** Fairlee Cemetery was opened in 1858 following the closure of Church Litten as a burial ground. In order to persuade people away from the tradition of being buried within the shadow of the parish church, an arboretum-like setting was created. Fairlee Cemetery is formally planted

with avenues of neatly clipped Irish **Yew**, interspersed with a fine collection of **Weeping Ash** trees and a central island of **Beech** and **Lime** trees at its heart.

Head back towards The Quay. As you leave the cemetery, turn to the right and continue along the footpath through Seaclose Park. This path is edged by many ornamental trees. It becomes a riverside walk as you pass through playing fields. Pleasant views along the River Medina can be enjoyed.

The line of trees ahead runs from the main road to the river marking the old boundary to Fairlee House and Farm. Fairlee means 'pleasant glade or woodland clearing'. This is now Medina Arboretum and there are several ancient **Oak** trees here. The most impressive is the tri-stemmed **Oak** tree located on the ditch bank to your right as you enter the Arboretum **(15)**.

The final tree on the Champions and Churchyards Histree Trail is the magnificent **London Plane** to the right of the path **(16)**. This tree sits within a hollow where water sometimes gathers during wet periods. Because it is an isolated tree with plenty of space, the impressive canopy has spread covering a large area.

There are many trees to be explored in the arboretum including fruit and nut trees from the original orchard plus many more recent, exotic additions.

*Thank you for walking the Champions and Churchyards Histree Trail. There are seven other Histree Trails in the series for you to enjoy.*



# Champions & Churchyards Histree Trail

4 miles / 6.4 km



- Main route
- Route on roads/paths
- Route on tracks
- Footpaths
- Start
- Public house
- Tea rooms
- Parking
- Toilets
- Tourist information
- Bus stops

