

## Clayfield Copse Circular Tree Walk

**Start in the car park, go past the skate park into the meadow, along the back of the tennis courts towards THE great oak tree.**

### Info from QR code Tree detail

### Path to the next tree

#### At the OAK



A wonderful old tree. Oaks 'take 300 years growing, 300 years resting, 300 declining'! Its gnarled bark and knotty branches supporting more wildlife than any other British tree, particularly insects.

Guess its age?

Measure its girth at about shoulder height, this increases by 2.5 centimetres a year according to some calculations.

Height?

Follow the grass path round towards the dragon, now hidden behind a clump of brambles and trees!

To a young **ELM** tree.

#### At the ELM



A 'new' young elm, bred to resist the 'Dutch' elm disease that ravaged our landscape 50 years ago. This one planted about 15 years ago. There are three or four more on site, can you find them?

There are also some old elm trees on site, which grow for a few years, then the elm beetle moves in carrying a fungus disease which blocks the water supply, the tree dies back, but may sprout out again from the roots and dies back again 15 years later!

Good luck to this one!

Now bear left across the field towards the gap in the hedge, towards a large **ASH** in the hedgerow.

#### At the ASH



Sadly, after a bumper year here of ash seeds 10-15 years ago, ash die back disease is now ravaging our ash trees, found 10 years ago it is a fungus infection that blocks the food supply to the leaves. Some are fighting the disease, there is no treatment, a few look like they could survive. Estimates vary between 2% and 75%!

Follow the path down the hill and bear left at the bottom towards Blackhouse Wood to the **BEECH** trees.

### At the BEECH



5 of the 'queen' of trees. Beautiful green in spring, wonderful colours in autumn, that smooth clean grey bark the elegant branches ... Aren't they just gorgeous?

The remains of nuts on the ground are known as "mast" and are popular with finches, they have the beak to break the prickly husks, and is also good food for wood mice, jays and squirrels!

Keep along this path past the Dip, on your right, go straight along the edge of Blackhouse, past Alberts seat, turn right at the end, [ nod to a young pear tree, near the fence] then at the way marker turn left up the bridle path to the **YEW**.

### At the YEW



These evergreen trees are often found in church yards and are well known for their long life. In Scotland there is a yew known to be **2,000 years** old!

Look at the bark, full of interesting nooks and crannies!

Almost all of the yew tree is poisonous to humans, except the red flesh on the berries which are popular with thrushes.

Macbeth's poison contained 'slips of yew'.

Continue up the bridle path, past one of the tall cedars on your left, at the caterpillar sculpture [made of a cedar tree] turn left along The Ride, pass the fallen American pine, to the **CEDARS** and the **CRAB APPLE**.

### At the CEDAR



These giants are about 20 metres or more. Just stand under and look up! some along the bridle path some along the Ride. The deodar cedar was often planted as part of stately home parkland design 150-250 years ago, and this path was on the edge of the Caversham Park House estate.

Naturally the branches would reach the ground, but these have been pruned? Or just lost lower branches.

On a bank? They prefer well drained soil....

Considered a divine tree in Hindu religion. Wood used for making incense.

The great storm of 1987 felled several of the cedars here, many of them were carved into the way markers here in

Just opposite along the Ride is the humble wild **CRAB APPLE**.

Clayfield Copse, by local woodcarvers.

Sadly, the American pine fell this year [2023] - still blocking the path! It was probably planted at the same time as the cedars.

### At the CRAB APPLE



Looks scruffy and gnarled but in spring the branches are full of sweet-smelling blossom for insects and bees, leaves are popular with moth caterpillars, followed by hard green tart fruit eaten by birds and mammals.

Keep along the Ride to a young slender tree on your left, a **WILD SERVICE** tree.

No fruit this year after a bumper crop last year. The fruit were traditionally roasted and used as part of a wassailing drink in winter.

Shakespeare "roasted crabs hiss in the bowl" *Loves Labour Lost*.

Average life span 60yrs

Maybe not a true crab but a hybrid as pips from discarded apple cores revert to wild?

This old apple tree, is still leaning and still supporting wild life.

### At the WILD SERVICE



An unusual name and not a very common tree. You may find beautiful coloured leaves on the ground. There are several on the border with Kiln Road which are very colourful in autumn. Just look around here you will see the stump of an old elm tree which is trying to regrow. Remember the 'new' elm across the field.

Keep along the Ride, on the left you will see some of the new bat boxes, and a single **HORNBEAM**.

**At the  
HORNBEAM**



This one has a beautiful trunk that **has** to be stroked! feel the strength! The name, means 'hard tree' it is the hardest wood of any tree in Europe. The other hornbeams are in a cluster around the Kiln Road entrance. They have beautiful green blossom in spring which in autumn have triangular papery seed holders shaped like dinosaur footprints! They don't mind the dampness here.

At the end of the Ride near the hornbeams, turn left across the football field back to the car park.