

Old Aberdeen's Heritage Tree Trail

A GUIDE TO OUR HERITAGE TREES





Boston Ivy - (*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*)

Location: New Kings, High Street

Trees have adorned important, city buildings, monuments and avenues, providing contrast and form in urban environments for thousands of years.

Introduction

The original settlement of Old Aberdeen (Aberdon) was located on the south bank of the River Don. Though the early history of Aberdon is unclear, it is thought that this riverside settlement had been in existence since the Roman occupation of Britain.

During this period, Aberdon would have been mainly a large wetland area covered with alder and willow trees. Scots pine and birch grew on the exposed coastal hills and the dense and extensive Caledonian forest lay further west.

However, much had changed by the 12th century. The expanding communities of Old and New Aberdeen had need for timber, which depleted much of the nearby forest – leaving only the Royal Forest of Stocket; which was bequeathed to the Burgh of Aberdeen by Robert the Bruce in 1319.

Certainly, by the time Parson Robert Gordon created his map of Aberdeen in 1661* the Royal Forest was long gone. The only trees now evident were short-lived cultivated trees found in gardens and orchards – hence Orchard Street, Walk etc.

By the mid 18th century, private estates such as Seaton had established new tree planting schemes. The oldest surviving trees from that era are the 250-year-old elms and sycamores in what is now Seaton Park, tree numbers 14 and 15 along the trail.

* www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/acc/YourCity/Maps/pgordon.asp



Using this guide

As there are so many varieties of tree species along this seasonal trail, it has only been possible to briefly overview a select few within this guide.

The trail starts at Mounthooly roundabout (north end of Gallowgate), heading east through the subway onto Kings Crescent towards Old Aberdeen, finishing at Seaton Park. The trail is approx 2 miles or 3.2 km long (a 1.5 hours walk).

Following the suggested route will require crossing a number of busy roads and walking along the characteristically uneven and cobbled streets of Old Aberdeen. It is the responsibility of members of the public to ensure their own personal safety, and to please respect the privacy of those who reside along the trail's route.

Suitable footwear should be worn, and it is advised that the more remote areas of the trail are visited during daylight hours.

At any point, should you wish to reach the city centre by bus, head east to King Street for a No.1 or 2 bus.

Key



DECIDUOUS
Shedding leaves in the autumn.



**CONIFER/
EVERGREEN**
Retains leaves in the winter.



ALTERNATE TWIGS
Arranged successively on opposite sides of the stem.



OPPOSITE TWIGS
Growing in pairs at the same level on opposite sides of the stem.



SIMPLE LEAF
A single leaf on each stalk.



COMPOUND LEAF
Leaflets in opposite pairs or fan shape on each stem.



SPIRAL NEEDLES
Needles grow round twig.



NEEDLES
Needles in pairs.



Accessible from street or path indicated.



Accessible via ramp or steep slope.

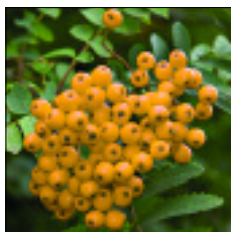
1 Rowan

(*Sorbus aucuparia* 'Joseph Rock')



The small rowan with its bright autumn berries is a short-lived native tree (80 years) also known as the 'mountain ash'; reflecting its ability to grow high up on mountain slopes (900m) – higher than any other native tree. Though the berries are inedible to humans when raw, they do however make tasty jams and jellies once cooked. The berries also provide extra food during the winter months for songbirds such as thrush and migrant waxwings.

The word 'rowan' comes from the Nordic word for 'charm'; hence the tradition of planting the tree outside homes to ward off evil and to place the dead under its branches for spiritual protection before burial.



Location:

Mounthooly roundabout (beside west exit)



Access



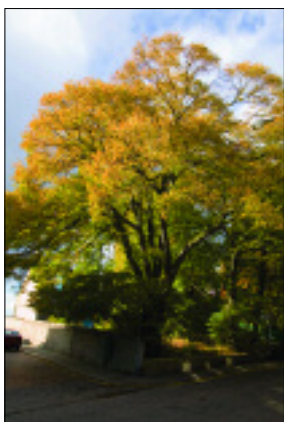
2 Small-leaved Lime

(Tilia cordata)



The small-leaved lime also known as the 'tree of a thousand uses' by the Romans is found naturally only in southern Scotland and England. The tree was often coppiced and the soft wood, which does not warp, was used to make domestic implements such as cups, ladles and bowls as well as rope and netting from the fibrous bark backing (bast).

The lime trees here at Kings Crescent were planted in the 1880s and provide a wonderful green vista during spring and summer when the trees resonate with the sound of insects such as bees, wasps and hover flies, which are attracted to the nectar-filled flowers.



Location:

Corner of Kings Crescent/Jute Street
(Privately owned)



Access



3 Cider Gum

(Eucalyptus gunnii)



The cider gum is a member of the eucalyptus family, a native of Tasmania and one of the fastest growing evergreen trees in the world. The name 'cider gum' is said to refer to an old Tasmanian practice of collecting sap from the tree to make a coarse cider. The tree has a unique silvery grey-green bark turning red as it peels, but unlike other members of the eucalyptus family its leaves are not very aromatic.

As a young sapling, this particular tree was thrown on the compost heap but refused to die. Subsequently, it was replanted and is now flourishing with the potential to grow up to 25m.



Location:

Corner of College Bounds/Sunnybank Road
(Privately owned)



Access



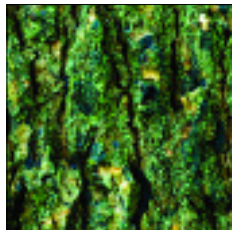
4 Field Maple

(Acer campestre)



The field or English maple, a native of southern Britain, is a small fast growing tree with petite attractive leaves. The tree was introduced into Scotland as an ornamental and hedgerow tree providing shelter and food for numerous insect species especially bees, nesting birds and small mammals.

If you look carefully to the left of this pocket park you will find four field maple trees with a number of small suckers (shoots growing from underground). The fully matured roots and burs (woody growths) were once prized for the making of thin quality veneers, as was the timber for the production of musical instruments such as harps and violins.



Location:

Left of pocket park opposite Spital Walk - No's 1-37



Access



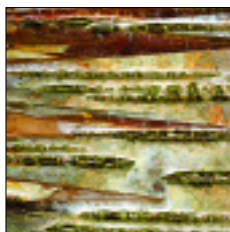
5 Silver Birch

(Betula pendula)



The silver birch or 'lady of the woods' is an elegant tree with weeping branches, small triangular leaves and silvery, peeling bark. It is fast growing but short-lived with some exceptional trees living for up to 150 years. Mature birch trees have the ability to create millions of seeds from their numerous catkins; these are scattered to the wind each winter to colonise open ground, preparing the way for other slower growing tree species such as oak and Scots pine to grow.

The fungus *Taphrina betulina* causes the unusual growths or 'witches broom' that can be seen in the tree's crown. Birch branches are often used to make besom brooms.



Location:

Spital Walk - No's 1-37 (Residential area)



Access



6 Horse Chestnut

(Aesculus hippocastanum)



The horse chestnut is one of the largest flowering trees of the northern hemisphere, introduced into Britain as an ornamental tree during the 16th century from its native Greece and Albania. As a recently introduced tree, the horse chestnut has had a large impact on our lives and culture, with its unique sticky buds, large familiar leaves, candle-like flowers and distinctive green spiky fruit encasing inedible seeds or conkers – see the two trees closest to the manse.

The original derivation of the tree's English name is said to have come from the Turkish practice of using the conkers to treat horse ailments such as bruising and swelling.



Location:

Humanity Manse grounds (opposite Orchard Walk)



Access



7 White Poplar

(Populus alba)



The white poplar introduced from Holland during the 16th century is tall and fast growing. However, it is a short-lived ornamental tree with an uncanny ability to hunt out water. It has distinctive black diamond shaped lenticels (air pores) on the trunk. When a gentle breeze blows the tree takes on a dazzling white appearance due to the underside of its leaves being covered with white downy hairs.

In some countries it is now illegal to plant white poplar as a street tree, as the tree's insatiable quest for water causes its extensive root system to penetrate and block drainpipes and sewer systems, entailing major repair work.



Location:

Right of University entrance (opposite University Road)



Access



8 Scots Pine

(Pinus sylvestris)



Scots pine is Britain's only large native conifer, remnants of the original 'Caledonian' Scots pine forest are still found in Glen Affric, Glen More and Rannoch. This group of Scots pine can grow up to 25-30m and are easily recognised by their characteristic flaky orange-red bark. The needles of the tree occur in pairs (4-8cm long) and last about 4 years before they are replaced. The pine cones, a favourite of the red squirrel, open from January onwards in order to disperse the wind-borne seeds and fall the following summer.

The timber has many constructional uses but is increasingly used for furniture because of its decorative knots.



Location:

41-51 College Bounds (walk through university grounds and veer left) – residential area



Access

Flat



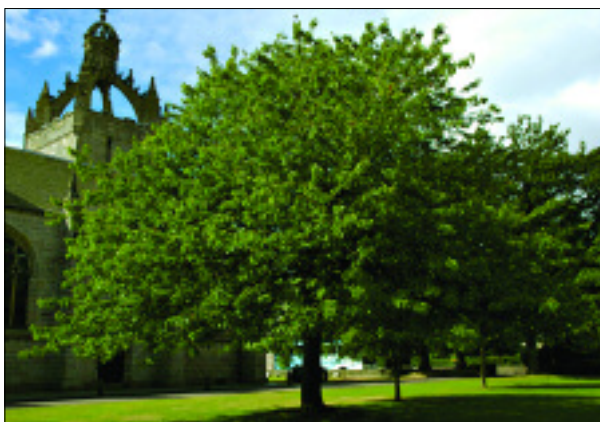
9 Wild Cherry

(Prunus avium)



The wild cherry (called gean in Scotland) is a short-lived native species, growing from 5-30m high. It is often planted in parks and gardens for its spectacular cherry blossom displays, which appear between April and May. The shiny purplish-brown bark contains numerous tiny lenticels (air pores) seen as thin raised corky bands around the trunk. If the trunk or a branch becomes damaged, a strange thick gum oozes out to cover and protect the wound.

As with other cherry tree species, wild cherry has nectaries (nectar glands) on the upper leaf stems to attract ants, which in turn protect the tree's leaves from leaf-eating insects.



Location:

Last tree on the left of path



Access

Flat



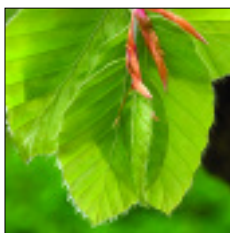
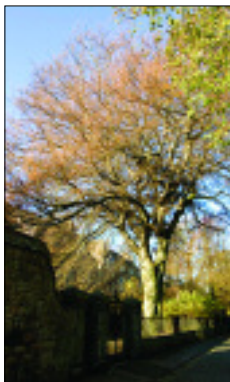
10 Beech

(Fagus sylvatica)



The majestic beech with smooth silvery-grey bark is a tall (40m) native of southern Britain, introduced into Scotland over the past 200 years, where some of the largest trees are now found. Beech is a dominant woodland tree casting a dense shade after its soft, spring leaves have hardened, allowing only sparse vegetation to survive under its canopy. During autumn the leaves provide a colourful display with beechnuts carpeting the woodland floor in abundance every 5 to 8 years - an important wildlife food source.

The word 'beech' originates from the ancient German word 'bok', from which we get the English word 'book' - from the practice of writing on thin, cut sheets of beech bark.



Location:

Cruickshank Botanic Garden – see page 19



Access

Flat



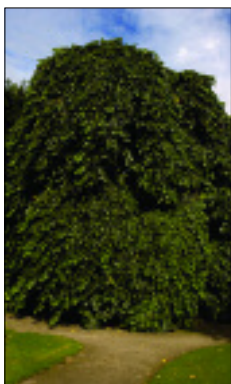
11 Camperdown Elm

(*Ulmus glabra* 'camperdownii')



It is said that the head forester of the Earl of Camperdown in the 1830s discovered an odd contorted branch growing along the ground in a nearby forest. In the grounds of Camperdown House, the earl's gardener succeeded in grafting the branch to the trunk of an ordinary wych elm so producing the first of many Camperdown elms or weeping elms now found all over the world, especially on private estates and churchyards.

As you sit on the bench sheltered within its branches, look at the upper trunk of the tree; you can see where the original cutting was grafted onto the trunk, now 2m above ground!



Location:

Cruickshank Botanic Garden – see page 19
(Turn left at the Francis Masson plaque)



Access

Flat



12 Yew

(*Taxus baccata*)



The native yew (*Taxus baccata*) can live for up to 5000 years (Fortingall Yew - Perthshire) and is considered by some experts to be a 'primitive' conifer tree. It is slow growing with straight dark green needle-like leaves. Every part of the tree is toxic apart from the red, fleshy fruit or arils, which are eaten by birds. The yews in the graveyard are Irish yews with tapered points and light green curled leaves.

When the first Christian missionaries came to Britain, it is said that they worshiped God under the shelter of a sacred yew tree prior to building a church building. This may account for the many ancient yew trees found in churchyards across Britain.



Location:

St. Machar's Cathedral graveyard



Access



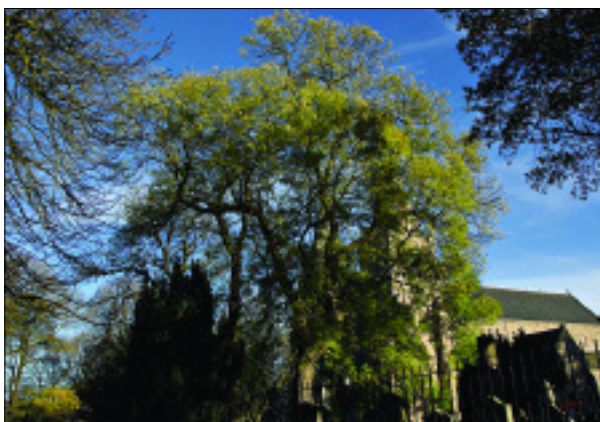
13 Ash

(*Fraxinus excelsior*)



The tall elegant ash, which can grow up to 40m high, is a native tree steeped in legend and folklore relating to tales of heaven and hell. It has compound leaves (many leaflets on one stem) and is the last tree to come into leaf during late spring and the first to lose its leaves at the onset of autumn. The distinctive black buds are seen during the winter months with large clusters of ash 'keys' hanging on the tree like old-fashioned door or chest keys.

The word 'ash' comes from the Anglo-Saxon 'aesc' meaning spear, referring to the wood's great strength for making spear shafts and other wooden implements.



Location:

St. Machar's Cathedral graveyard
(3 trees beside west railing)



Access

Flat



14 Wych Elm or Scots Elm

(Ulmus glabra)



A hardy tree, the wych elm is the only native elm to Britain and indeed Scotland. The tree is found all over Britain but grows especially well in NE Scotland where to date it has been able to withstand the onslaught of Dutch Elm Disease, which has devastated the elm population across most areas of Britain and Europe. The word 'wych' means pliable referring to the twigs, which were once used as riding whips.

The tree does not sucker like other elms but regenerates by wind-borne seed, creating large brown carpets in May/June – it can live for hundreds of years providing many benefits for wildlife in its old age.



Location:

Seaton Park (north edge of play park)



Access



15 Sycamore

(Acer pseudoplatanus)



The handsome sycamore or 'plane' is thought to have been introduced by the Romans or even earlier by the Celts from Europe. However, there is now an increasing consensus that the tree is native to Scotland, where many ancient trees have been recorded. The four mature sycamore trees in Seaton Park, overlooked by St. Machar Cathedral, are thought to be daughter trees of original sycamores planted in commemoration of the Auld Alliance during the 15th century.

Sycamore is one of the commonest trees on the British landscape providing an important source of pollen and nectar for bees and other insects. The tree is also a host to many lichens and mosses.



Location:

Seaton Park (4 trees - southwest of play park)



Access



Global Warming

Trees are amazingly complex perennial woody plants with many diverse qualities, contributing to the life on Earth. They provide clean oxygenated air, moderate temperature, remove carbon dioxide, stabilise soil, support wildlife and provide food, shelter, fuel, timber and many other sustainable benefits - even within the urban environment.

However, in our busy frantic lifestyles, we often fail to see the imperceptible changes brought about by global warming on the natural environment we have become so dependent upon.

Rising temperatures, variable seasonal patterns and extreme weather events are proving too much for a number of native trees; yet provide new opportunities for other species preferring a milder climate.

Indeed, we are possibly about to witness many remarkable changes in the natural environment bringing about the establishment of 'future native' species.



Rising temperatures cause variable seasonal patterns.



The Cruickshank Botanic Garden

Open Monday to Friday – 9am to 4.30pm, all year.
Saturday/Sunday – 2pm to 5pm May to September.

Entry is by the main gate on St. Machar Drive, across from the Old Aberdeen Town House or by the small gate on the Chanonry.

Seaton Park



Seaton Park lies to the north of the city and was purchased by the Council in 1947 from Major Hay. Beside the park's south gates stand the fortified towers of St Machar's Cathedral. There are many fine areas in the park from the flowerbeds to the rose beds and up to the walled garden beside the old stables, which have been converted for housing.

The Cathedral Walk is always a resplendent sight in midsummer and one of the most popular with visitors to the city. Seaton Park is also an access point for the River Don and a walk has been established from the park to the city boundary.



Winter Twigs





1	Rowan	3
2	Small-leaved Lime	4
3	Cider Gum	5
4	Field Maple	6
5	Silver Birch	7
6	Horse Chestnut	8
7	White Poplar	9
8	Scots Pine	10
9	Wild Cherry (Gean)	11
10	Beech	12
11	Camperdown Elm	13
12	Yew	14
13	Ash	15
14	Wych Elm	16
15	Sycamore	17



Green Monuments

Since the dawn of the earliest civilisations, trees have been an important landscape feature of towns and cities across every continent. Trees have adorned important buildings, monuments and avenues, providing contrast and form in urban environments for thousands of years.



Many old trees that have survived the onslaught of both man and beast over the centuries are now increasingly being recognised as 'green monuments'. These unique trees have become woven into the cultural fabric of our society and have their own stories to tell - if we take the time to look!

If you would like to know more about Green Monuments and what you can do to protect our ancient natural and cultural heritage, please contact the Tree Council on 020 7407 9992 or visit www.treecouncil.org.uk

Old Aberdeen's Heritage Tree Trail is one of a series of themed trails being developed around the City.

These are part of the Energising Aberdeen programme, supported by the City Growth Fund.

Further details about these trails can be found at:
www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/acc_data/service/cd_trails.asp



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