

A WINTER WALK in Vinters

Valley Nature Reserve

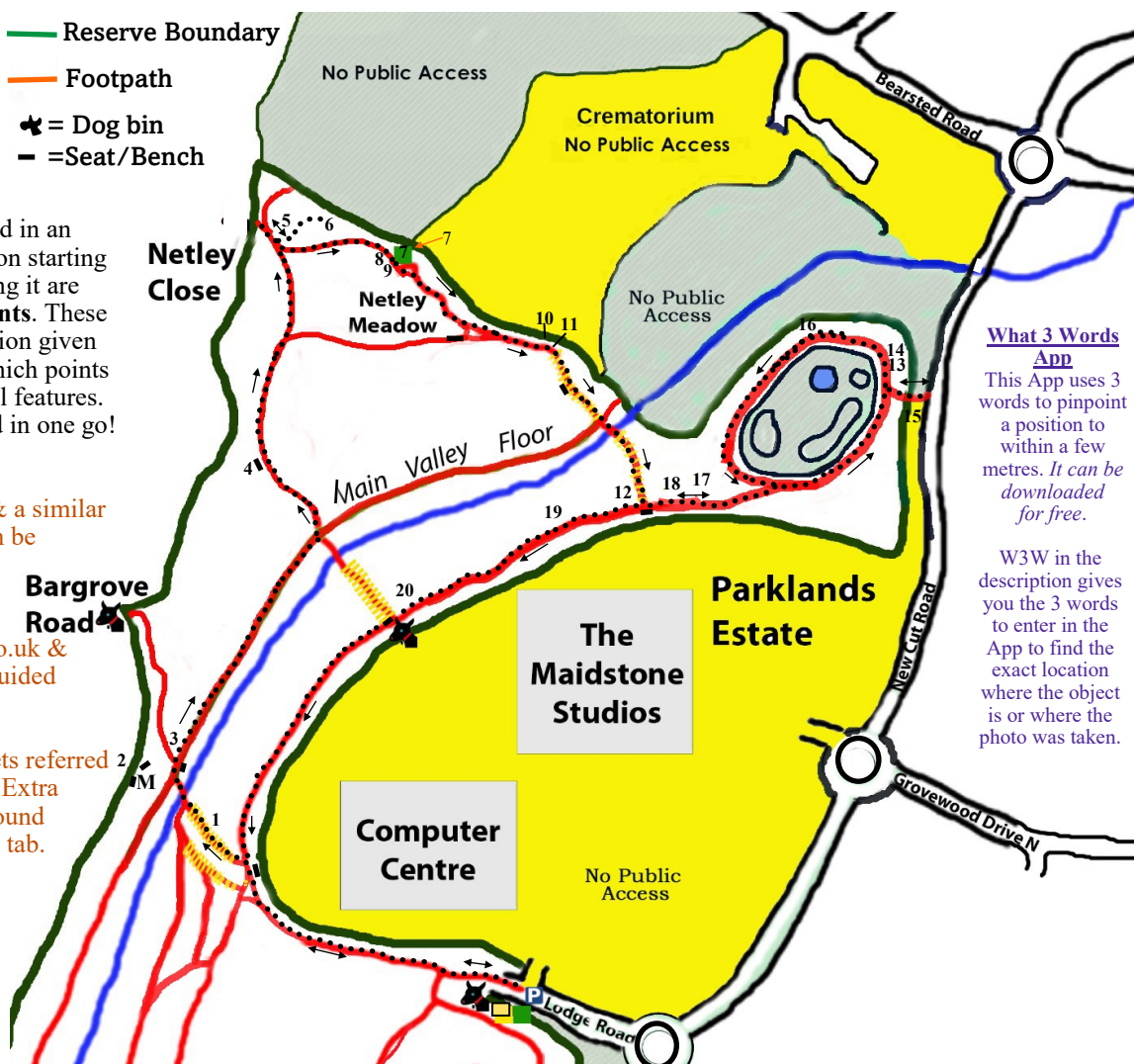
Northern LOOP JAN.2026

- M = Memorial
 ■ = Bird Feeders
 P = Parking
 ■ = Lodge
- Reserve Boundary
 — Footpath
 ✖ = Dog bin
 — = Seat/Bench

This walk is described in an anticlockwise direction starting from the Lodge. Along it are numbered **Pause Points**. These relate to the information given below & overleaf which points out interesting natural features. It need not be walked in one go!

Copies of this walk & a similar Southern Version can be downloaded for free from the Reserve Website www.vintersvalley.co.uk & select the tab 'Self Guided Walks'

The information sheets referred to in the Educational Extra Supplement can be found Under the 'Archives' tab.



What 3 Words App

This App uses 3 words to pinpoint a position to within a few metres. It can be downloaded for free.

W3W in the description gives you the 3 words to enter in the App to find the exact location where the object is or where the photo was taken.

From the Lodge follow the track through the gate into the Reserve & continue past the stone plaque & on with bramble on your L & mixed young trees on the R. Follow the track round to the R & just past the bench walk down the steps on your L taking care as there is no handrail. You will pass the Ice House entrance on your R & 3 old Yew trees **1**. At the bottom of the steps you emerge onto Willow Lawn. On your L you can see the **2** Harry Lowder Memorial. Retrace your steps & visit the **3** Weeping Willow. Ignore the Bargrove path opposite & continue NE along the Main Valley to the next path on the L signed Netley Exit. Walk up this passing an impressive **4** Swamp Cypress behind the bench on the L. Carry on uphill, bypassing the path on the R until you come in sight of the Reserve entrance & where a path joins from the R. Here there is an impressive **5** Silver Birch. From here a path can be walked *with care through the brambles* to visit a **6** Wellingtonia tree. Return & take the path on the L that passes along the NW side of Netley Meadow until almost at the bird feeding station **7**, but on your L are a **8** Wild Cherry & a **9** Turkey Oak. Past the bird feeder, the path curls round to the R & runs parallel to the Crematorium perimeter fence along which are several young Holm Oaks. Keep going past the path junction on the R & you will see a large **10** Field Maple. Beyond this, the path curls L to the top of the Crematorium Steps, but before you descend pause to admire the massive **11** Beech on your L. Descend the steps & cross the Main Valley Floor Path to ascend the Top Steps opposite where at the top on the R is an old hollow, dead-looking tree **12**. You are at a T junction so turn left & walk towards MacGrory's Meadow. At the gate keep R & walk anticlockwise round the meadow hedge composed of mixed shrubs but including a **13** Guelder Rose & a **14** Spindle Tree. A short dogleg along the New Cut Rd exit path takes you to a large **15** Beech always liberally covered in beech nut cases. As you come round the opposite side of the meadow there is a long stand of tall Scots Pines **16** the other side of the Crematorium fence. Return to the meadow entrance gate & reverse your route to the Top Steps passing a large leaning Oak **17** & a tall **18** London Plane. Carry on straight ahead passing a number of stumperies **19** for boring insects & a remarkably convoluted Oak, **20** both on the R. From here, walk along the path keeping L at the junctions to rejoin your outward route from the Lodge.



1 Yew Trees. You will come across many Yew trees in the Reserve but the bottom one is worth a closer look because its trunk is more regular & rounded than most & it has grown tall & straight. Possibly it was planted surrounded by other young saplings & this has forced it to grow upwards rather than develop the usual more rounded format. The depression on the R of the path leads to the **Ice House** entrance which is now a protected hibernation site for bats.



2 Harry Lowder Memorial. This living memorial was planted in 2024 by the Lowder family & friends together with Reserve volunteers. It commemorates the life of a man who gave great service to the Reserve for over 40 years most of those as Chairman of the Management Committee. Willow cuttings were embedded in the ground where they naturally take root, then the stems were woven into the current lattice.

3 Weeping Willow. ([plant.vocab.lines](#)) This is thought to be a hybrid between a Chinese Weeping Willow & a White Willow. In 2023 it was pollarded as two of the top branches had broken off & there was a danger that the others would do the same endangering the public. Without the foliage you can see the outline of the original tree. Take a look at the bark which has thick interlocking ridges

4 Swamp Cypress ([cook.shock.error](#)) Take a look at the bark & compare it to that which you have just seen on the Weeping Willow. The furrows are much longer & the bark generally smoother. Step back & look at the profile of the tree. The branches run upwards parallel to the trunk rather than spreading out. They only spread at the top in the canopy.



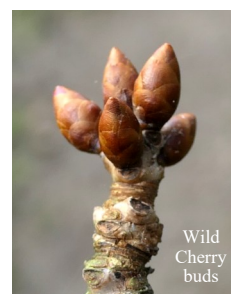
5 Silver Birch ([stays.noting.tens](#)) There are several Silver Birches around this area but the one on the R (north east side) of the path is the best to look at. The white bark is the obvious distinctive feature of the tree, but also the diamond markings on the trunk which become black in older trees. There may also be some male catkins on the tree in groups of 2 or 4 at the tips of twigs. They are brownish now but will become yellow & pendulous in Spring.



6 Wellingtonia. ([chained.lived.after](#)) This giant of a tree is native to California but is planted in the UK for ornament. Brambles tend to restrict access to it, but if a path is open to it, & with care to avoid tripping, you will find the bark is thick, red & spongy rather like the Coastal Redwood to which they are related. The species was discovered in 1852 & soon after introduced to Britain. The green scale-like leaves clasp the shoots, quite unlike those of the Coastal Redwood.



7 Bird Feeding Station. This is one of three in the Reserve. The feeders are topped up during November to March.



8 Wild Cherry ([video.stoke.ports](#)) There are many Wild Cherry

trees in the Reserve & this one is particularly accessible. Look carefully at the shiny, reddish brown bark with the many circular lines of lenticels. They are spongy pores in the tree bark that are essential for gas exchange through the otherwise impermeable bark. Similar lines of lenticels are also very apparent in the Silver Birch which you have just seen. The buds are light brown, oval in shape & are usually borne in clusters, as is the case here.



9 Turkey Oak ([nails.begs.carry](#)) Now compare the bark of this tree with that of the adjacent Cherry. Its bark is dark grey & shows many vertical shallow fissures with a red/orange pigment in them. This is in contrast to older turkey oaks where the bark is much darker, lacks this pigment & is broken up into plates. Turkey oak existed in Britain before the last Ice Age but died out during it. They were reintroduced to the UK in 1735. They are fast growing & tolerant of various soil types & pollution.



10 Field Maple ([farms.lane.lost](#)) Field Maples, *Acer campestre*, typically have twisted trunks & this is no exception. The bark is fissured & feels corky in texture. This specimen has fluting on one side. The buds are in pairs & are grey/green to reddish/brown. There are many varieties of Maple but this is the only naturally occurring one in Britain. It thrives on chalky alkaline soils such as here & its seeds are a prime source of food for Woodmice & Bank Voles both of which are regularly caught in our small mammal surveys that are carried out twice a year.

11 Beech ([bolt.survey.truck](#)) There are many Beech trees throughout the Reserve although the majority are along this NW side of the Main Valley. Beeches typically have a smooth grey bark but *occasionally* you find specimens with a rough lightly fissured bark & this is one of them. Just for comparison, look to your left at the large Beech ([secure.point.trying](#)) growing at the top of the drop to the Valley Floor. These two Beeches look similar ages yet have totally different textures of bark.

12 This dead-looking tree ([models.lock.blues](#)) is actually a London Plane whose heartwood has rotted away leaving just a shell of bark & living underlying transport tissue which is functioning well enough to allow fresh shoots to sprout from the top.

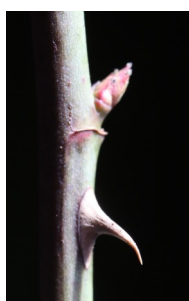


13 Guelder Rose & a **14 Spindle Tree.** ([look.squad.liked](#)) These are just two of a variety of trees planted in this Conservation Grade Hedge which was planted in 2008. It is pruned to about head height in the late winter which is well after young birds have fledged & the berries have provided food for the resident birds or passing visitors such as Fieldfares & Redwings.

13 & 14 cont. You might like to try & identify some of the trees from these photos & listed features.



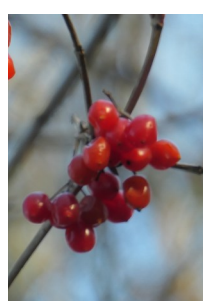
Blackthorn
Black berries &
spines. Tiny buds



Dogrose
Hooks & red
buds.



Spindle.
Young = deep green.
Old = ridged & brown.



Gelder.
Translucent red
berries



Hawthorn.
Spines & dark red
berries



Hazel
Yellow-green buds

15 Large Beech ([about.voices.rainy](#)) This tree is actually just outside the boundary of the Reserve but worth a closer look as it produces large quantities of beech nuts & even in winter the tree is covered with empty prickly husks. It has a lightly furrowed bark & is light grey/brown in colour. The low branches allow you to look at the prickly nut cases & pointed buds.



Beech
nut
case

Bud

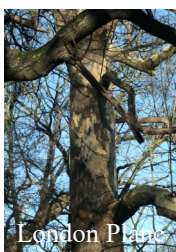


Scots Pines

16 Scots Pines ([joins.hunt.nods](#)) This fine row of trees stands the other side of the fence in the Crematorium grounds. However, even from here you can see the scaly, slightly red tinged bark & a few male cones hanging down higher up. On the lower branches you can see that the needles are long & in pairs. They stay on the tree from 2 to 7 years.

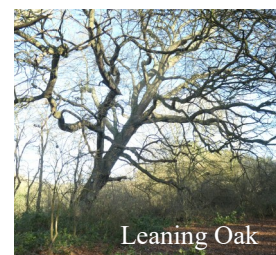


Scots Pine bark



London Plane

17 Oak & 18 London Plane The path used to run closer to these trees but has been diverted on account of the lean of the Oak. A similar size Oak fell onto the path near the Valley Park School entrance to the Reserve following a period of very wet weather. Heavy branches on one side overhanging the path had simply unbalanced the tree. This leaning oak looks unstable & with the prevailing SW wind coming from behind it, there is a high risk of it falling. There are many oaks in the Reserve, but there are relatively few London Plane trees & this is the biggest. You



Leaning Oak

can see the characteristic greyish bark peeling away to reveal pale brown/yellowish patches below. Look up & you will see large areas on the upper branches have lost their bark which is worrying.

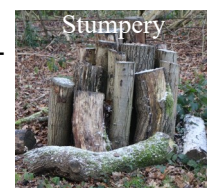
([tape.lock.sheep](#))



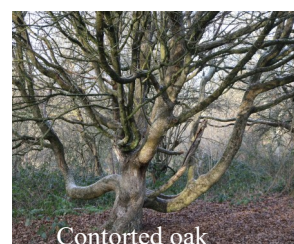
Stag
Beetle

Photo S. Songhurst

19 Stumpery. ([mimic.dead.stumps](#)) There are several stumperies along this section of path as well as others distributed about the Reserve. *Broadleaf* logs are buried upright & the spaces between them filled with soil. This mimics buried wood where stag beetle larvae go through three larval stages while feeding for 3 to 7 years on the rotting wood. Jays & Woodpeckers, badgers & moles all feed on these larvae. Adult beetles feed on sap & decaying fruit. Stag beetles are the largest terrestrial insects in Europe. Males have oversize mandibles which are used to wrestle with other males. They are harmless to humans, but in the medieval times were called the Devil's Imp.



Stumpery



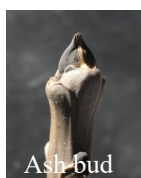
Contorted oak

20 Interesting Oaks As you walk along MacGrory's path you will pass oak & ash trees. Many of the oaks are very contorted, one on the RHS in particular ([trout.guises.drum](#)). It is unlikely to have been coppiced, so one can only speculate as to the cause of the unusual shape. If you look at the other oaks along this stretch you will see their canopies are quite misshapen. About 100 metres further down the path on your L by a fallen rotting tree there is an oak ([transmitted.edge.film](#)) where a branch & the trunk have rubbed together and fused. This is called an



Inosculation

inosculation. The bark has been worn away exposing the underlying growing tissues which have fused together in a similar way to a graft.



Ash bud

While you walk along this path, do look to your R at the Ash trees. Some are bare & have been killed by, or are succumbing to, Ash Dieback. This is caused by a fungus growing into & blocking the water conducting tissue (xylem) in the tree. However, many are quite healthy & you can see millions of Ash 'keys', which are their fruits, as well as their distinctive black mitre-shaped buds.



Ash keys