

11 Weeping copper beech - cemetery

This can be seen just past a conifer on the right, a short distance from the entrance. A variant of the common beech, this specimen is unusually tall for a weeping beech.

12 Douglas fir

These stately conifers planted all around the cemetery tower over the graves. You will see many of the cones from these fir trees on the ground around the paths.

13 Cypress

Look downhill from the central roundabout and you will see two very compact evergreen conifers. These are cypress trees, next to them is a more typical Lawson Cypress which has a more open form. From the Cemetery head back to Hemdean Road and turn right towards Caversham centre.

14 Plum - Hemdean House

This characterful old tree with its gnarled trunk grows by the entrance of Hemdean House. It has attractive spring blossom and occasionally bears small plums.



15 St Anne's Well

Continue along Hemdean Road until you reach Priest Hill, turn right and walk up to the historic St Anne's Well (note the plaque which states that the healing waters of this holy well brought many pilgrims to Caversham in the Middle Ages). Either side of the well are two pollarded London Plane trees, planted shortly after the well was restored in 1908. Plane trees thrive in urban environments. Pollarding is a way of pruning the upper branches to keep trees smaller and more compact than they would otherwise grow. Turn left down St Anne's Road and right along Church Road to Caversham Court [take care crossing this busy road to get to the gardens].

16 Caversham Court Gardens

The gardens, with a history dating back to the 12th Century, contain many fine specimen trees, several of which were planted in the mid-19th Century or earlier. Notable trees include Mulberry by the entrance, several old Limes around the perimeter (note the clumps of mistletoe growing high in their canopies), a Bhutan Pine, young conifer near the tea kiosk with long needle-like leaves and large banana-shaped cones, a veteran Copper Beech (same as common Beech but with darker leaves; its heavy boughs are supported by steel braces) and a Wellingtonia or Giant Sequoia (very tall evergreen tree by the river). There are also several old Yews and a Yew hedge clipped in a "cloud" formation which dates from the 18th Century. At the eastern end of the garden next to the gazebo is an ancient Yew tree over 500 years old, believed to be the oldest tree in Reading.

A separate Caversham Court Tree Trail is available from the Tea Kiosk which is open Wed-Sun from April to October. Our Caversham Tree Walk ends here where you may enjoy refreshments from the kiosk, or walk back to Caversham Centre where there are several cafes and pubs.

Useful information

How to get there:

By car: Take the A329 northwards out of Reading, join Caversham Road and head over Caversham Bridge. Turn right into Church Street and follow signs for parking at Waitrose or go forward to turn left at Prospect Street and left again into Chester Street car park.

By bus: Take the 22, 24, 28 or X40 from central Reading and descend at Caversham Church Street.

Further information on trees:

You can find out more about these tree species online or in Jon Stokes' (2025) *Trees of Britain and Ireland*, Princeton Press Wild Guides.

All information in this leaflet correct at time of publication. Leaflet updated 2026.

Reading Tree Wardens:

You can find out more about us and forthcoming events by visiting our website at <http://www.readingtreewardens.org.uk> or our Facebook page (Reading Tree Wardens).

Walking time:

One and a half hours approximately, or longer if you take the full tour of Caversham Court Gardens.

This is one of seven tree walk leaflets developed by Reading Tree Wardens. The other walks are round Tilehurst, Coley Park Meadows, Redlands, the Town Centre, Riverside and a Winter Walk.

Advisory note:

Most of this walk is on pavement but there is a part of it on grass and some steep steps. Please remember to wear suitable shoes.

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Reading Tree Warden Network

TREE WALK CAVERSHAM

The pagoda tree at Caversham Public Library



Reading Tree Warden Network

Introduction

By the mid 19th Century, Caversham was a large and rapidly expanding Oxfordshire village. In 1911 Reading's boundaries were extended to include much of Caversham (the remainder being transferred into Berkshire in 1974). It was during the Victorian and Edwardian era that many of the prominent trees we see today were planted, often within the grounds of large villas.

Our walk starts in the centre of Caversham at the corner of Priory Avenue and Church Street.

1 Magnolia Grandiflora - Priory Avenue

This splendid evergreen Magnolia tree grows against the wall of a building on the corner of Priory Avenue and Church Street. It has glossy leaves and large white flowers in late summer/early autumn, and provides welcome year-round greenery in this built-up area.

2 Japanese Pagoda tree - Caversham Library

The pagoda tree at the side of the Library (opened in 1907) is noted as being the largest of its species in Berkshire. Despite the name, pagoda trees originate from China. In hot summers it flowers profusely.

3 Holm Oak - St Martin's Precinct

The evergreen Holm or "holly oak" (the leaves are similar to holly) is a prominent feature of the precinct, it dates from Victorian times when this area was in the grounds of Caversham House (demolished in 1966 to make way for the precinct). Holm oaks originate in the western Mediterranean but grow very well in Britain. Walk along Church Street, turn left by the mini roundabout up Prospect Street and continue walking past the Prince of Wales pub to Peppard Road (steps up to Balmore Walk just past the pub make for a pleasant detour to avoid the traffic). Turn into Newlands Avenue.

4 Tree of Heaven

Two Trees of Heaven grow by the pub car park at the top of Prospect Street. Native to China, they are large and very fast-growing trees tolerant of urban pollution. They flower in late summer.

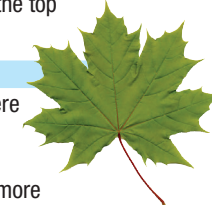


5 Pine - Newlands Ave

Near the corner of Newlands Avenue is a large Austrian or black pine; these pines have dark brown bark. Our native Scots pines are similar but with lighter orangey bark, especially towards the top of the tree.

6 Norway Maples

Just past the pine are several Norway maples, there are both green and purple-leaved varieties. The leaves on a Norway maple are similar to the more common Sycamore, but are slightly broader with more sharply defined lobes.



7 Ornamental cherries and crab apples

The verge on the other side of the road is planted with a mix of flowering cherries and crab apples. Both flower in the spring and have good autumn leaf colour. Continue along Newlands Avenue into Balmore Park.

8 Cedar - Balmore Park

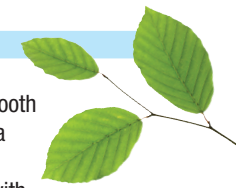
The tall evergreen tree on the left side of the road is a cedar. Cedars, renowned for their grandeur and longevity, are usually planted as specimen trees in parkland and large gardens, in this instance in the grounds of Balmore House. Cedars have narrow needle-like leaves and compact egg-shaped cones. Continue past Balmore House and the new houses, follow the road around to the right and look out for a Public Footpath sign on a lamp post: turn left onto the footpath next to No 69 which leads into Balmore Walk - once part of the grounds of Balmore House.

9 English Oak - Balmore Walk

This fine old oak is estimated to be at least 350 years old. It has had some large boughs reduced in the past. English oaks are host to more wildlife than any other of our native trees. Note the woodpecker holes and hollowing branches - great habitat for birds and bats. Turn left downhill along the path through the woodland, and turn left where the paths meet, walk through the beech trees along the gravel path.

10 Common Beech

This small woodland in Balmore Walk consists mainly of beech trees. These noble trees have smooth grey bark and were traditionally grown in this area for furniture making. Just as you come out of the woodland you get good a view towards Reading with the station and tall buildings of the town centre in the distance. Turn immediately right across the grass to a narrow gap in the hedgerow where a path takes you down some steep steps onto Hemdean Road with Caversham Primary school opposite. Turn right and just past the school left into Victoria Road then right through the gates into Caversham Cemetery. The cemetery was landscaped in the mid 19th Century and contains many fine trees.



Reading Tree Warden Network