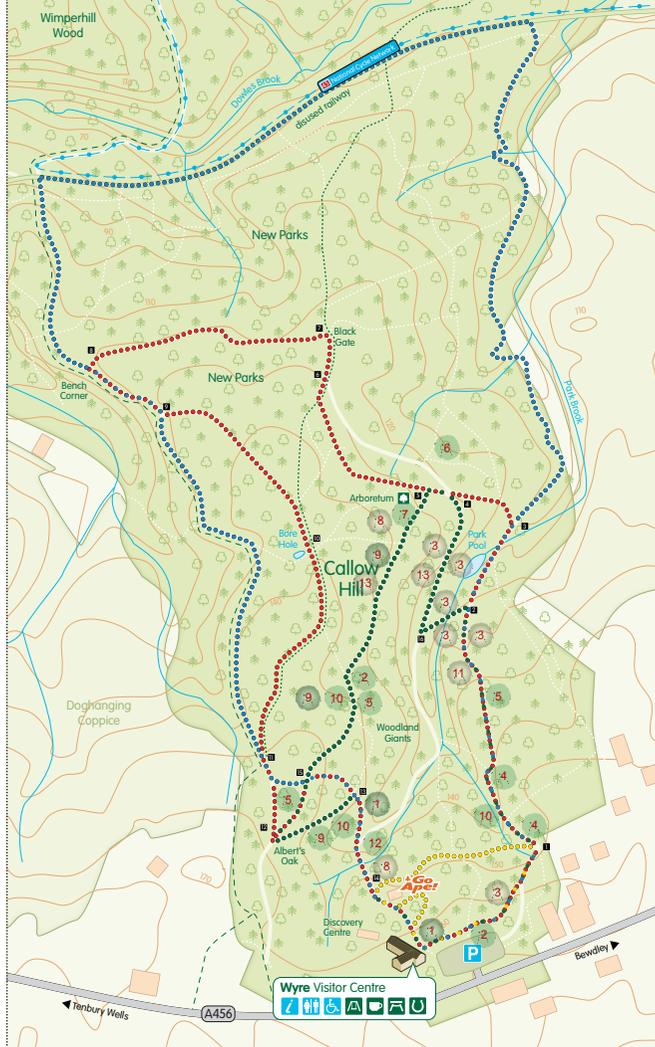


Wyre Forest Callow Hill area

Key

- Parking
- Information
- Toilets
- All access
- Cafe
- Play area
- Picnic area
- Horse riding
- Buzzard Trail
- Woodpecker Trail
- Wren Trail
- Family Mountain Bike Trail
- National Cycle Route
- Public footpaths
- Public bridleways
- Emergency numbered posts

0 100 200m



Key to trees

- 1 European Larch
- 2 Holly
- 3 Douglas Fir
- 4 Oak
- 5 Silver Birch
- 6 Wild Service
- 7 True Service (Whitty Pear)
- 8 Ash
- 9 Scots Pine
- 10 Corsican Pine
- 11 Alder Buckthorn
- 12 Hazel
- 13 Hawthorn

NB: Some numbers relate to individual trees and some to plantations of a single species.

As you learn the trees see if you can spot them at other locations around the route. (Eg silver birch is very common just about everywhere!)

You will also come across different tree species on this route - look at their leaves, buds and bark and see if you can identify what they are by using a book or the internet.



Birch

(Silver and Downy)

Use this map to find an example of this tree when you next visit Wyre.

Alternatively, to print a bigger version follow this link



## Silver Birch - *Betula pendula*

### Folklore

#### What's in a name?

Associated with Thor, probably in recognition of his role as an agricultural and fertility deity. Used in Purification rites. With the exception of the mysterious elder, the Birch is the earliest of the forest trees. The Birch is used extensively in cleansing rituals. In Europe, long associated with fertility and healing magic, birch twigs were used to bestow fertility on cattle and newlyweds, and children's cradles were made from its wood.

Twigs used to be used in the ritual of driving out the spirits of the old year. Delinquents and the insane were 'birched' to expel evil spirits.



If the Oak and the Beech contend for the rank of King, there is no doubt as to the right of the Birch for "Queen of the woods". This beautiful and elegant tree has inspired artists and writers, past and present. It is now mainly planted for its aesthetic value and as a nursery tree to protect young forestry plantations. It is an opportunist species which will quickly colonise bare ground.



**Size**  
Up to 30m high.



**Age**  
100 years old.

[www.foresteducation.org/  
search/learning.results/](http://www.foresteducation.org/search/learning.results/)



## Silver Birch - identification

An elegant fast growing tree whose branches hang down giving it a weeping crown.

#### ★ Flowers and seed

Both male and female flowers are found on the same tree. Male flowers are long, yellow-brown catkins, hanging in groups at the tips of shoots. Female catkins are smaller, green and short. Sheds masses of tiny winged seeds in Autumn.



#### ★ Leaves

Usually doubly serrated. More pointed than the Downy Birch leaf

#### ★ Bark

Its bark is white and scaly with conspicuous black diamond shaped patches.





## Downy Birch - *Betula pubescens*

### Folklore

#### What's in a name?

Known as Lady of the Woods. Paper Birch and Downy Birch: Carefully gather strips of the bark at the New Moon. With red ink, write on a birch strip: "Bring me true love." Burn this along with a love incense, saying "Goddess of love, God of desire, Bring to me sweet passion's fire." The specific name of a god/goddess may be added. Or cast the bark into a stream or other flowing water, saying: "Message of love, I set you free, to capture a love and return to me." Remember: It is unwise to use this incantation and ritual directed toward a specific person as that would violate the rule. If a love is to come to you, it must be of that person's free will to do so.



Downy Birch is slightly more hardy than Silver Birch, and usually smaller. Hybrids of Silver and Downy Birch are, however, common.



**Size**  
Up to 30m high.



**Age**  
Up to 100 years old.

[www.foresteducation.org/search/learning.results/](http://www.foresteducation.org/search/learning.results/)



## Downy Birch - identification

The crown of Downy Birch is an irregular fuzz of twigs and the branches spread out rather than hang down. Downy Birch is so called because of its hairy twigs.

#### ★ Flowers and seed

Male and female flowers are found on the same tree. Both flowers are arranged as catkins.

Winged seeds are narrower than those of the Silver Birch.



#### ★ Leaves

Leaves are oval/triangular and downy on the underside.

Leaves have a regular single row of teeth and an abrupt pointed tip.

#### ★ Bark

Its bark is less shiny and more brown in colour with horizontal banding but no black diamonds like Silver Birch. The bark is more apt to peel away in strips.





## Birch - associated fungi and lichens



★ Birch Polypore -  
*Piptoporus betulinus*



★ Fly Agaric -  
*Amanita muscaria*



## Birch - associated wildlife (insects)



★ Birch Shieldbug  
Lives on the cones and foliage.



★ Parent Bug  
Lives on the cones and foliage.



★ Orange Underwing Moth

### Wildlife Spotter

To download an insect spotter chart click [here](#)



## Birch - associated wildlife (birds and mammals)

Birch fruits prolifically every year attracting winter flocks of small birds.

### Wildlife Spotter

To download a bird spotter chart click [here](#)



★ Grey Squirrel  
They peel off the silvery bark in order to lick the sap. This can kill the tree above the wound.



★ Redpoll  
They feed on the seeds.



★ Siskin  
They feed on the seeds.



## Birch - timber properties

The timber is almost white, fine textured, straight grained and tough though now of little value even though it turns well and gives an excellent veneer. However, as a nurse tree to young plantation trees it is of considerable importance as it improves the soils due to nitrogen-fixing nodules in its roots, and grows quickly, providing protection from the weather.



## Birch - uses past and present



The timber is used for wood pulp for paper and structural plywood. It is used in building, for wooden components and flooring, and in the past for carts, ploughs, gates and fences. Solid birch is used in furniture, especially the frames of upholstered chairs, and is turned for brush backs and handles.



In Scandinavia the bark is used for roofing.



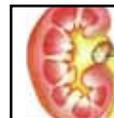
Traditionally used for making besom 'broomsticks' and firebeaters. Large amounts of birch brushwood are collected annually from Wyre for making racehorse jumps.



It can be used as a fuel for smoking Haddock.



Birch bark is used for tanning certain kinds of leather.



The sap was thought to have medicinal benefits for kidney stones and other ailments. The sap was also useful as a good source of sugar and can be brewed into beer or wine.



## Birch - activity

Make a whisk by stripping the bark off thin twigs in one pull, then bundling these strips together and binding them together with another strip.



Alternatively, the bark can be peeled off and used in many ways. Follow this link to make a birch bark water filter:

[www.wildwoodsurvival.com/survival/water/1swbirchbarkfilter.html](http://www.wildwoodsurvival.com/survival/water/1swbirchbarkfilter.html)

