

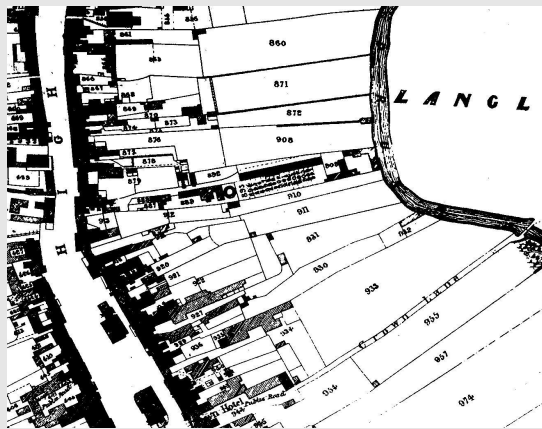
A walk around Witney's Ancient Trees

Walk four Tree Trails in the centre of Witney: Waitrose Carpark, Witan Way Millstream footpath and St. Mary's Churchyard, Church Green.

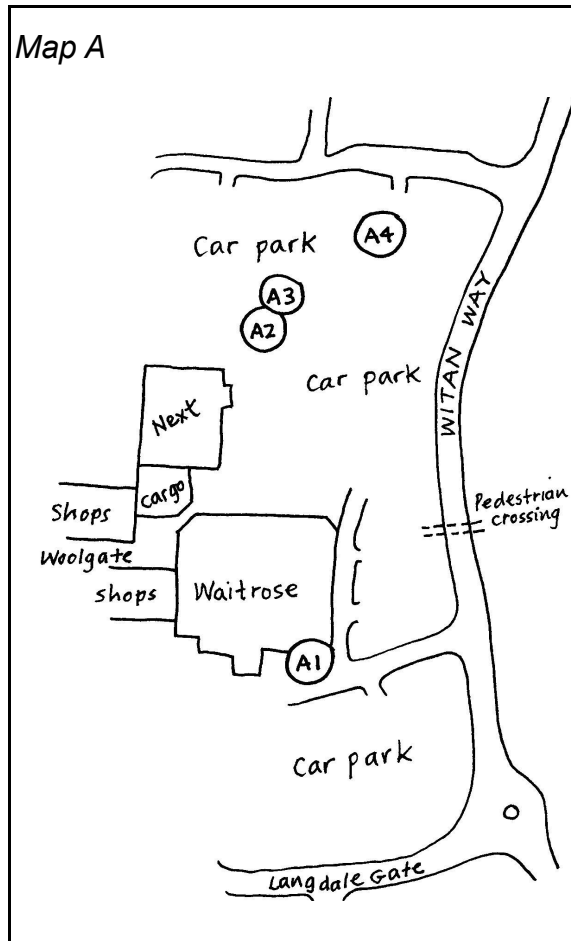
The Waitrose Carpark Trail (Map A)

The land now in Waitrose carpark, and all the plots behind the shops and houses in central Witney, was laid out in the 13th century by successive Bishops of Winchester, whose Palace lay near St. Mary's church. Of particular note is Peter des Roches, Bishop from 1205 to 1238, who laid out the market square, Church Green and the High Street. Each dwelling or workshop had a long narrow plot of land running behind it, at right angles to the Green and the street. These were called burgage plots, because they belonged to burghers, or merchants.

The last intact burgage plot was built over at Marriot's Close in 2008. Most of them retained their original shape and purpose until the beginning of the 20th century: they were large enough to have grazing for a few animals, and to grow vegetables. They are clearly shown in this 1840 map of Witney in the Witney and District Museum.



Map A



Waitrose carpark covers quite a few old burgage plots, with their boundary hedges and trees still in place. At the service entrance to Waitrose, behind the store, is a tall **Corsican pine** (*Pinus nigra*)

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
A1	0054	24m	100-150	2.63m

Towards the centre of the carpark is a tall and broad tree with wonderful bark colourings, a **London Plane** (*Platanus hybrida*)

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
A2	0091 01655	22.5m	150-180	3.50m

(Two identification tags)

Close by is another **Corsican pine**

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
A3	01651	33m	150-180	3.2m

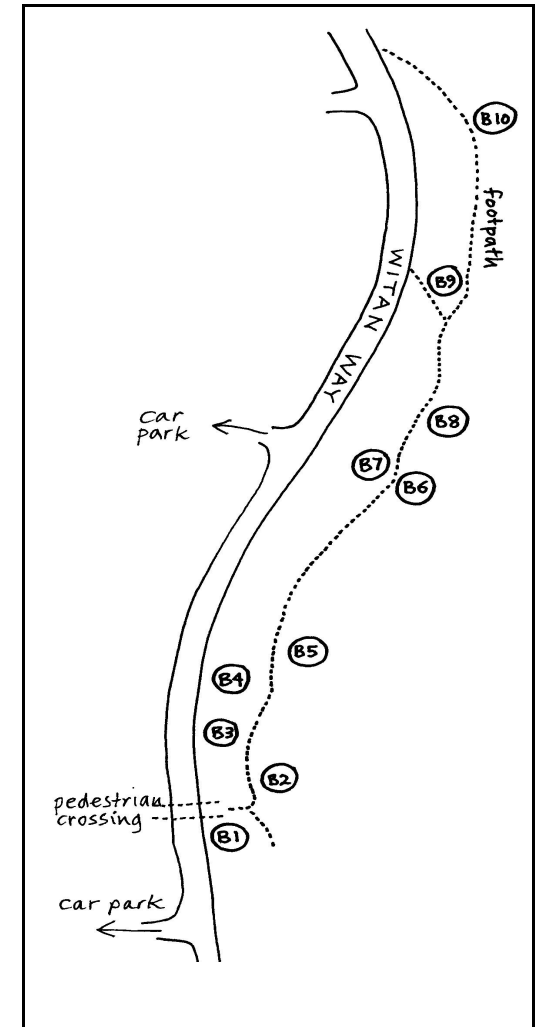
(The average girth of an ancient pine is 2.1m)

At the opposite end of the 3 hour carpark to Waitrose, near a vehicle entrance from Witan Way, is the only large chestnut left, now that disease has killed off several huge ones in the middle of the carpark.

Horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*)

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
A4	0152	26m	80-100	2.9m

Witan Way Mill stream footpath - Map B



This woodland path follows the Mill stream all the way from Bridge Street to Farm Mill, the old mill building opposite Sainsburys. It is broken in the middle by the Leisure Centre. The mill and the stream were probably built around the time of the Bishop's Palace, to provide water power for flour milling. The Mill might even be the one mentioned in the Domesday Book, according to Stanley Jenkins of the Witney and District Museum.

Some 13th C burgage plots behind shops in the Market Square, Church Green and the High Street extended down to the Mill stream on the East of the High Street, and a few larger plots contained fish ponds leading off the Mill stream. They are all connected by channels to facilitate the free flowing of fresh water. You pass these fish ponds on the path from the Leisure Centre to the Old Mill.

We will start at the **Northerly section towards the Aquarius housing development**, so take the zebra crossing out of the Waitrose carpark and go straight ahead onto the Mill stream footpath. The walk starts from the pedestrian crossing path towards Cogges – on your right facing East is a **Crack Willow** (*Salix fragilis*)

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
B1		8m	120-140	4.4m

(The average girth of an ancient willow is 2.6m)

Turning left along the path, on the bank overhanging the stream is a very large **London plane** (*Platanus hybrida*)

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
B2		55m	200-220	5m

Next to the Plane is a **Lime** (*Tilia x vulgaris*)

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
B3		30m	150-170	?

Trunk girth is impossible to measure because of the huge numbers of suckers at the base of the tree, but the average girth of an ancient lime is 3.6m. The trunk is split, but otherwise in good condition.

Opposite the lime is a **Horse chestnut** (*Aesculus hippocastanum*)

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
B4		30m	120-150	2.9m

It has characteristic bowls on the lower branches, and an unusually smooth, straight trunk, covered in old ivy. The average girth of an ancient chestnut is 2.3m.

Back on the Mill stream bank is another **London Plane**

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
B5		35m	150-180	3.97m

According to Nick Dalby, the WODC Forestry and Woodland Manager, planes were brought to Britain in the 1650s. They thrive even in polluted cities and are renowned for their colourful patchy bark.

A little way further down on both sides of the path are groups of **Crack willows** (*Salix fragilis*)

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
B6&7		3-4m	100-140	1.85m

A little further down the path on the Mill stream side is another **Crack willow** group.

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
B8		3m	100-140	3.7m

These are composite trees, supporting horse chestnut, hawthorn, sycamore, wild rose, bramble and ivy. All these plants have put down roots into the old willow's sap system. The average girth of an ancient willow is 2.6m. At this point there is a group of modern poplars on the road side.

Just beyond the division of the footpath taking a left fork, there is another **Crack willow** stump.

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
B9		8m	120-150	4.2m

It supports elderflower, hawthorn and ivy.

On the right hand side, further along the Mill stream bank are 5 more composite **Crack willow** stumps.

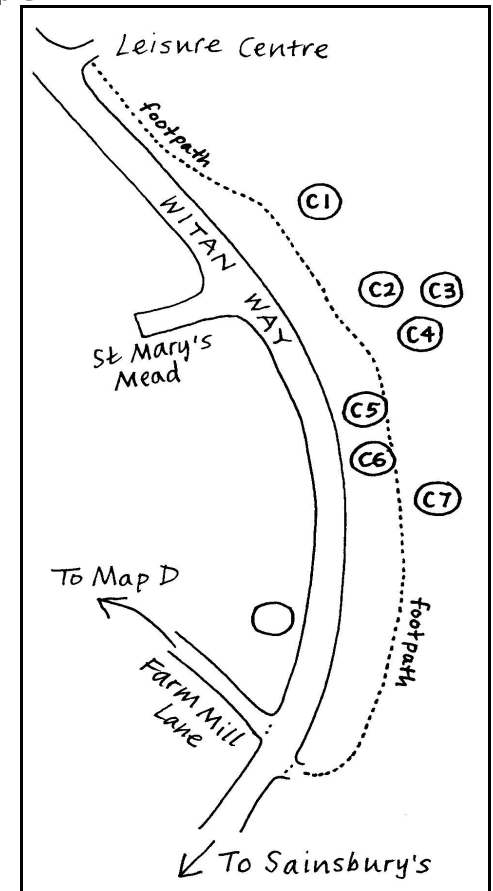
Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
B10		3m	120-150	

They look unremarkable from a distance, but they are interesting close to, because you can clearly see the newer trees they all support. The crumbling bark

supports many tiny creatures, and sometimes you can see an insect-eating bird on the bark.

David Rees, of the Oxfordshire Woodland Project, informs us that willows were pollarded so that their branches spread further out and could give shade to livestock, and so that farmers could cut fronds to feed cattle. Young, whippy spars were used (and indeed, are still used) in fencing and basket making. If the cut branches were used by joiners, the multiple branches were easier to cut and cart away by woodcutters. Willow trees like wet soil, are quick growers and can be fully mature within 70 years. However, as we see with these examples in Witney, they still flourish as a stumpy trunk.

The Southern section of the Mill stream footpath, from the Leisure Centre to Farm Mill - Map C



Leaving the Leisure Centre and walking along the Mill Stream path towards Sainsburys, the first large tree you come across is a **Sycamore** (*Acer pseudoplatanus*)

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
C1	0441	35m	150-180	3.67m

(The average girth of an ancient sycamore is 2.9m)

A little further along the path, in a fenced clearing, are three magnificent ancient trees, one of which has unfortunately been pollarded because of disease: **Horse Chestnut** (*Aesculus hippocastanum*)

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
C2		12m	200	5.07m

(The average girth of an ancient chestnut is 2.3m)

Nearby is a very straight tree with thick ivy stems covering the trunk, and no lower branches: **Ash** (*Fraxinus excelsior*)

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
C3		36m	100-120	3.8m

Another nearby tree is a second **Horse chestnut** (*Aesculus hippocastanum*)

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
C4		35m	100-120	3.33m

Just nearby is a fishpond, which originally belonged to the property and burgage plot now occupied by Langdale Court and Swinbrook Court.

Back on the path, opposite St Mary's Mead, there are two large, split-trunked alders. David Rees, of the Oxfordshire Woodland Project, says these trees love water-side locations, and the wood splits easily. Alder wood was a favourite wood for making temporary fencing, as well as all sorts of items, including brush backs and dogs. It is very likely that these trees were coppiced to make their use easier: the tree was cut down at the base when young, so that several stems grew in place of the one trunk, making them easier to cut and cart away for the woodcutter. Alder is also used to make charcoal, which is a constituent of gunpowder.

Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) (3 trunks)

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
C5		25m	100	3.65m

The second **Alder** is even bigger, with six trunks.

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
C6		27m	100	4.2m

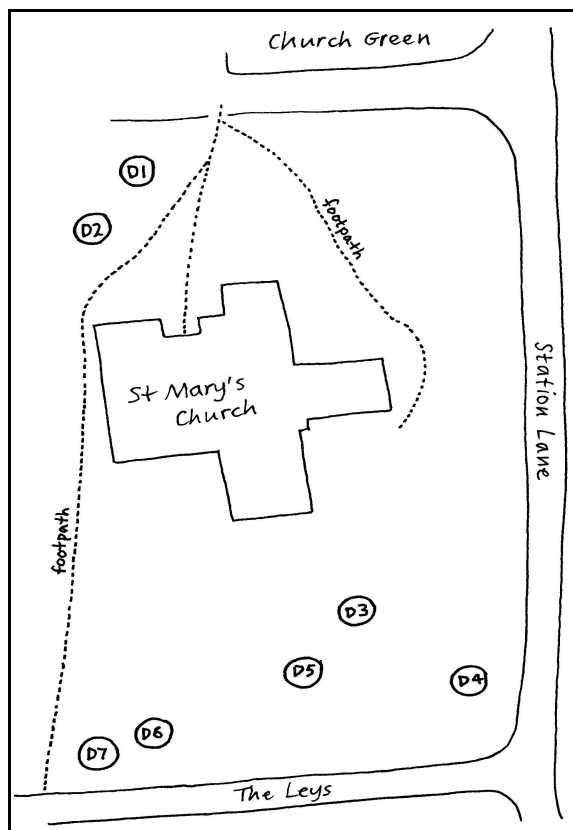
Also opposite St Mary's Mead, is another **Ash**

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
C7	0428	35m	120	4.32m

Along the footpath many of the trees benefit from having their roots in the millstream, and therefore grow faster than those on drier soil. This might explain their relatively large girth.

From the bench by the path you can see the largest plane tree in Witney (marked by a blank circle), in the private development St. Mary's Mead. Cross the road at this point - on the left is Farm Mill Lane, leading to:

St. Mary's Churchyard, Church Green - Map D



The Churchyard has some unusual trees, but they are not all ancient. Just inside the entrance to the churchyard from Church Green, in front of the Church is a **Cedar of Lebanon** (*Cedrus libani*)

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
D1		24m	150-170	3.15m

Close by is a **Copper Beech** (*Fagus sylvatica*)

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
D2		21m	150-170	4.6m

Go to the left of the church past the Almshouses to the rear Churchyard. On entering, you come to another **Cedar**

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
D3	01508	28m	200-250	6.1m

Nearby is a **Corsican Pine** (*Pinus nigra*)

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
D4	01509	24m	120-150	2.8m

Further south is a **Beech** (*Fagus sylvatica*)

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
D5	01515	20m	90-120	2.92m

The average girth of an ancient beech is 3.2ms

Nearby is another **Cedar**

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
D6	01517	24m	100-120	3m

Nearer the southerly wall and ditch is a stately **Californian Redwood** (*Sequoia sempervirens*)

Map No.	ID	Height	Approx. Age	Girth
D7	01519	35m	150-200	5.13m

This leaflet was surveyed, researched, compiled, typeset and published by **Witney Woodland Volunteers**
www.witneywood.org.uk



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