

About the Trail

This is a short trail around North Down, taking the visitor on a circular walk either through or alongside the three young woods planted on North Down. Paths may be uneven and muddy in wet weather. The Trail should take about an hour at a comfortable pace. If you have a dog it needs to be on a lead. The route includes a gentle climb up to the top of Little Trees Hill, which is fringed by mature trees which were already part of the site. There are breath-taking views across miles of countryside in several directions.

Magog Down is open every day of the year. This special corner of Cambridgeshire is owned and cared for by the local charity [The Magog Trust](#) which needs your help and support to maintain the site.



Magog Down is a County Wildlife Site, important for its meadows, woodlands and hedgerows.

Entry is free but car parking charges apply, £3.00 with tickets valid all day. Friends and Members are entitled to free parking and receive a car sticker which must be displayed. Please visit our website at www.magogtrust.org.uk for information and opening times. There are no toilets at Magog Down.



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Registered Office:
The Magog Trust, Verger's Cottage, 1 Gog Magog Way,
Stapleford, Cambridge CB22 5BQ
A Company limited by guarantee Registered in England
No 2426534 Reg Charity No 802150

Before 1989 the Magog Down was intensively farmed arable land, with one strip of woodland across the skyline. The land came on the market and was bought by the newly formed Magog Trust (a registered charity), with the aim of restoring the land for conservation and recreation. Six new woods were planted, starting in 1991. By 1992 over 24,000 trees and shrubs had been planted by members of the Trust and volunteers. The species chosen are native to Britain and are trees which are suited to the chalk soil of Magog Down. The woodlands are a mix of deciduous trees with evergreens such as Holly and Yew. Species planted include:

Trees

Ash, Beech, Field Maple, Holly, Hornbeam, Oak, Small-leaved Lime, Wild Cherry, Yew

Small Trees and Shrubs

Blackthorn, Dog Rose, Hawthorn, Hazel, Spindle, Purging Buckthorn, Wayfaring Tree

The names of the woods reflect some of the history of the Magog Trust, the support given to it and its links with the local community.

Youth Wood: much of this wood was planted by local schools and youth groups.

Colin's Wood: Named after Colin Davidson, Vicar of Stapleford until his untimely death in 1989 who was a key mover in getting the project started.

Magog Wood: planted alongside trees in the original skyline wood to broaden it. Trees have also been supported by sponsors.

On South Down:

Memorial Wood: Trees sponsored and planted in memory of friends or loved ones.

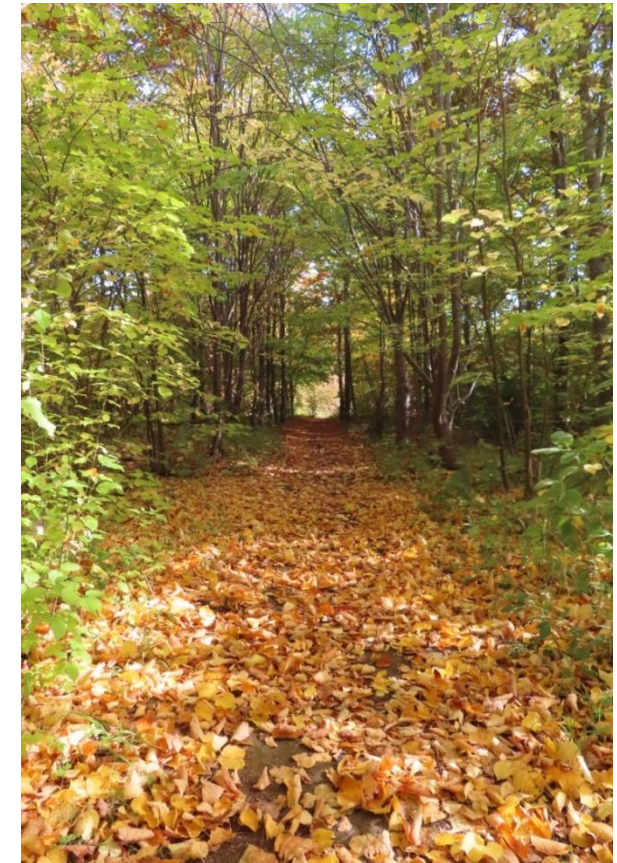
Vestey Wood: Named after Edmund Vestey who loaned funds to help finance the original purchase of the land.

Villedômer Wood: named after the village in the Loire region of France which is twinned with Stapleford.

Rotary Wood: To celebrate 75 years of Rotary in Cambridge 1922 - 1997



Magog Down Tree Trail



Magog Down Tree Trail

There are ten trees on this trail. Each tree is identified on a nearby post by number and by name. The English and Latin names of each tree are given on this leaflet, with a short summary about each tree.

START

Enter the North Down through the small gate beyond the Picnic Field.
Turn left and follow the grassy path up to the edge of Youth Wood.

Youth Wood

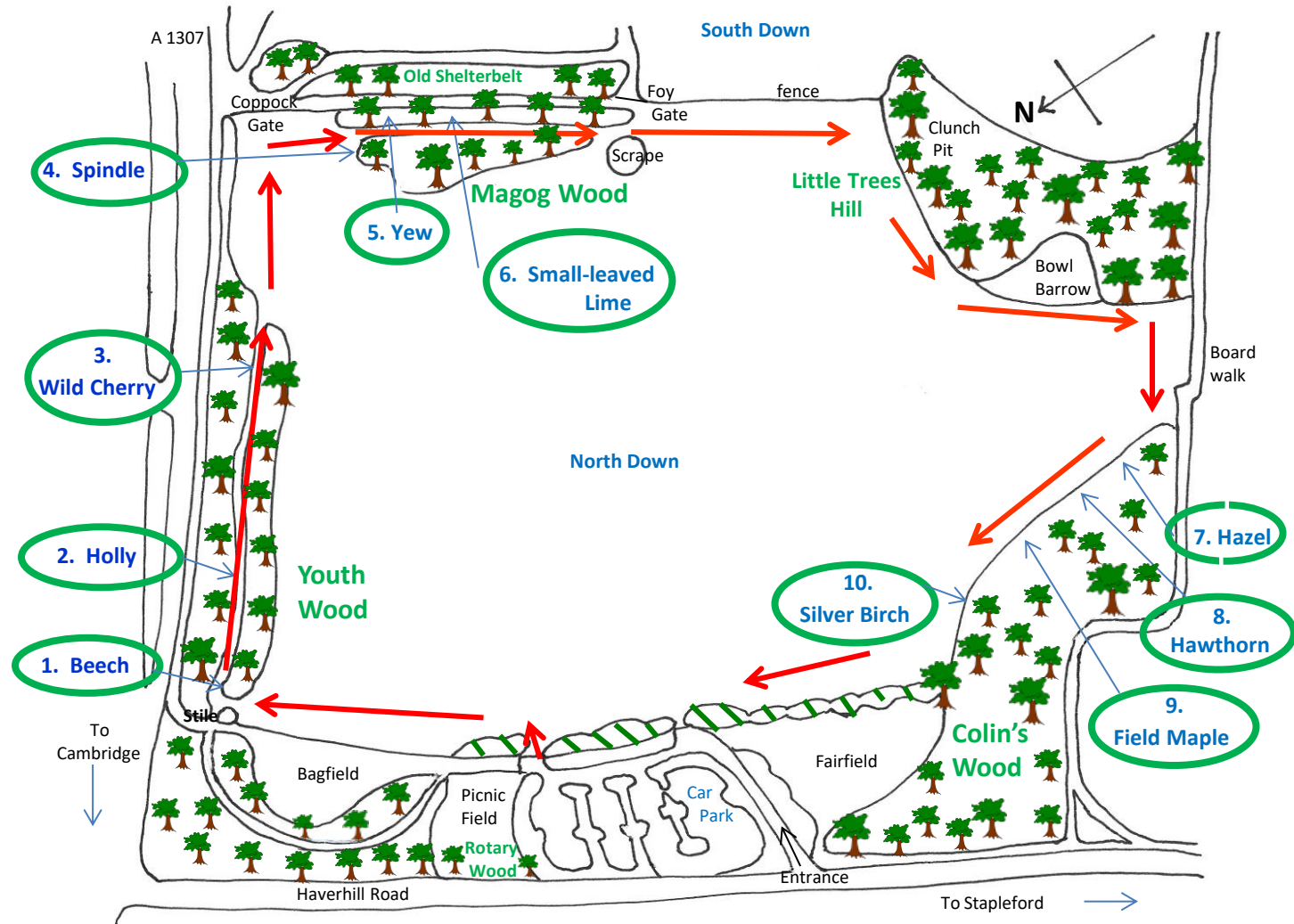
Enter the wood to the right of the bench (in memory of Florence Hawkins). Youth Wood is mainly Beech trees with occasional groups of Ash and a scattering of Wild Cherry, Small-leaved lime, Yew and Holly.
All the trees around you as you enter are Beech trees, so this is the first tree to look at. The marker post is next to a tree in front of you, near the path.

1. Beech *Fagus sylvatica*

Beech trees are thriving in all the woods on Magog Down. The Beech is an elegant, graceful tree with a smooth silver-grey trunk and bark. The leaves are a glossy, vivid emerald green in spring, with spectacular golden hues in autumn. They are oval and pointed at the tip with a wavy edge. Beech trees have male and female flowers which grow on the same tree. Triangular beech nuts (known as beechmast) form in bristly brown seed cases.



Magog Down Tree Trail



Visitors are asked to follow the rules of the Countryside Code. Please stay on the paths in the woods to avoid trampling flowers and disturbing birds and wildlife. Log piles and branches provide habitat areas and homes for small creatures in the woods so please do not move or disturb them. Please do not pick flowers or leaves. Some plants can cause irritation to the skin.

Turn over to find out about the other trees on the trail

After looking at the beech tree follow the woodland path to the right (you will see a stile and a fence to your left). The second tree to look at is **Holly**, on the left hand side of the path.

2. Holly *Ilex aquifolium*

There are two groups of holly trees, we will stop at the second group.

Holly is a native evergreen tree that can grow to about 15 metres. Mature holly leaves are dark, glossy green and easily recognised with their wavy margins and strongly spiny leaves.

Small white flowers

can be seen in May. Only the female Holly trees produce berries, known as drupes.



Continue along the woodland path, until you reach the **Cherry** tree.

3. Wild Cherry *Prunus avium*

A medium large deciduous tree, growing to 20 – 30m. Cherry trees flower in April, just before the leaves appear.

Look out for the beautiful white blossom. Cherry bark is shiny grey or reddish-brown with a metallic sheen, with peeling horizontal bands. Leaves are rather thin, pointed and toothed. They turn red or yellow in autumn. Wild Cherry trees have rather bitter cherries.



Follow the path to the end of the wood, and re-join the grass path on North Down. Walk down to just before Coppock gate. Turn here and follow the grassy path diagonally across to Magog Wood.

Magog Wood

Magog Wood was planted to broaden and extend the adjacent original skyline wood of mainly mature sycamore. Trees include Beech, Small-leaved Lime, Yew and Field Maple. Magog Wood is less open and ivy covers much of the woodland floor, but in early summer (usually in May) beautiful White Helleborine emerge and flower under the trees. Helleborines are flourishing in all the young woods on Magog Down.

4. Spindle *Euonymus europaeus*

The Spindle Tree is on the right at the entrance to Magog Wood. Spindle is at its loveliest in autumn when its leaves turn pinkish-red and the fruits ripen. It has distinctive vivid coral pink berries which split to reveal bright orange seeds. Spindle is a small, delicate, native, deciduous tree which can grow to 9m. Leaves are shiny and slightly waxy, with tiny sharp teeth along the edges. Young bark and twigs are deep green.



Continue into the wood and follow the path for 20m until you come to the **Yew** tree on the left hand side.

5. Yew *Taxus baccata*

The Yew is slow growing and long lived. It is a small bushy evergreen shrub or tree growing to 15m, and it usually has many trunks.

Yew trees have needle-like leaves 2-3mm long.

They grow in two rows along a twig, with the upper side a shiny, dark green. Yew flowers are pollinated by the wind and develop into red fleshy fruits with a poisonous seed inside.



As you walk along the path the mature ash and sycamore trees which form the old shelterbelt woodland can be seen through the wood to your left. Continue along the path until you come to our next tree.

6. Small-leaved Lime *Tilia cordata*

Lime are amongst the longest living and tallest (to 38m) of our native trees.

The leaf is pointed with fine sharply toothed edges. Small-leaved Lime leaves are heart-shaped. The heavily scented flowers open in late June and are loved by bees and other insects. The flowers hang in clusters, with the flower stalk fused with a pale green, tongue-shaped bract. The fruit falls with this wing-like bract once it is ripe.



Once out of the wood, continue past the North Down scrape and up along the grassy path near the fence. Walking up here will give you a chance to admire the splendid views across South Down. At the top of the hill follow the path around the edge of the Little Trees Hill woodland.

Look out for the stately lime trees at the top of the hill, and the mature beech trees with their long overhanging branches as you go down the slope. On a good year the grass is scattered with beech nuts. At the bottom of the slope enjoy further spectacular views across miles of countryside. Turn right on the grassy path and walk towards Colin's Wood.

Colin's Wood

Trees include Beech, Ash, Cherry and Small-leaved Lime. The tree trail walk continues to the right along the wood margin, giving a chance to appreciate the shrub and hedgerow plants giving variation in height and structure to the woodland edge. This helps support a greater number and variety of birds and invertebrates, providing nesting sites, shelter and food sources from flowers, seeds and berries.

7. Hazel *Corylus avellana* (near the bench in memory of Mereke) Hazel is a deciduous shrub or small tree growing to about 6m tall. One of the most familiar features of the hazel is its golden yellow catkins, or lamb's tails which can be seen as early as January tossing in the wind. Their powdery, yellow pollen fertilises the female flowers, which will later develop into hazelnuts. From January to March the tiny red bud-like female flowers may be spotted on the twigs near the clusters of male catkins. Hazelnuts ripen in mid-August, but are often seized by grey squirrels.



8. Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*

Hawthorn is an attractive shrub or small tree reaching a height of 10m. It is one of the most common British trees, grown here for the benefit of wildlife. It produces heavily scented flowers in May, hence its common name of May Tree or Whitethorn.

Hawthorn leaves are small with deep, pointed lobes. Hawthorn berries or haws ripen to a bright red in autumn.



9. Field Maple *Acer campestre*

The Field Maple is a deciduous tree and is Britain's only native Maple. It is a round crowned tree which grows to about 20m tall. Field maple twigs often have corky ridges, with small grey leaf buds. Leaves have five blunt lobes and in autumn turn a rich gold, sometimes red. The flowers are yellow-green and appear in April and May with the leaves. The tree produces paired, horizontally winged fruit.



10. Silver Birch *Betula pendula*

Silver birch is quick growing and when mature can reach 30m. It forms a light canopy with elegant drooping branches. It is easily identified by its bark which is silver-white all year round, and which sheds in layers. Silver birch has both male and female catkins which appear on the same tree in April and May. Leaves are small, pointed and triangular.



Continue down towards the gate leaving North Down. To your left is Fairfield hedge which has been planted with native trees and shrubs, providing a secure route for wildlife movement, shelter and feeding areas. Trees are being managed at intervals along the hedge to become bird perches and 'singing trees'.

The woodlands of Magog Down link together with the adjacent woodlands of Wandlebury Country Park and the Beechwoods. These provide an important network of habitats which support wildlife and enable access to natural landscape for people to enjoy.

Visitors are asked to stay on the paths in the woods to avoid trampling and disturbing wildlife, especially nesting birds, and follow the rules of the Countryside Code. Please do not pick flowers or leaves or disturb woodpiles. Some plants can cause irritation to the skin.

Magog Down is maintained as open countryside. Paths may be uneven or muddy.

Meadows on North and South Down

The former arable areas between the woods were sown with native species of grass and wildflowers to restore the hilltop to chalk downland. Chalk grassland has an incredibly rich and diverse range of plant and insect life with many nectar-rich flowers and herbs, and native grasses. The meadows are carefully managed by sheep grazing or hay cuts so that the herbs, grasses and wildflowers which are adapted to the dry, thin chalk soils can flourish.. On a sunny summer day skylarks sing above swathes of wild flowers which provide a haven for mammals, birds, butterflies, moths, bees, beetles and other invertebrates. The long grass areas on North Down are cut on rotation to continue to provide shelter and food for wildlife through the winter.

Magog Down is significant in the wider chalk landscape of South Cambridgeshire. It is one of a network of chalk grassland fragments including reclaimed chalk pits which together form a series of stepping-stones enabling species to move more easily across the landscape.

Little Trees Hill

The mature trees at the top of the hill fringe the old chalk or clunch pit, which provided building materials for local villages from medieval times until the 1800s. The area within the 65m contour around the hilltop has been designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument by English Heritage, comprising a Neolithic Causewayed Enclosure, with a later Bronze Age Bowl Barrow present near the summit.