

Welcome to Shanklin's Histree Trail

The Groves and Gardens Histree Trail is 5.2km (3.2 miles) long with an optional extension of 1.9km (1.2 miles). The trail begins and ends at Tower Cottage Gardens, Chine Avenue in Shanklin Old Village. The shorter version presents an easy, accessible walk, mostly on hard surfaces. There are some stiles and gates to negotiate, with some steep inclines and descents on the extended route. The extended trail may also be muddy and uneven underfoot in places.

Getting There

Bus: 2 or 3 to Old Village Train: Twice an hour - short walk to Old Village from station.

Car: Vernon Meadow pay and display car park, Chine Avenue.

Follow the text and use the map to explore the Groves and Gardens Histree Trail. Promenade through parks and gardens, pass by mysterious ancient woodland and pay a royal visit to Victoria and Lady Isobella.

(1) The Shanklin Histree Trail begins at Tower Cottage Garden. Within the gardens once stood Tower Cottage built c.1825 by General Viney. The cottage was still in situ at the end of World War II but had been bomb damaged; subsidence eventually claimed the cottage in 1947.

Follow the tarmac path diagonally through the gardens. Much of the landscaping is part of the long-term restoration undertaken in 1986 by the Town Council. The mature trees including **Beech** and **Oak** date back to the 19th century, but the interesting mix of ornamental species such as the **Oriental Plane** with star-shaped

leaves and the **Red Oak**, best viewed in autumn, are more recent additions.

Continue on the path towards the sea. Descend the stone steps; to your right lies Chine Inn and the lower entrance to Shanklin Chine. In front of you is Keats Green, named after John Keats, an English Romantic poet who made several visits to Shanklin. During his 1819 visit, it is said that he found inspiration for some of his greatest work and wrote the opening line to Endymion 'A thing of beauty is a joy forever'.

The only tree on The Green is an impressive **Cedar** standing in the grounds of the Brunswick Hotel and has been sculpted by the prevailing south-westerly wind.

The Green was formed by a field boundary being set back from the edge of the cliff. This enabled an unimpeded ride for patrolling Inland Revenue officers hoping to intercept smuggled goods from across the Channel. At the height of smuggling, it was recorded that one in six seafaring men took an active part and it is said that a vast network of secret tunnels existed, linking the Chine with the Old Village.

From the steps, turn left into Everton Lane then take the next left into Chine Avenue. The large stone sitting on the corner of Alexander Road and Chine Avenue is the remains of a mounting block. These assisted mounting and dismounting a horse or cart and were especially useful for women riding sidesaddle, allowing a horse to be mounted without a loss of modesty.

Join the elevated pavement of Chine Avenue once used for promenading. Town promenades were raised platforms where, clear of the dirt and mud, the locals could elegantly parade up and down.

(2) Follow the promenade until you reach a group of magnificent **Beech** trees to your right, named after eminent women of the Isle of Wight. The largest tree is 'Victoria', after Queen Victoria. This mighty **Beech** is of elephantine proportions and it's difficult to determine where the stone wall ends and the tree begins. To Victoria's right stands 'Lady', after Lady Isobella de Fortibus who, in 1293, was the last hereditary owner of the Isle of Wight. The remaining trees in the group are named 'Julia' after Julia Margaret Cameron - the pioneering Victorian photographer - and 'Lizzie' after Elizabeth Wallbridge, a devout Christian whose religious book 'The Dairyman's Daughter' had a remarkable influence in the US when it was published in 1825.

Go past the car park and turn left at the junction with the High Street. Take the immediate turning on your left into Chine Hollow. Pause at the poem and fountain between the Crab Inn and Pencil Cottage - a memorial to Henry Longfellow, an American poet who stayed in Shanklin in the 1860s. Longfellow lunched with Alfred Lord Tennyson and was photographed by Julia Margaret Cameron during his Island visit. Once across the footbridge, climb the steps which lead into Rylstone Gardens. These popular gardens originally formed the grounds of Rylstone Manor, now a hotel.

Pass the aviary and, with the railings to your left, admire the **Coast Redwood** within a fenced enclosure to your right **(3)**. **Redwoods** are native trees of California; this species are the tallest trees on Earth, sometimes reaching the dizzying heights of more than 100 metres. **Redwoods** have buttress-style trunks and rusty red bark which is fairly soft and spongy (right).

With the hotel to your left, take the left fork of the path into the gardens proper. Pause here to marvel at the pair of towering **Monterey Pines** which can be identified by their large cones growing in a spiral formation around the branches **(4)**. These are among the most spectacular **Monterey Pines** on the Island, approaching 100 years of age. They are likely to have been planted when the gardens opened to the public c.1916.

A row of impressive **Holm Oaks** stretch along the cliff path. These evergreen trees were originally from the Mediterranean and they tend to do very well in the Island's climate. Take the immediate turning to your right a short distance along the path to reveal Rylstone's fattest **Holm Oak** tree **(5)**.

Follow the path to The Chalet and continue around to the right of the building. Making a refreshment stop in the Rylstone café affords a good view of the soaring **Monkey Puzzle** tree **(6)**. The **Monkey Puzzle** was introduced to the UK from Chile in 1795. It has a tall, straight stem and is so called due to the spiky leaves which are said to make it a puzzle for even a monkey to climb.

Head towards the upper area of Rylstone Gardens, the centre-piece being a stunning **Liquidambar** or **Sweet Gum** tree **(7)**. A native tree of America, it's at its most splendid in autumn when its star-shaped leaves display purple, deep red and orange.

Continue diagonally across the grass to leave the gardens to rejoin Chine Hollow then onto Popham Road. This road is lined with the popular street tree, the **Common Lime**, which has heart-shaped leaves.

The road takes its name from Francis White-Popham, last Lord of the Manor of Shanklin and direct descendant of Sir Geoffrey de Insula one of the first Lords of the Manor c.1170. Francis White-Popham was responsible for much of the development of Victorian Shanklin. The family have been frequent benefactors to the town and once owned around 1/6 of the Island.

At the end of Popham Road, turn right into Priory Road pausing to admire the standalone **Yew** on the corner and some mature **Oaks** to your right as you pass over the bridge. At the main road, cross to Big Meade. A row of **Horse Chestnut** and **Common Lime** trees mark the park's eastern boundary **(8)**. Walk towards the church through the avenue created by the mature street trees on the left and the younger, replacement trees to the right. Cross the car park to enter the churchyard.

A group of **Yews** stands in front of St. Blasius Church **(9)**. Parts of the church date from the 12th century, although most of the church comprises of more recent Victorian extensions.

The **Yew** has a long association with churchyards, and the space beneath was often reserved for dignitaries of the parish. St. Blasius was a manorial church until the 1850s when this engraving was made by George Brannon.

*At this stage in the trail, there is the option to extend the route. If you wish to walk the extension of 1.5 miles please continue with the text. If you wish to walk the shorter route please skip to *.*

Go to the back of the churchyard and cross the ancient boundary stone wall to join public footpath S10. As you enter the adjoining field after crossing the stile, an impressive **Ash** tree

stands to your left in the hedgerow boundary **(15)**.

Climb through this field, and across the next until you reach a second stile. To your left is Great Wood Copse and Cliff Copse ahead. Cross the stile and climb the steps. An interpretation panel gives information about the Shanklin Estate and how it is being managed for conservation. From here, take the path which forks to your right and drops to meet a ladder stile. This is a permissive path, open to the public by kind permission of the landowner; it is requested that dogs remain on a lead.

There is an interesting group of old field boundary **Ash** trees to the right of the stile. Just over the ladder stile is a wooden bench, a pause here affords stunning views across the north-eastern area of the Island. Before you is Holme Wood, a relatively new plantation of native tree and shrub species including **Hazel**, **Hawthorn** and **Oak**. This initiative is part of the Jigsaw scheme which promoted the planting of new woodlands to help link isolated copses helping to establish wildlife corridors and enlarge habitats, particularly for the red squirrel.

The plantation here should reconnect Hungerberry Copse to the south with Cliff Copse directly behind you - both of which are ancient woodlands, existing since the 1600s. Descend the permissive path. At the edge of the copse, pass by a lone **Oak** and into the fairy glen. Looking back offers an impressive view of the curving contour of Cliff Copse.

Cross the footbridge and follow the path down the steps. The path skirts the eastern edge of Hungerberry Copse, a mix of **Oak**, **Hazel**, **Ash** and some **Wild Cherry** known in local IW dialect as a 'Gean' or 'Merry'. Continue along the edge

of the copse until nearing the Westhill Road entrance. A second interpretation panel is situated just before the stile.

Directly to your left stands a large **Field Maple tree (16)**. This is a mature specimen of this native, slow growing small tree. Turn right onto Westhill Road until reaching footpath S85 to your right.

You are now in Manor Walk, one of two ornamental drives which approached Shanklin Manor. Along this drive is an interesting combination of tree species including mature **Beech, Common Lime** and **Scots Pine** and the rather more exotic **Monkey Puzzle (17)**. On the final approach to the old Manor, the walk is flanked by **Ash** trees.

The final tree on the extended trail is an impressive, towering **London Plane** tree located just before the footpath swings to the left **(18)**. The **London Plane** is thought to be a hybrid between the **Oriental** and the **Western Plane** and is common in urban parks and gardens throughout the UK. This tree would have been a feature of the Manor grounds and is one of the tallest **Plane** trees to be found in a public place on the Island. Continue on the footpath until you reach the exit by the church. Here you can pick up the shorter Histree Trail.

* Retrace your steps back towards the pond which lies within Big Meade. Big Meade was granted public access in 1933. Previously, the meade (short for meadow) was rented by Mr

Walter Russell, a High Street butcher and town councillor, who grazed his livestock here.

Make your way around the pond then uphill towards the benches. A rest stop here affords great views north towards Bembridge Down and the stunning white cliffs of Culver. This public open space is a popular spot for commemorative tree plantings and contains several impressive trees.

Perhaps the most unexpected is an **Olive** grove **(10)**. The **Olives** were commemoratively planted in 2006. The first **Olive** trees to be planted in a public place on the Island, they have already successfully fruited.

From the benches take the path behind you towards the large tree stump and turn right to join public footpath S84. This lane is one of two ornamental drives providing access to the old Shanklin Manor House, now private housing. Follow the footpath around to the right into the sunken lane.

Here a large **Hornbeam** tree stands in an elevated position on a mossy bank with a section of its root plate exposed **(11)**. The **Hornbeam** is a native but fairly uncommon, slow-growing species (right).

Look out for a monstrous **Holm Oak** on the bank to your right, just beyond the children's play area **(12)**. This is not an especially tall tree, but is fat with a girth of around six metres.

Neighbouring the **Holm Oak** stands a multi-stemmed **Common Lime tree (13)**. This tree has seven individual stems which indicates that it has been coppiced. Coppicing is a traditional method of periodically cutting trees to ground level to produce a 'stool'. The stool then regenerates often resulting several stems or trunks. This practice can significantly increase the lifespan of a tree and the cut wood is used in traditional crafts, such as hedgelaying.

Pause before reaching the old stone gate pillars to admire the large **Oak** tree on your left, then take the next turning on your right into Rectory Road. Continue along Rectory Road and, upon meeting the main road, turn left past Holme Farm Cottage. This is one of the oldest cottages in Shanklin and was once Headquarters for Customs and Excise. Return to the Old Village.

Just before the bend in the road stands a **Purple** or **Copper Beech** tree, an ornamental variety of the **Common Beech** and the final tree on the Groves and Gardens Histree Trail **(14)**. This specimen is located in the grounds of Holliers, another of Shanklin's original coaching inns. It is a wonderfully straight-trunked specimen displaying smooth, silvery-grey bark and the point of graft - where a cutting from a **Copper Beech** was grafted onto **Common Beech** root stock - can clearly be seen at a height of about one metre.

Thank you for walking the Groves and Gardens Histree Trail. There are seven other Histree Trails in the series for you to enjoy.

Groves & Gardens Histree Trail

main route (red) 1.8 miles / 2.9 km

extension (blue) 1.2 miles / 1.9 km



- Main route
- Extension
- Route on roads/paths
- Route on tracks
- Footpaths
- Start
- Public house
- Tea rooms
- Parking
- Toilets
- Tourist information
- Bus stops

