

Frome Heritage Tree Walk

Julian Hight www.worldtreestory.co.uk



Join local author and ancient tree specialist Julian Hight on a walk to see some of Frome's most majestic trees, and hear about their history and lore. Starting at the Cheese and Grain, the easy walk will include Millennium Green, Rodden Meadow and the town centre, and take between an hour and an hour and a half.

Julian's interest in trees started at a young age – growing up next to woodland which had a profound effect on him. He travels widely, camera in hand, to document historic ancient trees, resulting in 3 books; Britain's Tree Story, World Tree Story, and the forthcoming Britain's Ancient Forest. Julian presents regular talks on the subject, including an appearance on Channel 4's Tree of the Year TV programme. Chair of Wessex Ancient Tree Forum, he also campaigns to save threatened trees and ancient woodland.

Trees to visit include amongst others:

1. River Poplars, River Frome, Welshmill

Giant Poplar trees on the bank of the River Frome, quick growing majestic trees.



2. The Frome Elm, Spring Road

In the 1960s and 70s, Dutch Elm disease devastated Britain's Elm tree population. Outside of Brighton – home of Britain's National Elm Collection – only around 1,000 mature Elms remain. To my knowledge, this Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*) in a private garden is the only mature survivor of its kind in the town.

3. The Millennium Sycamore, Millennium Gardens

The Millennium Green Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), one of Frome's oldest trees, has stood overlooking Frome, since the mid-late eighteenth century.

In the early hours of January 16th 2018, strong winds stirred up by 'Storm Fionn' saw around half of the tree crash to the ground. Inspection revealed the presence of two fungi: Brittle Cinder (*Kretzschmaria deusta*) and Bracket (*Ganoderma australe*), which combined with heavily loaded limbs, contributed to the collapse.

Frome Town Council cut the remaining branches in 'coronet style' to mimic natural breakage and soften the tree's form, retaining most of the fallen wood. Over time this fallen wood will break down naturally and provide important decaying and deadwood habitat, brilliant for biodiversity – animals, birds, insects and lichen. One year on, the tree is showing good vitality.





4. Rodden Meadow Oaks, Rodden Meadow

Veteran Oaks (*Quercus robur*), stand in Rodden Meadow, the town's last remaining pasture field, remnants of a once wider wood pasture landscape. Once grazed by sheep, the wool they provided was once an integral part of Frome's economy.

Somebody painted a peace symbol on the trunk, which is fitting, as I like to think of this tree as a symbol of peace.

Oaks grown from Selwood Forest veteran trees stand in the brambles.



5. The Elephant Beech, St John's Church

A Copper Beech (*Fagus sylvatica purpurea*) stood in St John's churchyard since around 1865 when William Bennett restored the church and yard. The oldest tree in the town centre, it was found to host Ganoderma Bracket fungus and felled on Friday 24 June 2016. 12 foot of stump was retained for biodiversity and remains as a monument to its former glory.

Much of the timber is being stored by Frome Town Council with a view to supporting artists and wood sculptors to remember the tree in works of art.



6. The Frome Plane, Irongates

In 2014, an application was made to fell the large London Plane Tree (*Platanus x acerifolia*) at Irongates. Adding spectacularly to the aesthetic of the conservation area, around 10% of the town's population signed a petition to save the tree, the application was refused, and a Tree Preservation Order placed on the tree to protect it.



7. Cedar of Lebanon, Bath Street

Native to The Lebanon and Middle East, this stunning mature Cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*) dominates a private front garden in Bath Street, and was planted c1850.