

# TREES WITH STORIES TO TELL

A short walk through Risley



RISLEY OLD VILLAGE

Risley Brook circa 1903

**Start: Risley Village Hall**

Bus route i4 stops at the hall on route between Derby and Nottingham.

Parking: in the car park or on the road.

The walk takes about an hour.

1. Standing with your back to the hall doors look left to see a young oak tree growing in the hedge between the field - Rush Meadow - and the churchyard. This tree was planted by the Parish Council in 1981 to mark the wedding of Prince Charles and Diana Spenser.

Walk down the path to Derby Road and turn left.

2. Correspondence shows that seven trees were planted in 1954 to mark the coronation of our present Queen, with proposed sites including land at the Village Hall. There is no record of the sites actually planted, however the one horse chestnut and two limes which you can see after passing the field gate have girths suggesting that they are about 60 years old.

3. On passing the churchyard pause to look at 4 large yew trees, perhaps some 200 years old. The War Memorial here names 14 local men who died in WWI. Local oral history says that a tree was planted for each man. Pass the track to the City and stop by the school to look at three copper beech trees. These trees were planted by Teresa Hooley after WW1 to commemorate the dead of that war, including her brother Major Basil Hooley who died of influenza in 1918. There are five other beeches of similar age in front gardens along Derby Road.

4. Walk on beside the school hedge, which contains a lot of elm, to the security gate. An oak tree was planted in the school field in 1977 to mark the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. It can just be seen in the eastern hedge, where it took the place of an old elm which was affected by Dutch Elm disease.

5. Retrace your steps to the entrance to the City and turn in to walk along Risley Brook. The first house is The Old Post Office pictured on the front of this leaflet. The chestnut here is the same tree, now perhaps 130 years old. Many residents remember paddling in the brook here and collecting conkers. Certainly my children did so.

6. The next house is Willow Bridge, named after the willow trees that once stood along the brook and fortunately one remains here.



Old cottages by the brook circa 1900

7. Continue, crossing a stile into the nature reserve, and immediately take the left fork through a gap into the field beyond. The hedge on your right contains some once coppiced ash trees. In the past this strong, flexible wood would have been used for tool handles and for household fires, as ash is one of the best burning woods.

“Ash wood wet and ash wood dry,           \*  
A king may warm his slippers by.”

Follow the footpath diagonally across the second field toward a lone house on the bridleway. Turn left and stop at the original entrance to Risley Lodge. Two magnificent horse chestnuts stand on either side. Their girths suggest that they are about 100 – 120 years old, so dating back to the time that the Hooley family lived at The Lodge. The trimmings from the yews which you can see in the grounds are sent to the pharmaceutical industry for use in cancer medication.

At the bottom of the track turn right and find a safe place to cross to the south side of Derby Road. With your back to the pub look across at a bank of trees opposite.

8. The original group of 18 trees was planted in 1937 to commemorate the coronation of King George VI. Of this group, only 4 limes and 1 oak remain. I was told by older residents that many were originally damaged by revellers leaving the pub.

9. A short walk to your right will take you back past Risley Hall to the village hall. On the way one last tree of note is growing in the verge on the north side of the road. Closer examination shows that it is an elm and several trunks appear to grow from an old stump. This may well be re-growth from an elm that was felled following the spread of Dutch Elm disease in the 1960s.

To continue this tradition of commemorative tree planting, Risley Parish Council is planting an oak tree in First Avenue playing field to mark the 2012 Diamond Jubilee.

Pat Ancliff. 2012

Sources:

- Risley Parish Council correspondence and minutes
- Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock
- Oral history from life long residents of Risley

\* There are several version of this rhyme. Some may be found at:  
[www.aie.org.uk/vault/fp.htm](http://www.aie.org.uk/vault/fp.htm)

Further copies of this leaflet may be downloaded from

[www.risley-pc.org.uk](http://www.risley-pc.org.uk)

and

[www.erewash.gov.uk/culture-leisure/pride-in-erewash/tree-wardens](http://www.erewash.gov.uk/culture-leisure/pride-in-erewash/tree-wardens)