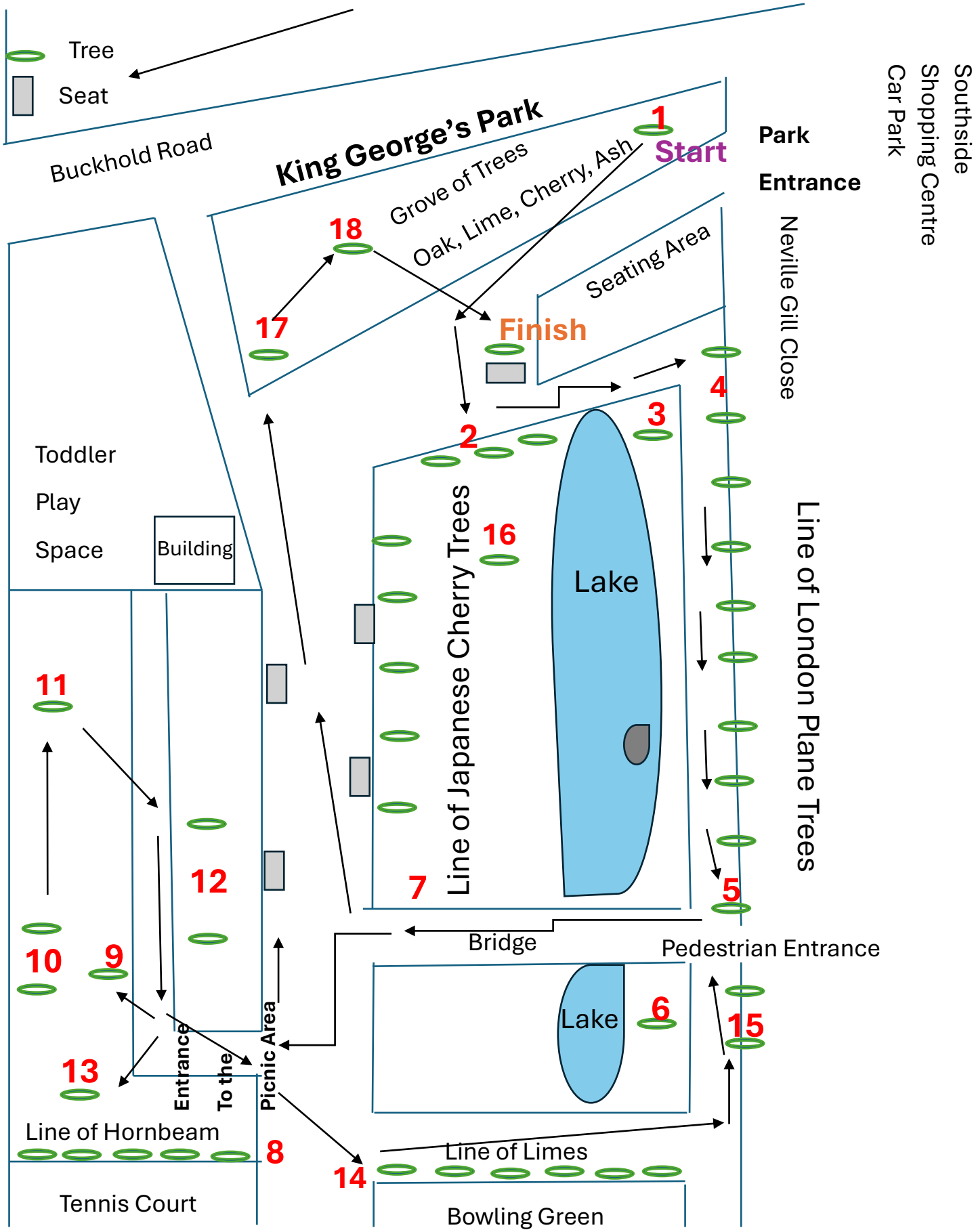
TREE TRAIL IN KING GEORGE'S PARK, WANDSWORTH

King George's Park, Wandsworth (*Photograph by Terry Tudor*)

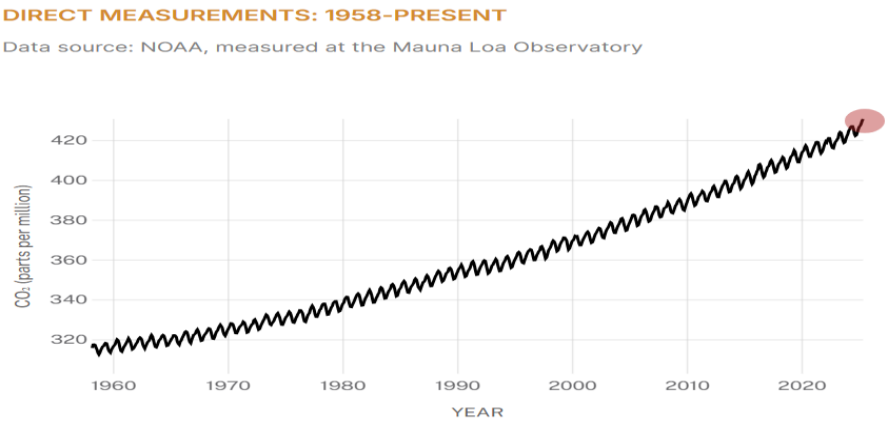
Plan of King George's Park, Neville Gill Road, Wandsworth Town, SW18 4TH – with key for tree symbol and seats at the top left hand side.



Introduction

King George's Park, Wandsworth was officially opened by King George V in 1923. The park extends over 55 acres it was designed by Percy Cane and constructed between 1921-23 by unemployed soldiers. The area around the lake was a former Victorian domestic garden. Two of the London plane trees are old enough to be possibly from the original garden.

Parks are the green lungs of London as trees photosynthesise turning carbon dioxide into oxygen. They provide much shade during hot summers as the planet warms up due to climate change. Greenhouse gases, like carbon dioxide (CO_2) and methane, trap heat in the Earth's atmosphere. The concentration of CO_2 in the air has reached more than 430 parts per million by volume (ppm), compared to about 280ppm in 1750 (at the start of the Industrial Revolution and burning fossil fuels).



Source of graph: Carbon Dioxide | Vital Signs – Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet

The urban environment generates 40% of all the annual carbon dioxide emissions. (Source: GOV.UK Promoting Net Zero Carbon and Sustainability in Construction 2nd September 2022).

Please see the directions below for the tree trail around the top section of King George's Park to enjoy some of the trees and the vital green corridor for wildlife alongside the River Wandle.

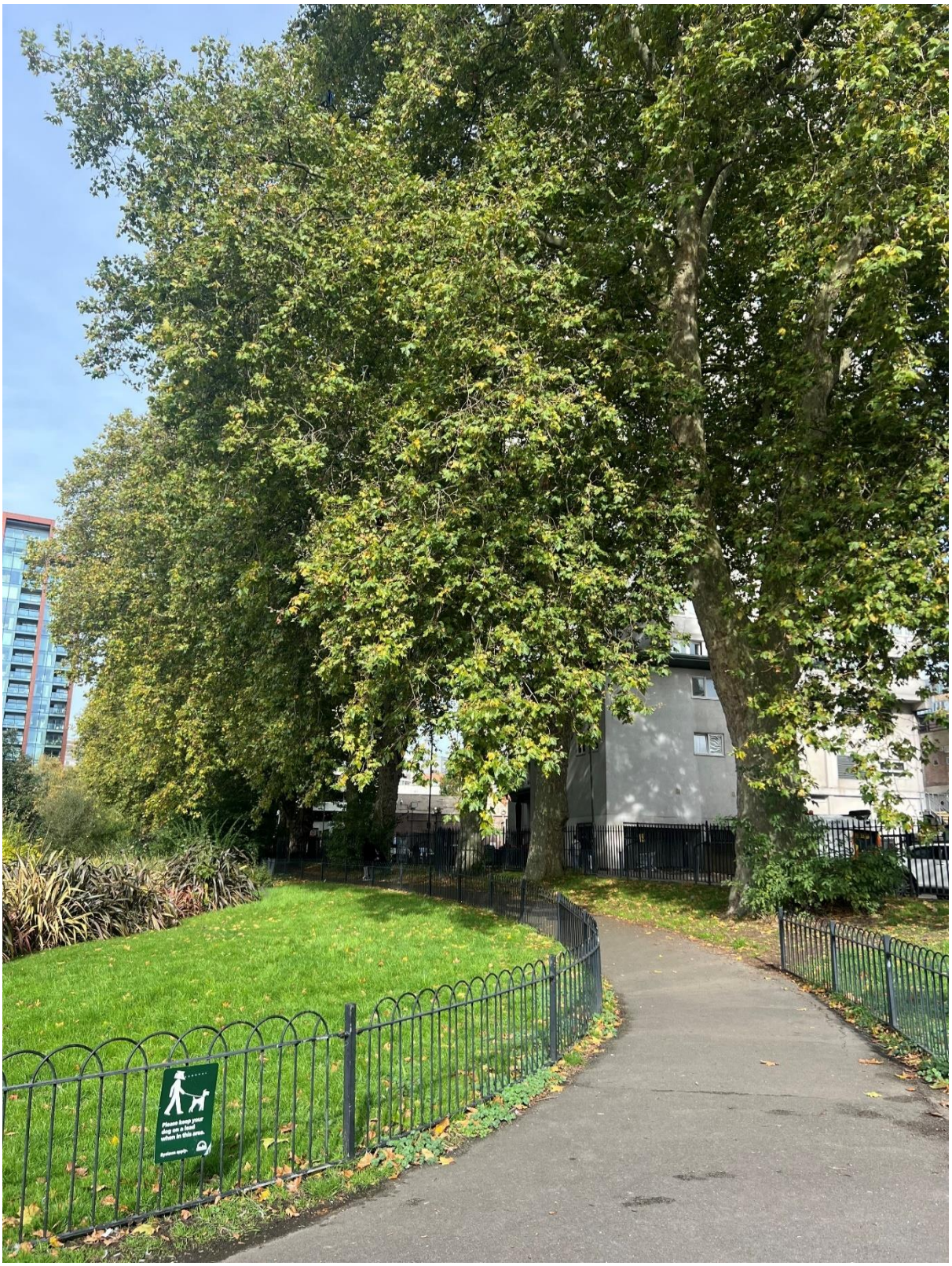
Directions

Enter the park from Neville Gill Close near the car park for Southside Shopping Centre, and on the right is a large red oak **(1)**. It takes around 40 years for oak trees to produce acorns. Go past the new seating area and take the first path on the left past the three acer trees **(2)** below and keep left to go along the left-hand side of the lake along the park boundary alongside Neville Gill Close.

Three Acer Trees in Autumn (photograph taken by Terry Tudor)

Weeping Willow **(3)** next to the Lake (*photograph taken by Emily Goodson*)

Weeping willows are sustainable trees they grow fast and filter pollutants in the water through their extensive root systems, which also stabilise the banks they grow upon. Willows are also capable of absorbing 175 – 200 litres of water a day and can reduce flooding. The shade over the water can help prevent eutrophication – excessive algae growth in water. (Source: Deep Green Permaculture 2023) Willow is still used to make baskets and garden frames. In the past, willow has been used to make coracles with canvas covers for fishing in water.



London Plane Trees **(4)** Looking Back Along Neville Gill Close (*photograph taken by Emily Goodson)*

London plane trees are a cross between the oriental plane tree and the American plane tree. According to the Woodland Trust they cross fertilised naturally in Spain and were introduced in Britain in the 17th Century. London plane trees are highly tolerant of air pollution and drought conditions (Source: GOV.UK The Case for Trees - Development and the Urban Environment) They also help to provide valuable shade reducing the urban heat island effect from buildings making cities hotter than rural areas. Just one mature tree can produce 100kg of oxygen per year.

Bark of a London Plane Tree in King George's Park (*photograph taken by Emily Goodson)*

As a London Plane Tree grows it sheds its bark.

London Plane Tree Bark with Candelariella Lichen (*Photograph taken by Terry Tudor*)

London Plane Tree Fruits are produced in a dense ball called achenes.

At the end of the line of London plane trees is an elderberry bush **(5)**. If you turn right, you will see a bridge across the lake and before the bridge a swamp cypress tree.

Swamp Cypress **(6)** in Autumn

Can you spot the Visiting Heron in the Photo?

Cross over the bridge and to your right is a long line of cherry trees **(7)**. Thirty new cherry trees were planted in December 2021 to restore the original cherry tree avenue. The trees were gifted to the borough by the Sakura Cherry Tree Project promoting friendship between Japan and the UK and part of a legacy project celebrating the Japan-UK Season of Culture 2019-2020 There are three varieties of trees Beni-Yutaka, Tai-Haku and Somei-yedoensis which flower April/May (source: Enable).

Opposite you, you will see the entrance to the low fenced picnic area. If you go through the gate, you will see a line of hornbeam trees on your left.

Hornbeams **(8)** are resilient to climate change and hotter and drier summers (source: Forestry & Journal 13th August 2019).

Evergreen Cedra Deodar **(9)**

Can You find the Young's Brewery Plaque?

The Cedra Deodar is native to the Himalayas and is helpful in stabilizing the mountain slopes where it grows at altitudes of 1,500-3,200 meters. Close to this tree is a Young's Brewery plaque in memory of John Young who was chairman of Young's Brewery in Wandsworth and worked there for nearly 50

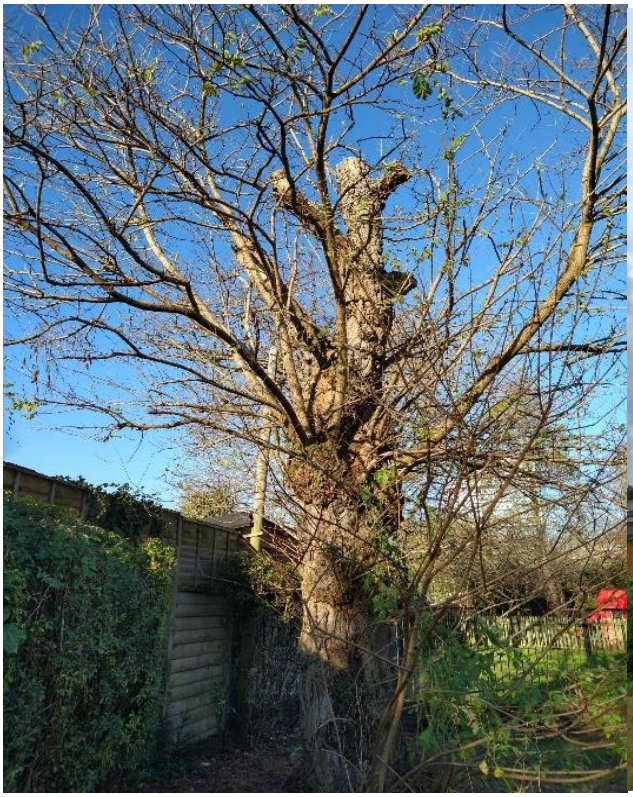
years. John Young loved the dray shire horses and was instrumental in stopping the eradication of shire horses in the trade. Sometimes heavy horses are used for park maintenance and biodiversity enhancement to prepare and for wildflower meadows.

Shire Horses Joey and William in King George's Park – Photo by kind permission of Enable

To the left of the evergreen tree near the back fence can you spot the two alder trees and the False Acacia with many burrs or knobbly growths on the trunk caused by stress/disease during tree growth.

Two Alder Trees **(10)**

Close Up of Alder Leaves and Fruits




False Acacia Tree (Also known as the Black Locust Tree) in Winter and in Summer **(11)**

Alder trees can take nitrogen out of the air and make soil more fertile through a symbiotic relationship with a bacterium in their root nodules. The alder catkins in the spring provide pollen and nectar for bees and insects (Source: Westonbirt Arboretum 2 March 2025).

To the right of the path are two English cherry trees in line with each other. If you turn around to leave the picnic area you will see next to the row of Hornbeam trees is a liquidambar maple tree which produces a variety of different coloured leaves of all different sizes in the Autumn.


English Cherry **(12)**

Liquidambar Maple **(13)**

If you exit via the gate opposite, you will see next to the bowling green a line of lime trees. To the left of the lime trees along the boundary with the road are two well pruned dark green Lombardy poplars.

Row of Limes **(14)** Next to the Bowling Green Two pillar Black Lombardy Poplars **(15)** Against the Fence

Lime trees are drought and pollution tolerant and are rich in nectar and pollen for bees and insects. (source: Forest Research Small-leaved lime (SLI) - Forest Research).

Walk past the black Lombardy poplars and turn left over the bridge again but this time turn right and walk along the line of cherry trees at the end is another red oak **(16)**. In front of you is an unusual Dawyck beech tree.

Winter Dawyck Beech showing column style growth in Winter but a broader tree in Summer **(17)**.

Classic brush shaped Mature Hornbeam in Winter and in Summer **(18)**

Further into this copse of trees is a naturally shaped hornbeam tree. If you stand with your back to the hornbeam, you will see a seat around another memorial oak tree for Young's Brewery. – finish.

Young's Brewery Oak and Memorial Seat **(Finish)**

Artwork in Front of the Seating Area

QUIZ

Match up the Autumnal leaves above to the following trees London plane, alder, red oak, cherry, acer, hornbeam, liquidambar maple, beech, common oak.

FOR NOTES ETC...

(e.g. nature notes and drawings)