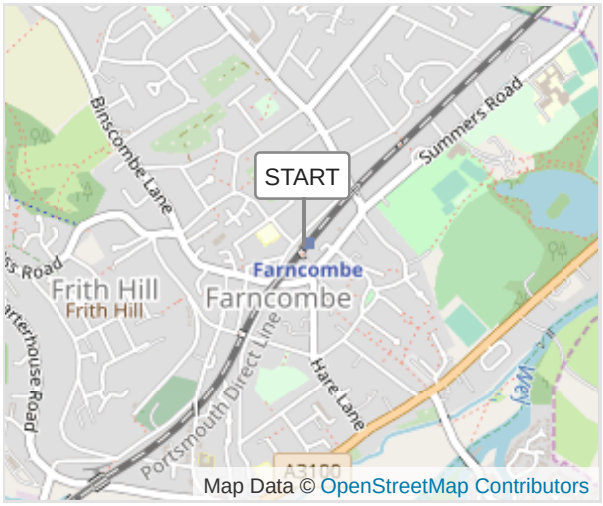
Farncombe
Tree Trail

Farncombe 08 - Farncombe Tree Trail

ROUTE INFORMATION

ROUTE LENGTH	1.842 miles
ASCENT	49 ft
DESCENT	49 ft
HILLS	↑ 31.3% | ↓ 40.6% | → 28.1%
TERRAIN	Mixed
START	**LAT:** 51.196887, **LNG:** -0.604613



NOTES

This is a circular walk, looking at trees on the land that was once part of the Broadwater estate. A large part of the estate now forms Broadwater Park but we will also find interesting trees on the way to the park. The walk is mostly along made up pavements and footpaths with only a short section along a more informal path. It will take about 2 hours to complete at a leisurely pace. If you prefer, you can split it into three, shorter walks (A-I, J-R and S-X.)

We will not stop to view every tree along the route! Instead, a good example of some of the many species has been selected for a close look. Some are native species such as Hazel and Beech. Others have been gathered from across the world but find the conditions here in Farncombe agreeable. Once you have seen the distinguishing features of a particular species, look out for other examples along the way.

Farncombe is a good stating point for a walk and can be reached by bus or train. The route starts at the train station where there are cycle stands. There is also covered cycle parking at the Leisure Centre in Summers Road, quite close to the end of the walk. You will find a public toilets at the junction of Station Road with Farncombe Street and in the park near point K.

If you need to take a rest at any time, you will find plenty of seats in the church Quiet Garden and around the lake in the park. There are opportunities to estimate the age of some trees and you may find it helpful to pop a measuring tape in your pocket, if you would like to try this.

There are cafes, shops and take-aways in Farncombe village for refreshment before you start or when you return. Several pubs, close to the route, serve food and they are indicated on the map.

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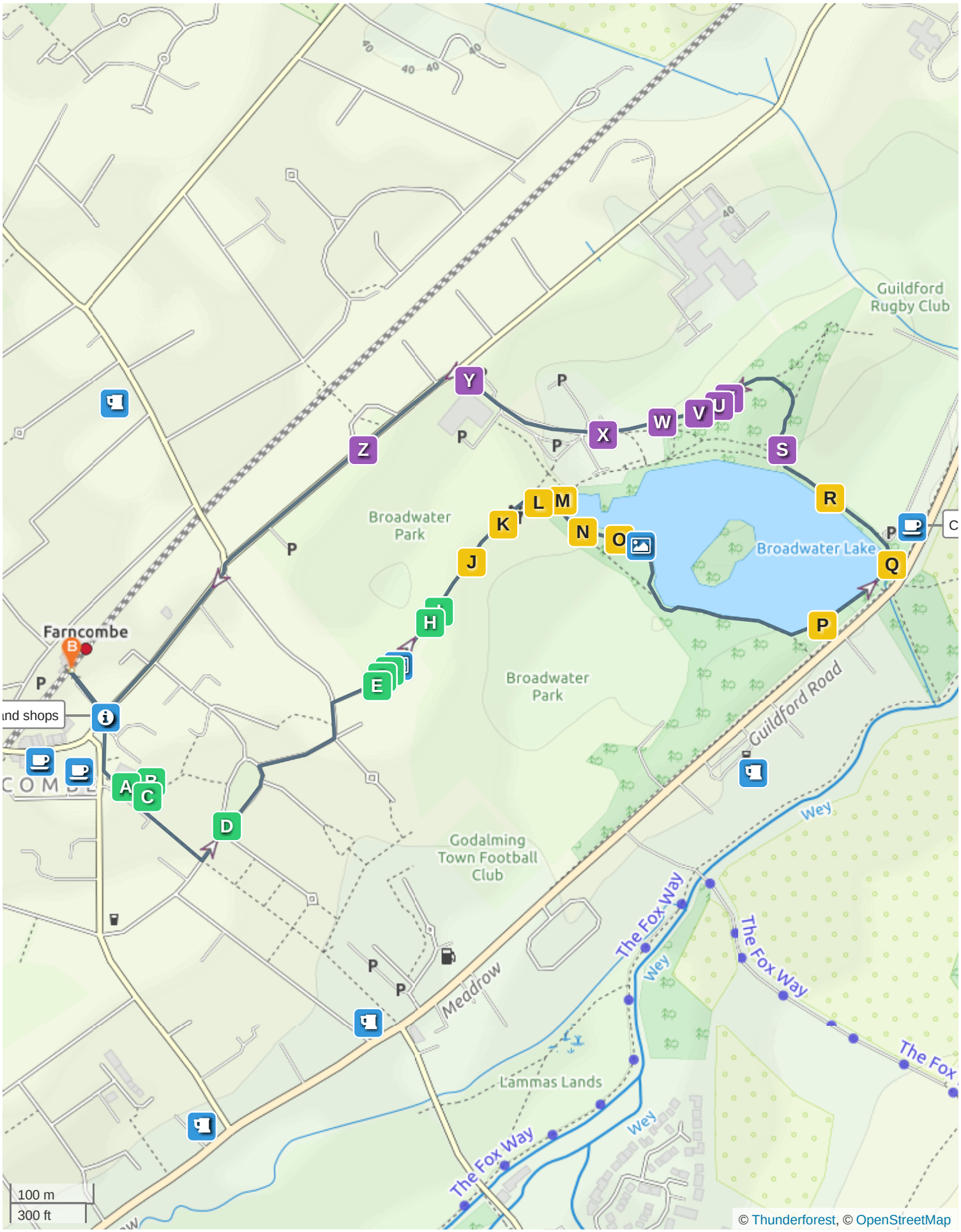

ROUTE DIRECTIONS

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
1	0.000	↑	Leave the station via the Portsmouth bound platform 2 and walk forward along the station access road.
2	0.040	↗	At the end of the station approach, cross the road and bear to your right before turning immediately left into St John's Street. (If you want some refreshment before starting your walk, Farncombe cafes and shops are close by on your right.) **Cafes and shops**
3	0.083	↖	 Opposite The Coop supermarket, turn left onto the footpath by the church. Stop by the porch.
4	0.094	↖	The 'Quiet Garden' around the church is worth a visit. Thanks to the dedication of a small group of volunteers, this garden has been created and is kept maintained for us to enjoy. Our first trees are in the rear part of the garden which is just past the church porch on your left.

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
5	0.101		 A) Yew (Taxus baccata) There are nine, largish trees with dark green foliage in the churchyard. These are yew trees. The first is immediately on your right as you enter the Quiet Garden. Yews are evergreen (they keep their leaves all year) and generally live to a good age. Because of their association with long life, they are often found planted at religious sites. The yews in the rear garden were probably planted here soon after the church was newly built, in 1849, with those at the front being added a bit later. A
6	0.126		 B) Deodar (Cedrus deodara) Walk on, into the Quiet Garden, and turn to your left behind the church to find a rather splendid cedar. The relaxed, downward sloping branches help to identify this as a Deodar which was introduced in the 1830's from the Himalayas where it is afforded religious significance. B

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
7	0.163		 C) Birch Continue round the garden to find the stark, white trunks of a row of 8 birch trees. They stand out at all times of the year but especially so in winter. In the wild, birch trees are often among the first trees to spring up on open land. However, these trees were specifically planted in 2008 when the churchyard was developed as a Quiet Garden for visitors to enjoy. They are probably Himalayan Birch (Betula utilis) and a variety called ‘jacquemontii’ that is noted for its exceptionally white bark. C
8	0.183	↙	Return to the church entrance and turn sharp left out of the Quiet Garden to follow the path.
9	0.215	↑	Continue forward through the arch.
10	0.266	←	Turn left and walk forward to the grass oval.

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
11	0.297	↗	 D) Lime At The Oval, take a moment to look at the three, mature trees in the middle of the green. The nearest has a tall, narrow shape while the one at the far end on the left has a broad crown. You might think that they are different trees but they are both Limes! They are probably variations of the Common lime (Tilia x europaea) which is a hybrid of the Large-leaved lime (Tilia platyphyllos) with the Small-leaved lime (Tilia cordata). They appear as young saplings in a photo of The Oval taken soon after it was built in the 1920s so you can work out their age. In some regions, the Lime is called the Linden. The tree on the right at the far end is an English oak (Quercus robur). It was planted in the 1990s as a replacement for another tree. We will look at oaks later. D
12	0.352	↗	Continue forward to the far end of the green and bear right into Pondfield Road.
13	0.412	↖	Bear left into Nursery Road.
14	0.438	→	 Turn right into the access road to the park.

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
15	0.472		 E) Conifer plantation Immediately on your right, just before you go through the metal gate/arch, is a mixed plantation of Scots pine (Pinus sylvestris) and Douglas fir (Pseudotsuga menziesii) These coniferous trees (they produce their seeds in cones) were planted in around 1920 to fill a strip of land that was not used as part of the adjacent housing estate. The nearest tree is a Scots pine. Notice the pink/orange tinges in the bark. Further into the plantation, you will see tall, straight trees with grey bark. These are Douglas firs. Can you find a cone from these trees? They are distinctive because a little 'tail' pokes out next to each scale of the cone. E
16	0.474	↑	Go through the metal gate/arch, into the car park, and find the first tree on the left.

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
17	0.479	↗	 F) Holm oak (Quercus ilex) This evergreen tree has leaves that are dark, shiny and slightly spiky. At first you might think it is a holly but, in fact, it's an oak! While the leaves may not be at all like the oak leaves you are familiar with, if you take a close look you may find acorns! There are three examples of this species within a short space and their size suggests that they may have been planted soon after the council acquired the land and turned it into a park in 1948. (The Latin name for this species has two parts. The first part, 'Quercus', indicates 'oak'. Can you find out what the second part, 'ilex', means?) F
18	0.487		 G) Silver maple (Acer saccharinum) Right next to the Holm oak is a large, Silver maple. The underside of its leaves are a silvery green which gives this maple its name. It is an introduction from North America where the sap of various Maple species is used to produce Maple Syrup. The Sugar maple (Acer saccharum) is favoured but the Silver maple may also be used. In Britain, it produces less sugar, but it makes a good ornamental tree. G

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
19	0.495	↑	 Before leaving the car park, pause to take in the view across the park. You are looking across a field that has been a cricket ground since 1827. It was developed for cricket by the Marshall family that owned the Broadwater estate. The ground is surrounded by fine, mature trees. At first glance, it looks as though many different species were planted; the trees vary greatly in shape and leaf colour. However, almost all of the larger trees are oaks! We will look at some of them more closely later in the walk.
20	0.498	↑	Leave the car park at the far end and continue forward along the surfaced path for about 50 yards to the first informal path on your right.

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
21	0.534		 H) English oak (Quercus robur) Stop where the first informal path branches off to the right and look at the large tree by this path. If you know no other tree, you can probably identify an oak. The acorns and the leaves, with their rounded fingers, are familiar to us. The National Trust and Surrey County Council both use oak leaves in their logo. The oak is a symbol of dependability. But, in fact, there are many different species of oak and many variations within the species. You will find a large selection in the park. The one just off the path to the right is a good example. The shape of its leaves, with their rounded fingers and no stalk, suggests that this is an English oak. If it's the right time of year, look for an acorn. Does it have a stalk? If the answer is 'Yes', then this is another indicator that this is an English oak. If you have something to measure with, check the girth of the tree. This is the circumference of the trunk at about chest height. If you measure in inches, you can make a rough estimation of the age. For oaks, one inch indicates about one year of growth. H

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
22	0.544		 I) Field maple (Acer campestre) Before moving on, take a look at the trees immediately to the left of the oak. They may appear to be one tree but, look more closely and you will find that there are at least two that look very similar. They are Field maples. Take a look again and you may discover slight differences between the trees.... the leaf shapes and the colour of the winged seeds vary. It is not unusual to find slight differences between individual examples of the same species. The Field maple looks especially splendid in its autumn colours and produces attractively patterned wood that has many uses including the making of furniture and musical instruments. I
23	0.547	↑	If you are completing the trail in shorter sections, this is a good point to take a break. To return to the station, head across the park towards the cricket pavilion. To continue the Tree Trail, walk forward along the surfaced path until you reach the children's play area.

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
24	0.588		 J) Aspen (Populus tremula) Even the slightest of breezes will set the leaves of the aspen trembling. Listen for a moment and you may hear them! This gives rise to this tree's Latin name, 'tremula'. The aspen is a 'pioneer tree' being one of the first species to colonise new ground. It has the ability to send up new shots from its roots which may grow to become significant trunks. If the Aspen here come from a single root system, are you actually looking at just one tree? Look for the dark, diamond shapes on its bark. J

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
25	0.625		 K) Sweet chestnut (Castanea sativa) Go to the far end of the children's play area and, on your right, you will discover a tree that has clearly had a hard life! It is a Sweet chestnut. The original trunk has fallen but, not to be beaten, a fresh circle of shoots have sprung up around its position. This demonstrates the chestnut's ability to regenerate, a feature that was used in past time to deliberately force the tree to produce fresh crops of useful, straight poles. This was called 'coppicing'. It involved routinely cutting the tree to the ground every few years to harvest the poles and force new ones to grow. The large leaves with their toothed edges and the clusters of long, tail-like catkins, make the chestnut easy to spot. The closely-spiked pods contain the distinctive nuts that give the tree its common name. It is such a familiar sight in Britain that it would be easy to mistake it for a native tree. In fact, it was introduced to Britain by the Romans. Can we tell how old this particular tree is? The oak we looked at earlier was living so we made the best estimate we could by measuring its girth. Here, there is an opportunity to count the rings in the fallen trunk. Each year, in the summer, the tree grows quickly while, in the winter, it hardly grows at all. This shows up as the grain or 'rings' in timber. There's no middle to this trunk so we cannot simply count all the rings but we can count them in the part that's left. Count the number of rings across the width of your hand and then measure your hand when you get home. Work out the number of rings per inch (or per centimetre) than multiply by the radius of the tree to get an estimate of its age. The radius is about 30 inches (75 centimetres.) If you have a tape measure, you can check it for yourself. And, if you want to work out when it was planted, you will need to take into account the size of the new, living trunks as well. K
26	0.648	↗	A short distance past the public conveniences, bear right along the path towards the lake and find the first tree on the left.

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
27	0.658		 L) Beech (Fagus sylvatica) The sturdy, upright trunk, with its silvery bark and the striking, coppery coloured autumn leaves, make the Beech a magnificent tree. Its wood has many uses, notably for making furniture. L
28	0.676		 M) Dawn redwood (Metasequoia glyptostroboides) This tree is right next to the beech, a little closer to the lake. Three species of tree are given the name 'redwood' and all three can be found in the park. This is the first. At one time, the Dawn redwood was only known as fossilised remains and was thought to be extinct. However, in the 1940's, some living examples were discovered in China. They were propagated and subsequently distributed around the world. It is one of the few coniferous trees to lose its leaves in winter. M
29	0.678	➔	At the lake, turn sharp right and follow the path around the lake to the point where an informal path branches off to the right.

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
30	0.710		 N) London plane (Platanus x hispanica) Next to the informal path on the right, is a London plane. Perhaps its most distinctive feature is its scaly bark. This peels to reveal pale patches that stand out in contrast to the darker, old bark. The leaves have five, broadly triangular lobes with additional, smaller serrations. The spherical fruits may remain on the tree in winter, decorating it like baubles on a Christmas tree. The London plane is a cross between the American plane and Oriental plane and was widely planted in cities because it proved to be tolerant of the air pollution that adversely affected other trees. N
31	0.715	↑	Continue forward along the surfaced path to where there are views of the lake. The next tree is on the left by a bench that faces the lake.
32	0.738		 O) Swamp cypress (Taxodium distichum) This tree was introduced to Britain from the south-east United States where it commonly grows in swamps. In these conditions, where there is limited oxygen in the soil, the tree will push up 'air-roots' out of the ground. As yet, there is no sign of this happening in Broadwater Park! Like the Dawn redwood, the Swamp cypress is one of the few conifers that looses its leaves in winter. O

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
33	0.754	↗	 Pause to admire the view across the lake. One tree dominates all others. We will look at it more closely in a while.
34	0.758	↑	Continue forward enjoying further views of the lake. Can you spot any further examples of the trees we have identified so far?
35	0.907	↖	 Keep left where a surfaced path branches off to the road on the right. Pass the first bench and, about 20 paces further on, you will find our next stop. Its not so much a tree, more a large shrub growing between the path and the lake on the left hand side. It's just past the clump of bamboo.

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
36	0.931		 P) Hazel (Corylus avellana) Hazel is growing extensively in the park but tends to grow amongst everything else! This example stands more or less on its own... but don't get it muddled with the two trees behind! Traditionally, hazel was cut to the ground every few years, initiating strong, new growth. Far from weakening the plant this 'coppicing' rejuvenated the plant and prolonged its life. The straight and pliable poles that this process produced, formed an important countryside commodity that was used for many purposes including fencing and furniture making. In the 20th century, hazel coppicing fell into decline as its products were replaced by wire and plastic. Where hazel has not been managed by coppicing, its many branches become thick and useless. Wildlife also suffers as the plant shades out the woodland floor and its crop of nuts become less bountiful. Thankfully, the practice is being revived in places where good woodland management is once more practised. P
37	0.942	↑	Continue forward to cross the footbridge over the lake outflow. Then find the first tree on the left. It's beside the lake opposite the bench.

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
38	0.999		 Q) Alder (Alnus glutinosa) Alder thrives in wet locations and so it is no surprise to find it growing around the lake and more generally along the River Wey valley. The wood, which is a bright orange-red when first cut, is unusually durable in wet conditions. Its roots have a strong association with a bacterium that fixes nitrogen in the soil enabling the alder to grow in relatively poor soils where other trees would not survive. Small alders are easy to confuse with Hazel. If you can spot the fruit, it helps. Alder has fruit that looks like small cones while Hazel has nuts. Alder leaves are blunt at the tip while Hazel has a distinct point. (A cafe van can usually be found in the adjacent car park.) Q
39	1.011	←	Keep left to stay on the lakeside path and then continue forward until you reach the first tree that is very close to the path on the left hand side.
40	1.069		 R) Willow The Willow is a common, waterside plant but there are surprisingly few examples in Broadwater Park. This one is probably a Crack willow (Salix fragilis), its name coming from the loud sound it makes when a branch breaks. R

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
41	1.107	↗	Once you are passed the playing field on your right, you will come to an area of woodland. If you are completing the trail in shorter sections, this is a good point to take a break. To return to the station, continue forward along the surfaced path by the lake. To continue the Tree Trail, turn away from the lake and up the informal path into the woodland on your right. (The path here is unsurfaced and a short section has roots protruding.) Our next tree is the first on on your right. Some local people call this 'The Elephant Tree'. You will see why.
42	1.122		 S) Giant redwood - 'Wellingtonia' (Sequoiadendron giganteum) This is the second of the three species of redwood growing in the park. It is the Giant redwood. This specimen is the tall tree visible from the other side of the lake and it stands head and shoulders over all of the other trees. The Giant redwood was brought to Britain in the 1850's and planted in an avenue on the Duke of Wellington's estate, Stratfield Saye in Hampshire. It is sometimes called the 'Wellingtonia' in memory of the Duke. S
43	1.129	↗	Pass the Giant redwood on your right, continuing forward on the informal path. Then follow the curve of the path 180 degrees round to the left. You may find it helpful to check the map.

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
44	1.219		 T) Monterey pine (Pinus radiata) Pass a large oak on your left and, immediately, you will see the splendid Monterey pine. It can be identified by its lop-sided cones which can remain on the tree for many years. It was introduced in the 1830's from the Monterey peninsular of California, the only place where it grows naturally. T
45	1.229		 U) Coast Redwood (Sequoia sempervirens) Right next to the Monterey pine you will find the Coast redwood. This, the last of the three redwoods. It was introduced into Britain from the west coast of the United States in the 1840's. In its native habitat, it can live for several thousand years and grow to a height of several hundred feet so this one has some way to go! U
46	1.236	↑	Continue forward for a short way to where the path divides.

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
47	1.244		 V) Horse chestnut (Aesculus hippocastanum) On your left, you will find a tree that is familiar to many as the source of shiny, autumn 'conkers'. These are formed in pods that have fewer spikes than the Sweet chestnut. The large, hand like leaves are another distinguishing feature. The Latin name starts with 'hippo', which seems a strange association. Can you find out what 'hippo' means? Note that Horse chestnut conkers must NOT be eaten. V
48	1.250	↗	Keep to your right, following the line of the fence, to the edge of a grassy area.
49	1.273		 W) Sycamore (Acer pseudoplatanus) On your right, you will find two Sycamores. Their five pointed leaves, give an indication that the Sycamore is a member of the maple family. It was introduced to Britain, possibly in Roman times, and grows vigorously here, often out-competing other species. To help spot a Sycamore, look for the red leaf stalks. W
50	1.279	↑	Keep forward along the 'plastic grid' track until you reach the surfaced road.

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
51	1.318		 X) Ash Two ash trees face you as you come to the road. The multiple 'leaflets' (9 to 13), that make up the ash leaf, help to identify this tree. There are two species here. The one on the left is a Common Ash (Fraxinus excelsior) while the one on the right is probably a Narrow-leaved ash (Fraxinus angustifolia.) A little further along on your left, beside the road into the car park, you will find several, much larger, mature examples of Common ash. Ash produces strong, white wood which has many uses including handles for tools, spars for boats and sports equipment such as hockey sticks. X
52	1.337	↑	Keep forward passing the 'crinkle crankle' wall that enclosed the estate kitchen gardens on your right and along the road with speed bumps.
53	1.392	↑	Cross the access road to pass in front of the leisure centre and the cycle racks until you reach the hedge by Summers Road.

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
54	1.428		 Y) Indian bean tree (Catalpa bignonioides) The tree on your left, just before you reach the hedge around the park, is a native of the southern United States which was brought to Britain in the 1700's. It is very late coming into leaf and flower but may still produce fruit. This is in the form of long pods that can stay on the tree through the winter. Y
55	1.437	←	Turn left along Summers Road. (If you prefer, you can follow the hedge just inside the park boundary.)
56	1.528		 Z) Parade of oaks Specimen oaks surround the cricket ground but it is worth paying special attention to the row of oaks lining the edge of the park by Summers Road. There is only one tree in this line that is not an oak. (See if you can spot which one.) But there is great variety in the oaks themselves! As you return towards Farncombe and the rail station, take a look at the differences in leaf, bark, acorn and, at certain times of the year, colour of these wonderful trees. Z

No	Miles	Turn	Directions
57	1.544		Maybe your head is spinning with all the new things you have learnt today? There were other trees that could (perhaps should!) have been included... Hawthorn, Holly and Hornbeam, just to name the H's. If you come to the park again, you might like to bring a 'tree book' and spot some more for yourself. Or simply come and enjoy those you have seen already 'wearing different clothes' as the seasons change. The walk was compiled by Martyn Sandford with thanks to Councillor Shirley Wardell, who originated the idea for a tree trail, and to Alan Betts and Peter Herring for their help and enthusiasm with picking the trees to include and checking identifications. (All photographs by Martyn Sandford.)
58	1.660	↑	Cross Nursery Road and continue along Summers Road to find the station approach on your right.
59	1.842		

Walks in the Surrey Hills from Farncombe Station

Farncombe is surrounded by the Surrey Hills, an area of outstanding natural beauty. It is a great place to start a walk. The Farncombe Tree Trail is one of several that start and end at Farncombe station. The station is conveniently located on the Waterloo to Portsmouth line.

The walks are mapped using Plotaroute, a free, on-line route planning tool. Plotaroute is used to plan outdoor pursuits worldwide but it is a Godalming based business that we are delighted to recommend.

The Farncombe Tree Trail can be found on Plotaroute at:
https://www.plotaroute.com/route/1078034?units=miles

Further walks from Farncombe Station can be found at:
https://bit.ly/3hsOcmh

The walks are of varying length and you can follow them in Plotaroute on a smartphone or print them like this guide.

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