



## Speech House

**SUMMARY** A short circular forest walk on good surfaces, mainly level with some gentle inclines.

**START** Forestry Commission car park at Cyril Hart Arboretum, 200 yards from Speech House towards Cinderford on B4226.

### WALK INFO

**DISTANCE** 2½ MILES

**No. OF GATES** 4

**No. OF STILES** 0

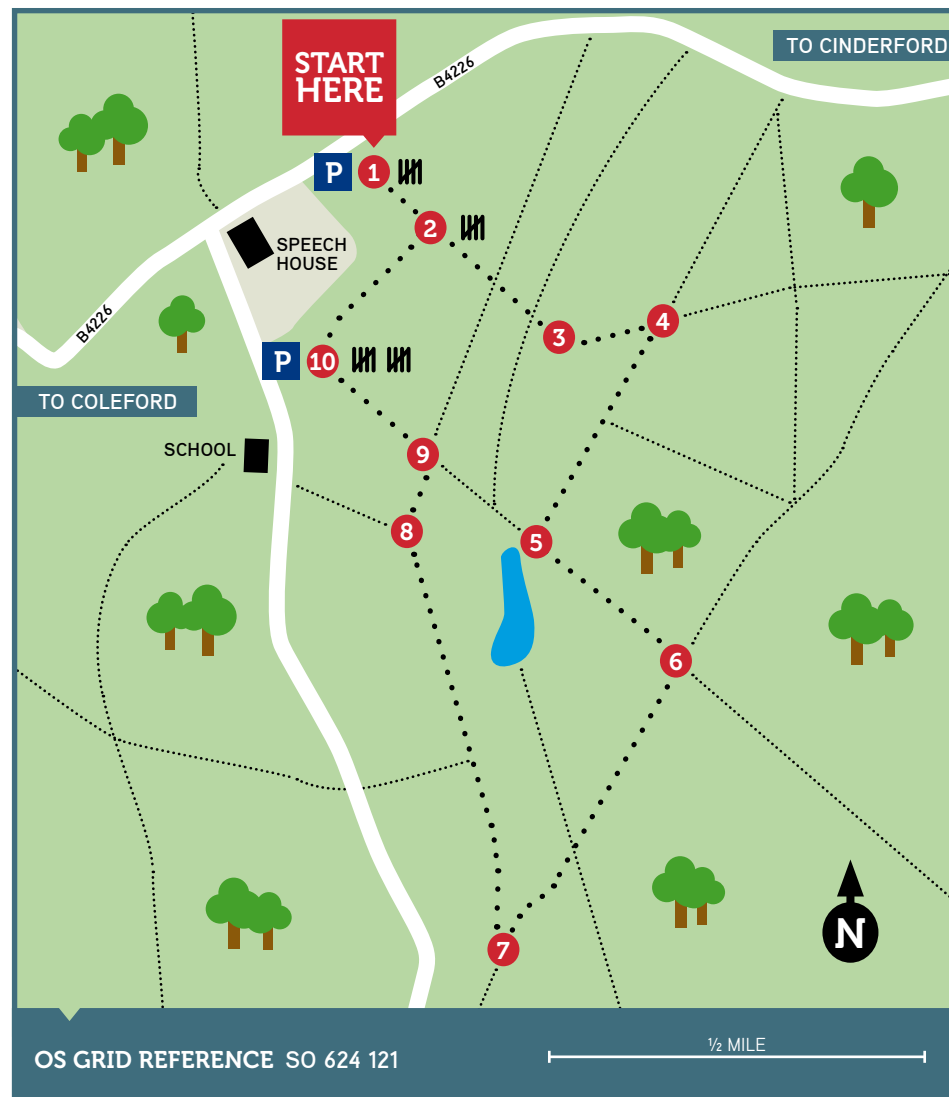
- Leave the car park and enter the Cyril Hart Arboretum [1] which has fine specimen trees, is laid out for the visually impaired and is itself a pleasant short walk. Follow the main path directly ahead leaving via another gate [2] to enter the forest. The first part of the walk is marked with green arrows. Notice the boundary stone near the gate.

- Keep on this forest track, ignoring crossings until it bears sharply left [3]. Continue to a diagonal crossing [4] and turn sharp right (green arrow) onto another forest track. Walk downhill to a wide track, Spruce Ride [5]. For the main walk turn left onto Spruce Ride; for a shorter route continue to follow the green arrows, turning right and rejoining the main route at [9]. At this junction is Speech House Lake, which is worth a detour to explore.

- Follow Spruce Ride up a gentle incline and at the brow of the hill turn right onto another track [6] with marker post M1. This track descends, crosses a stream and climbs to join Trafalgar Avenue [7]. Turn right passing through new plantations; you are walking through a working forest where timber is continually cut and new trees planted. If you are lucky, you may spot wild deer nearby. Trafalgar Avenue continues past Nelson Grove, into mature conifers before bearing right [8] and then rejoining Spruce Ride [9]. The names here commemorate the visit of Nelson to the area in 1802 following which parliament passed an act that the Dean was to be replanted with oaks for the Royal Navy. The boundary stone you saw earlier also commemorates this act and in Trafalgar Avenue 200 oaks were planted by local people on the 200th anniversary of Trafalgar in 2005.

- At Spruce Ride, turn left (marker post M2 and green arrow). After a short distance pass through a wide gate to a parking area and immediately turn right through a smaller gate to re-enter the arboretum [10], following the paths back to the start of the walk.

- From the arboretum, you will see the back



of the Speech House built during the reign of Charles II. Speech House, today a hotel but still owned by the crown, is where the Verderers' Court meets. The Verderers were originally responsible for the governance of the Forest, particularly protecting the vert and venison (trees and animals) for the King. The Verderers' Court is the oldest establish court in England but today its role is largely as an intermediary between the local public and the Forestry

Commission ensuring long established traditions are maintained. Dr Cyril Hart, after whom the arboretum is named was a verderer for over 50 years.

- Having completed the walk, why not go to the Speech House to see the court and have some refreshments!