

Post 21

ASPEN TREES

The hedge to your right is composed of aspen trees, which are a member of the willow family.

They grow on the wet clay soils

here on the top of the downs, but are an unusual choice for a hedge. The leaves dangle from long thin stalks and so turn in the slightest breeze, giving rise to the phrase 'trembling like an aspen'.

For this reason this tree was once associated with the curing of fevers.



Aspen leaves

In 'Folklore of the Northern Counties' (1866), William Henderson wrote of a Lincolnshire girl who, seeking to be cured, pinned a lock of her hair to an aspen tree saying,

"Aspen tree, aspen tree, I prithee to shake and shiver instead of me".

The patient was then said to have returned home in silence and never again been troubled with fever. It was also believed that if a cutting of a finger nail was pressed into the bark of the aspen by someone suffering from a disease, they would be cured when the bark of the tree grew over the nail.

Further along,
the hedge is
mainly formed
from blackthorn.
This tree has
very sharp thorns
and produces
suckers to form a
thick,
impenetrable
hedge, favoured by birds for nesting.
The round fruits have a purple bloom
and are often used to make a sweet
liqueur called 'sloe gin'.



Sloes

Follow the edge of the field
around to the left to post 22
(see map below).

NATURE TRAIL MAP

