

The National Trust's Allen Banks and Staward Peel (a Site of Special Scientific Interest) provides a wonderful area to visit and has many well managed tree species to find and identify. It is one of the largest areas of ancient woodland in Northumberland, lying in the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It was largely created in Victorian times by Susan Davidson, wife of the then owner of the adjacent Ridley Hall. She laid out 65 flower beds in the formal gardens and organised the system of paths, rustic bridges and summerhouses. Allen Banks has become a fantastic home for a variety of flora, fauna and fungi. It is especially well known for its carpets of bluebells and wild garlic, which cover the woodland floor in spring and early summer, but provides a great visitor experience in any season of the year.



## GETTING TO ALLEN BANKS



### By road

A69 from A1 at Newcastle 24 miles.  
A69 from M6 at Carlisle 29 miles.

### By rail

Newcastle – Carlisle service calls at Bardon Mill Walk?? (check timetables).

### By bus

685 service Newcastle – Carlisle (hourly during the day)



Cover: Ash (CW3) 1817



1789-1854

## John Martin Heritage Festival

Haydon Bridge, Northumberland  
March 2011 - September 2012

# The Character of Trees

Use Martin's prints to help you identify trees at Allen Banks



## John Martin 1789 ~ 1854

*John Martin*



John Martin was born at East Land Ends in the village of Haydon Bridge on the 19th July 1789. From very humble beginnings he went on to become the 'most popular artist of his day'. His early influences were the landscape and nature of the Tyne Valley, its lightning storms, floods and his staunch protestant upbringing.

The now wooded areas of Allen Banks and Staward Gorge he knew well. From his early life in the village he moved first to Newcastle and then on to London, fame and fortune.

He worked not only in oil on canvas and watercolour but was to become a fine engraver. His work in mezzotint (see right panel) has never been surpassed.



*'By birth, my station could scarcely have been humbler than it was'.*

*The Martin family shared a one roomed cottage – the left end of this simple stone building you can see today.*

His early work in etching on copper plate included a very fine series on trees he knew. This was to be his first published work on 15th May 1817. It had seven prints stitched onto a paper wrapper with a simple yellow label noting the contents and Martin's status as 'Landscape painter to Her Royal Highness the Princess Charlotte and His Royal Highness the Prince of Saxe-Coburg'. The Prince, later King Leopold of the Belgians, became his great friend following their sharing of lodgings earlier in 1814 at 77 High Street Marylebone.

The booklet was published by Rudolf Ackermann, Repository of Arts at 101 The Strand as a 'Drawing Book' at a price of 12 shillings (the equivalent about £26 now). Today complete sets of the images are extremely rare and valuable as are any individual prints from the series.



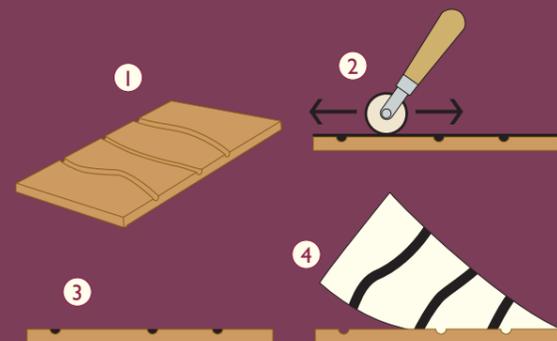
Figures on a stile 1840

Laing Art Gallery (Tyne and Wear Museums)



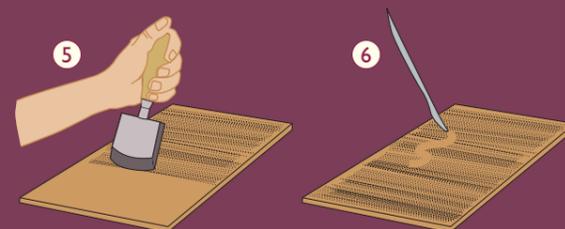
The Evening of the Deluge 1828  
Mezzotint and engraving

Both mezzotint and etching are types of printing known as *intaglio*, where the image is incised into the surface of a printing plate ①. Ink is rolled on to the surface ② and then wiped off the surface of the plate, only leaving ink in the depressions ③. Paper is placed on the plate and a heavy roller applied, transferring the ink to the paper ④.



### Mezzotint

With mezzotint the plate is roughened with a special 'rocker' tool ⑤. These areas will print black as the ink is held in the tiny pits in the surface. To create an image, areas are smoothed with a burnishing tool ⑥. A totally smooth surface will print white; a range of tones can be achieved by amount that the background is smoothed down. This technique can be combined with engraving additional lines and detail with a sharp point.



### Etching

Etching uses an acid bath to cut the design into the printing plate. The plate is covered with a 'ground', usually a hard wax. The design is drawn into the wax, exposing the bare metal. The acid eats into the exposed areas, leaving lines sunk into the plate. The depth of the lines – and how black they will print – is controlled by the time the plate is left in the acid bath.

Shown here are the Ash, Elm, Horse Chestnut, Lime and Oak. The 'CW' refers to the catalogue index of Martin's works compiled by Michael J. Campbell and J. Dustin Wees for a 1992 exhibition in New York.

Although trees were to become a strong feature of Martin's landscapes he did not produce detailed studies such as the foliage in these prints. The etchings were completed 1817, working from watercolour originals.

Why not use the etchings of trees and leaves John Martin produced to become a tree detective and identify these common species for yourself as you walk on the picturesque paths of the Allen riverside?

Other trees you might see – not illustrated by Martin – are Beech, Holly, Hazel, Sycamore, Sweet Chestnut, Yew and Birch.



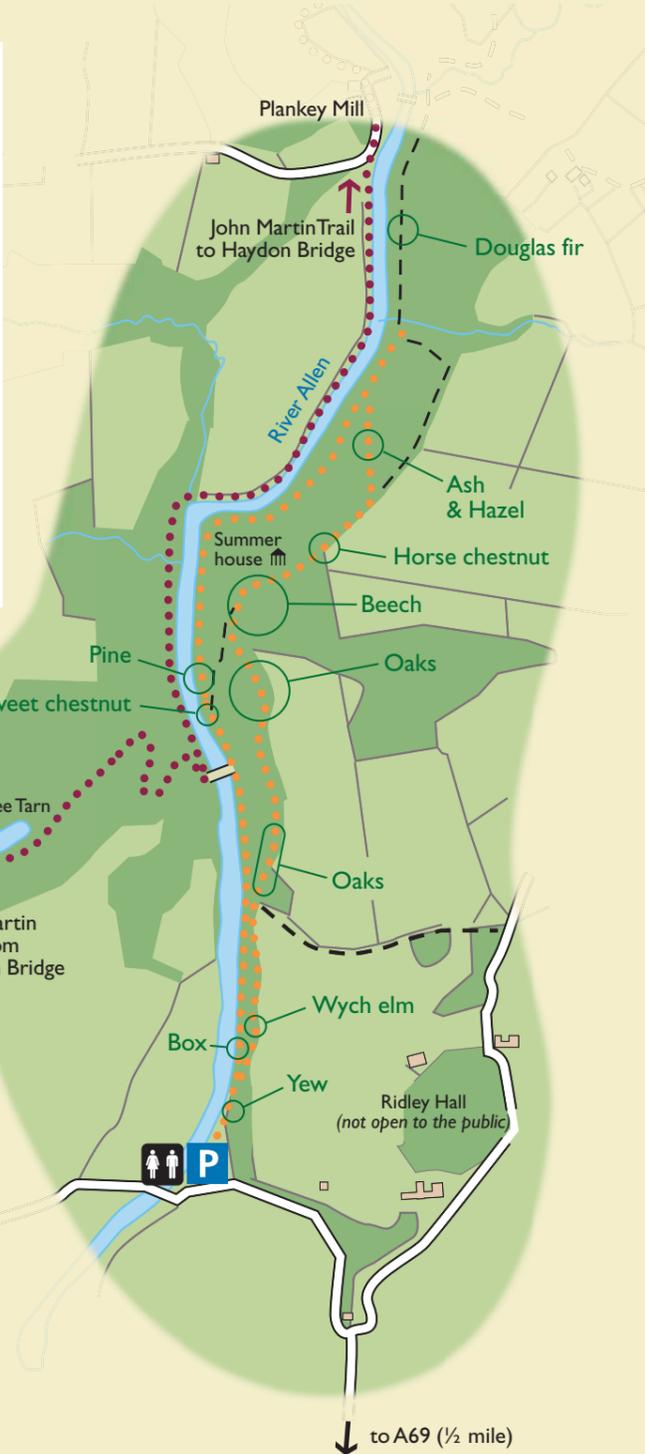
Beech



Pine CW8



Lime CW6



Oak CW7



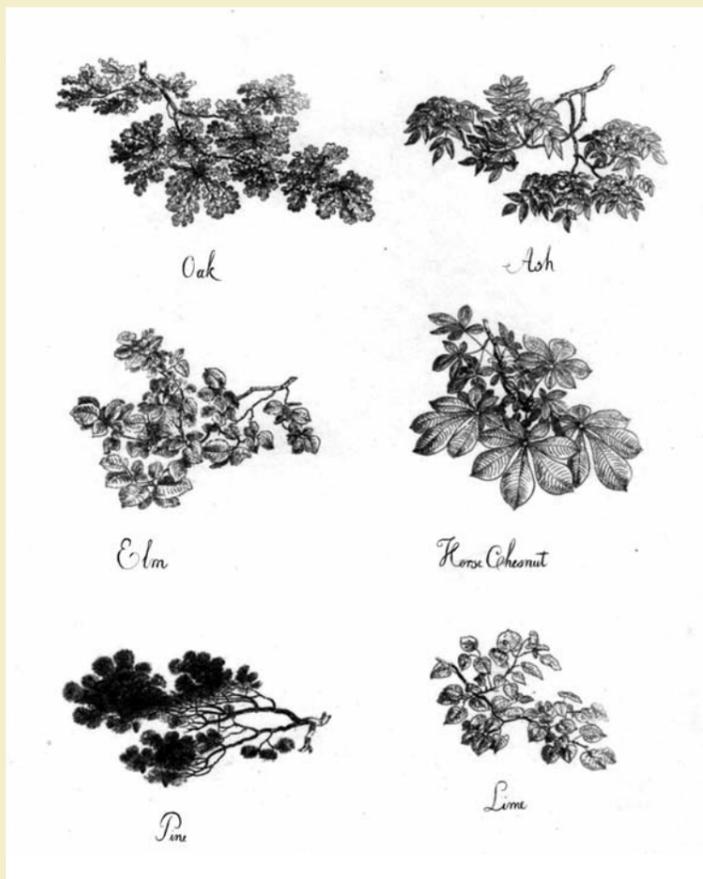
Ash CW3



Sweet chestnut



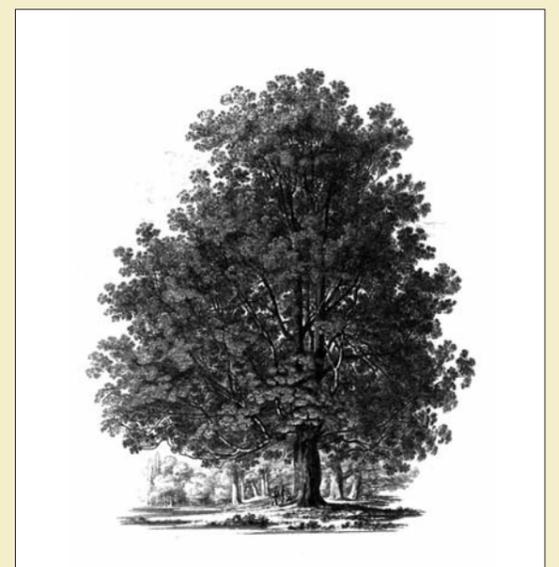
Elm CW4



[A branch, with foliage, of each tree] CW9



Hazel



Horse Chestnut CW5

The Elm was once very common throughout England and Europe until the advent of Dutch elm disease, a fungus spread by a beetle. However, some have survived in this northerly area and there are many mature Elms still in Scotland. Dutch elm disease resistant saplings have been grown from an ancient, immune, English tree found in Essex and some 2000 are now available at around 3 metres tall.