Other names: Gean

Origins: Widespread through Europe, North Africa and western Asia; common scattered through woodland and in hedges.

How to recognise it: Masses of clustered white flowers before the leaves open are obvious; the bark is grey-pink when young, darkening with age and has highly characteristic, cory horizontal banding; leaves are long, pointed, and with forward-pointing teeth; they tend to hang and have a paler underside, and turn yellow to red-purple in autumn. The fruit ripens from yellow through to black.

Limits of growth: Max. height: 31m Max. girth: 5.5m+ Max. Age: Probably rarely more than 80 years. Found up to 400m altitude

Life of the tree: Cherry will grow on most soils with good drainage. Small groups often arise from suckers but it never seems to form more than small patches in woodland - perhaps because the adult trees like a lot of light. The white blossom makes the trees stand out on wooded banks in April, before most leaves are out. Full fruiting develops only at about 25 years of age and is rarely sweet enough in the Lake District for human taste.

Uses: Cherry timber is a warm red-brown streaked with other colours; the curling grain makes for attractive veneers. It works well and takes a good polish and so is still in demand for high quality cabinet making and musical instruments. It was formerly used also for barrel hoops and for smokers’ pipes. It is the parent of cultivated cherries and is often used as a rootstock for cultivated varieties in orchards and gardens.

Plant classification: Magnoliidae(Dicotyledons)