

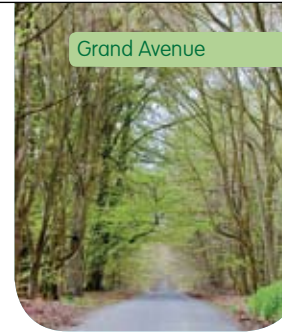


Front Cover

Information

There are no vehicular rights within the forest although cars are currently permitted along the Grand Avenue and into the picnic area during daylight hours. If you do leave your car parked in the Forest please make sure it is locked and you have removed all of your valuables.

Access is permitted by foot but visitors are asked to respect the privacy of those residents still living within the forest and observe any warning or information signs. At times tracks within the forest can be wet and muddy so please dress accordingly. Sat Nav reference for Postern Hill Car Park: SN8 4ND



Grand Avenue

Telephone numbers

Postern Hill Campsite Warden
Savernake Estate
Forestry Commission Office
Forest Holidays, Central Booking

01672 515195
01672 512161
01793 388905
0845 130 8224

Tourist Information Centre (TIC) in The Library
High Street Marlborough
Open Mon & Thurs
Wed, Fri & Sat (until 4pm)
Closed Tuesday & Sundays

01672 515190
10am - 8pm
9.30am - 5pm

Savernake Parish Council hopes that you find this pamphlet useful and any monies from it will be used for educational and environmental projects in the Forest.
Photographs © 2003- 2007. Published by Forestry Commission, 2008



Savernake Forest is internationally important for its ancient trees and associated habitats.

The Forest extends to 1100 Hectares (2750 acres) most of which is classified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest as well as being registered as an important historic park. Its long history as a forest has left us with an outstanding legacy of old trees, rich landscape and biodiversity. Current management is focused on conserving the most important aspects of this character.

The history of the Forest goes back for a thousand years or more. It became a Royal Forest soon after the Norman Conquest and an ancestor of the present owner, the Earl of Cardigan, Trustee of the Savernake Estate, was appointed as the first Warden. During medieval times the word "forest" did not refer to an extensive area of woodland, but to an area which was administered under Forest Law. These laws were concerned with the protection of deer and the timber rights of the King. In those days the Forest probably consisted of small woodlands and extensive areas of wood pasture amongst scattered trees and scrub. Many of the largest oak trees in Savernake date from the medieval period.



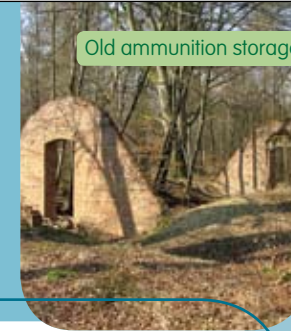
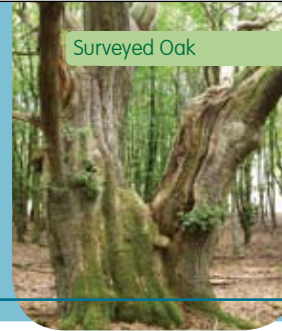
One of the oldest trees is the Big Bellied Oak which is very noticeable on the side of the A346 road, south of Cadley.

This is an old pollard which, traditionally, would have been managed by having its branches lopped off at regular intervals for firewood and fodder. The trunk has a circumference of 10.8m at 1.5m making it the largest oak in the Forest. The tree could date back to Saxon times. In June 2002, in recognition of its place in the national heritage, The Tree Council designated The Big Belly Oak as one of fifty Great British Trees to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Inside Left

There are many other old and named trees in Savernake.

Some of these are signed and many are accessible on foot. An important aspect of current and future management is to extend the life of these old trees by removing some of the surrounding younger trees that crowd them.



In 1547 Savernake ceased to be a Royal Forest and became the property of Edward Seymour, the 15th Hereditary Warden, Duke of Somerset and Lord Protector of his nephew, the young King Edward VI. During the 18th Century the then hereditary wardens laid down the foundations of the modern forest with rides meeting at Eight Walks. They planted avenues and clumps of beech, oak and sweet chestnut which characterize the forest today. There are many beech trees along Grand Avenue which at 3.9 miles is the longest avenue in Britain. Other avenues of beech are on Charcoal Burners and Long Harry. Sweet chestnuts can be seen along the SE section of Amity Drive. Located off Three Oak Hill Drive is the Ailesbury Column which was erected in 1781 to celebrate the return to health of King George III. This forms the focal point of the main view from Tottenham House.

Since 1939 the majority of the woodland has been managed by the Forestry Commission with the freehold retained by the Savernake Estate. During WWII the Forest became a giant ammunition dump and remains of storage facilities can be seen along Charcoal Burners and Grand Avenue. Plantations of young trees were made between 1945 and 1970 and during this time the arboretum near Eight Walks was established.

Inside Right