

Bedwyn Circular (via Savernake Forest and Marlborough)			Bedwyn Circular (Extended Version)		
1 <sup>st</sup> walk check	2 <sup>nd</sup> walk check	3 <sup>rd</sup> walk check	1 <sup>st</sup> walk check	2 <sup>nd</sup> walk check	3 <sup>rd</sup> walk check
01 <sup>st</sup> May 2023					
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## Bedwyn Circular (via Savernake Forest and Marlborough)

**Start & Finish:** Bedwyn Station

Bedwyn Station, map reference SU 279 644, is 103 km west south west of London, 120m above sea level and in **Wiltshire**.

**Length:** 31.0 km (19.3 mi).

**Cumulative ascent/descent:** 407m.

For a shorter or a longer walk, *see below* **Walk Options**.

**Toughness:** 7 out of 10

**Time:** 7 hours walking time.

For the whole outing, including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 10 ½ hours.

**Transport:** Bedwyn Station is on the Berkshire and Hampshire line from London Paddington. The journey time is from 65 minutes. Currently, a change is needed at Reading or Newbury.

A Newbury – Bedwyn train will wait for up to 5 minutes for a delayed train from Paddington.

**Saturday Walkers' Club:** Take the train closest to 09.00 hours.

**OS Landranger Map:** 173 (Swindon & Devizes)

**OS Explorer Map:** 157 (Marlborough & Savernake Forest)

### Walk Notes:

A meandering route through Savernake Forest with its veteran trees and through historic Marlborough. Savernake Forest today is just a fraction of its historical size, but yet is the largest privately owned forest in Britain. It stands on a Cretaceous chalk plateau within the North Wessex Downs AONB, presenting as rolling downland serrated by four shallow dry and wet valleys. This creates the damp heavy soils well suited to oak and beech woods. Pollarding has taken place for many generations, leading to the trees developing sizeable girths and having curved pieces of bows. Some of the picturesque veteran trees are over 1,000 years old and many have recently been protected, named and signed. More than 20 of the named trees are passed on this walk, as well as numerous other grand oak, beech and chestnut specimen.

The forest itself is a mixture of some plantations (outside of the core area), Ancient Woodland, landscaped spaces, pastures, commons and other open areas and a few long avenues with grand vistas.

Its timber has been managed by the Forestry Commission since 1939, but under the condition that the public shall have access to it (apart from a few clearly marked private areas).

The link routes from and to Great Bedwyn cross some pastures and smaller woods and lead through the landscaped Tottenham Park, ending with a scenic descent into a valley, while the route from the forest into Marlborough follows a dismantled railway line and goes through the river meadows of the Kennet and the Old Town. After lunch, you walk out of the historic market town with its extra-wide High Street and through fields back into Savernake.

Amongst the many walk options are several out-and-backs or loops to or past veteran trees not on the main walk, as well as one through the Chisbury Camp hillfort site.

### Walk Options:

**A slightly longer start** leads through the wooded Chisbury Camp hillfort Site and enables a look at the early 13<sup>th</sup> century St. Martin's Chapel (English Heritage), this adds 750m and 20m ascent.

**An Extension in the heart of the forest** leads past the True Braydon Oak (adds 150m and is more mud-prone).

**A Shortcut not long after** cuts 550m but also 3 of the named trees.

**A Major Shortcut cuts out the northerly part of the forest and the loop through Marlborough** plus subsequent route through fields back to the forest (cut 8.6 km/5.4 mi and 133m ascent/descent (4/10)).

**An Extension Loop through the northerly part** of the forest adds 700m.

**Bus lines 22** (Marlborough – Great Bedwyn) **and 80** (Swindon – Marlborough – Tidworth/Ludgershall) link Marlborough, Cadley (10.6. from the end of the walk) and Bedwyn Station. They take you either from Marlborough to Cadley to cut out the non-forest part right after lunch, or on to Great Bedwyn Station (line 22 only) from either Marlborough or Cadley. Both: Mon-Sat only.

**An Extension Loop past five more named trees in the southerly part** of the forest adds 1.1 km.

**Apart from above mentioned extensions and loops, some of the named 'veteran' trees** are reached on out-and-back diversions. The text mentions what distances are added for those diversions.

**At the end,** a variation cuts 700m distance. This includes 500m on a busy road without a walkable margin.

### Named Significant Trees mentioned in the text:

[**Name**, signed/unsigned, on/off main route and distance from it, trivia]

**King of Limbs**, unsigned, 65m off the main route, Radiohead's 2011 Album is named after it;

**Crockmere Oak**, signed, 300m off the main route;

**True Braydon Oak**, signed, either 215m off the main route or on a loop adding 150m;

**Saddle Oak II**, signed, 40m off the main route;

**Saddle Oak I**, signed, 50m off the main route;

**Great Sweet Chestnut**, unsigned, 40m off the main route;

**Great Beech**, unsigned, 15m off the main route;

**Old Paunchy**, signed, 120m off the main route;

**White Road Oak**, signed, on the main route;

**Bumble Oak**, signed, on the main route;

**Young Paunchy**, signed, 120m off the main route;

**Cathedral Oak**, signed, 500m off the main route on a loop;

**Brudenell Oak**, signed, on the main route;

**Spiral Oak**, signed, 200m off the main route;

**Big Belly Oak**, signed, 350m off the main route, 1 of the 50 Great British Trees;

**Cluster Oak**, signed, 180m off the main route;

**New Queen Oak**, signed, 165m off the main route on a loop;

**Original Queen Oak**, signed, 355m off the main route on a loop, planted in 1536 to celebrate the wedding of Jane Seymour to Henry VIII;

**Spider Oak**, signed, 415m off the main route on a loop;

**Replacement King Oak**, signed, 600m off the main route on a loop;

**Pointing Oak**, signed, 650m off the main route on a loop;

**Ayers Oak**, signed, 820m off the main route on a loop.

### Lunch (details last updated 25/08/2022)

**Numerous options along Marlborough's High Street**, see the walk directions for details.

### Tea (details last updated 25/08/2022)

**The Three Tuns Freehouse** 1 High Street, *Great Bedwyn, Marlborough, Wiltshire, SN8 3NU (01672 870 280, <https://tunsfreehouse.com/eat/>)*. The Three Tuns is located 300m from the end of the walk. Open 10.00-15.00 and 18.00-23.00 Tue-Thu and all-day Fri-Sat. Food served 12.00-14.30 and 18.00-21.00 Tue-Thu and 12.00-21.00 Fri-Sat.

## Notes:

### Pewsey Vale Circular Walk

Opened in 2022, the PVCW is a 125 km (77 mi) waymarked circular Long-Distance Path based on the Vale of Pewsey. It takes in dramatic downland, secluded woodlands, sweeping valleys, farmland, country lanes, picturesque villages and sections of the Kennet & Avon Canal.

<https://www.visitpewseyvale.co.uk/pewsey-vale-circular-way/>

### Savernake Forest

The present-day Savernake Forest covers just 18 km<sup>2</sup> between Marlborough and Great Bedwyn and stands on a Cretaceous chalk plateau within the North Wessex Downs AONB, presenting as rolling downland serrated by four shallow dry and wet valleys. This creates the damp heavy soils well suited to oak and beech woods.

Historically, a 'Safernoc' woodland was first mentioned in AD 934 and the Normans established a royal forest in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The area of that forest (which included pastures and commons), was 390 km<sup>2</sup>, covering an area as far west as East Kennet, east to Inkpen, south to the Collingbournes and north to the Kennet River. More than half its size was lost to 'dis-parking', the change to agricultural use, from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> to mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, but in Capability Brown's times, its size was still 160 km<sup>2</sup>. Great beech avenues were planted, with the Grand Avenue now being the longest tree-lined avenue in Britain, at 6.3 km. It is Britain's only privately owned forest, as since Norman times it has been in unbroken ownership of the Esturmy, Seymour and Bruce families (through marriage).

The timber has been managed by the Forestry Commission since 1939, but under condition of a more 'enlightened' management plan than was the FC's norm. One condition was that the public shall have access to the forest, so although only one right of way passes through it, all paths and tracks can be walked along at all times but walkers are asked to respect the few signs protecting the various private houses scattered through the Forest. The Forest is closed one day a year to maintain the private status.

Savernake is a coppice-with-standards forest and an Ancient Woodland, supplemented by some limited areas of plantations outside the forest's core. Beech and oak can be pollarded which – over generations – leads to the trees developing sizeable girths and having curved pieces of bows. Some of the very old trees (more than 1,000 years old in cases) therefore look very picturesque, and Savernake is thought to have the highest concentration of 'veteran' trees in Europe. In recent years, great efforts have been made to restore and preserve them and many have now been signed as well as marked on maps.

The broad-leaved woodland is accompanied by a farmland mosaic of coppices, meadows, scrub and heath, both within the large contiguous forest area, and between the main forest and outlying woods and copses. Some of the outlying copses are fine bluebell woods (i.e.: Little Frith & Cobham Frith, but also Birch Copse). Savernake is an SSSI primarily for the quality of lichens on the barks of the older trees. There are also interesting fungi and mosses.

<https://www.savernakeestate.co.uk/>

### Kennet River

The Kennet is a 72 km (45 mi) long Thames tributary and has an extensive range of rare plants and animals that are unique to chalk watercourses. One of the sources is Swallowhead Spring near Silbury Hill in Wiltshire, the other being a collection of tributaries north of Avebury near the rural settlements of Uffcott and Broad Hinton which join up with the waters from Swallowhead Springs near West Kennett Long Barrow.

### Marlborough

Marlborough is a market town in Wiltshire on the Old Bath Road, the old main road from London to Bath. The town is on the Kennet River, 39 km north of Salisbury and 16 km southeast of Swindon. The earliest sign of human habitation is the Marlborough Mound, a 19m prehistoric tumulus in the grounds of Marlborough College, dating from about 2400 BC. It is of similar age to the larger Silbury Hill about 8 km west of the town. In 1067 William the Conqueror assumed control of the Marlborough area and set about building a wooden motte-and-bailey castle, sited on the prehistoric mound. This was completed in around 1100. Stone was used to strengthen the castle in around 1175.

On 28 April 1653 the Great Fire of Marlborough started in a tanner's yard and spread quickly, burning the Guildhall, St Mary's Church, the County Armoury, and 244 houses to the ground. During the rebuilding of the town after the fire, the high street was widened and it is now the second-widest in England after Stockton-on-Tees.

In 1804 the Marlborough White Horse was cut on a downland slope southwest of the town.

Cardinal Wolsey was ordained as a priest at The Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in 1498.

On the north side of the high street is the Merchant's House, built following the Great Fire of 1653. It was the property of a silk merchant and, rarely for a house of this type in a town centre, retains its original room pattern. Notable are the wall paintings. One room painted in a striped pattern, copying silk hangings, is perhaps unique in Great Britain.

Although once served by two railway lines, the town no longer has any direct rail access.

Former famous residents: Nick Drake (folk singer/guitarist), William Golding (Noble Prize-winning author).

### **White Horse Trail**

The WHT is a 146 km (90 mi) waymarked circular Long-Distance Path. It provides views of eight white horses which are cut into the turf of the chalk hillsides of Wiltshire, as well as visiting many other historic and prehistoric locations.

### **The Wansdyke/The Wansdyke Path**

Wansdyke (from Woden's Dyke, Woden=a Saxon God) originally was a long deep ditch and bank, a linear defensive earthwork. The bank is up to 4m high with a ditch up to 2.5m deep. It runs from the Avon valley south of Bristol to Savernake Forest near Marlborough in Wiltshire and it is one of the largest linear earthworks in the UK. It measures 72 km (45 mi) with the middle being formed by the remains of the London to Bath Roman Road. It was probably built in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. That is after the withdrawal of the Romans and before the complete takeover by the Anglo-Saxons. The ditch is on the north side, so presumably it was used by the Romano-British Celts as a defence against West Saxons encroaching from the upper Thames Valley westward into what is now the West Country.

The Wansdyke Path is a 21 km (13 mi) waymarked linear path. It follows the Wansdyke for a short stretch.

### **Tottenham House**

Tottenham House is a large Grade I listed country house in Wiltshire, eight kilometres southeast of Marlborough, separated from it by Savernake Forest, which is part of the Tottenham Park estate. The site of Tottenham House was known by 1200 as Tottenham Wood, a part of the then much larger Savernake Forest, and was under the control of the Esturmy family. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the estate passed by marriage to the House of Seymour of nearby Wulfhall, two kilometres to the south, who enclosed the surrounding land to form a deer park. Wulfhall was partly demolished, and the building materials used to construct the first Tottenham House (then known as Totnam Lodge), probably by Edward Seymour, a nephew of Queen Jane Seymour. The present house incorporates parts of the earlier houses on the site from that time.

In 1675, the estate passed into the Bruce family by marriage and in 1721, Totnam Lodge was rebuilt to the design of the pioneering Palladian architect Lord Burlington, and parts of the grounds, including the kitchen garden, were later laid out by 'Capability' Brown (1764-c1770). The house underwent a number of further rebuilds, and the current house mostly dates from the 1820s. In 1861, a large church (St. Katharine's) was built for the estate, one kilometre north of the house.

The Bruce family lived in the house until 1946. Thereafter it was used as a preparatory school until 1994, then leased to a charity until 2005, then leased to a consortium intending to convert it to a luxury hotel and golfing centre, but the consortium went bankrupt in the 2008 recession. In 2014, the house was sold for £11.25m to an undisclosed buyer (believed to be property developer Jamie Ritblat) who has turned it back into a private home. A quote from an article in the Marlborough News on the Planning Permission being granted (12/09/2018): "..., the owner will need to find an annual budget of some £3.1million – of which £1.7million will be spent on the necessary 69 permanent staff (48 full time and 21 part time). The other £1.4million will be spent on "...supplies such as heating oil/gas, maintenance of CCTV and alarms, TV and audio, maintenance and upgrade of IT systems, vehicle and aircraft maintenance and repairs [plans include a helipad and hangar], dog, pheasant, horse and pet food, veterinary, pheasant poults, beaters, plants, seeds and bulbs, fencing and lighting, food, cleaning and household supplies, flowers, window cleaning, swimming pool and spa maintenance...".

#### **Trivia:**

In 1995, the house featured as the boys' school in the film 'A Feast at Midnight', starring Christopher Lee.

In 2006, Radiohead recorded part of their album 'In Rainbows' at the house.

In 2015, the house featured in season 6 of the TV series 'Downton Abbey'.

## WALK DIRECTIONS

Arriving on platform 1 at **Bedwyn Station** in the village of **Great Bedwyn**, leave the platform near the front of the train and walk up to a road and *turn right* along a pavement to cross the railway line on a bridge.

**At the far side of the bridge, you have a choice:**

**For the slightly longer route via the Chisbury Camp** hillfort site, *turn right* along a tarmac path and pick up the directions below under **Chisbury Hillfort Route**.

**For the Main Walk**, cross **The Knapp**, leading on the right to the railway station, and pass a small green, then *turn right* immediately along a tarmac path called **Railway Terrace**. You follow this path through a few turns, passing a couple of residential cul-de-sacs on the right in the process, and eventually *turn up to the left* to a T-junction with **Farm Lane** (unsigned) and *turn right* along it. In 60m *turn left* up along **Castle Road** and in 150m cross **Brown's Lane** a little to the right and continue in the previous direction along a signposted bridleway ('Chisbury 1') along a wide grassy field margin, initially with a tall hedge on the left. Where the hedge discontinues, you continue in the same direction along a wide grassy strip between arable fields at different levels. You are heading for a tall transmission mast in a wood at the top of the rise, with **Chisbury Camp** hillfort site away to the right across a couple of fields.

In 400m enter **Chisbury Wood** through a wide gap with bridleway markers on a fence post and continue in the same direction to the right of the fenced transmission mast, along a clear gravel-and-earth path. In 140m ignore a right turning path and then **[!]** continue in the same direction with a low black marker post along a grass path, where the gravel track curves to the left to a four-way junction of tracks. There is some higher ground on the right, and in 25m you pass a pond on the left (can be dry in summer). In 80m pass another bridleway marker post and continue in the same direction along a wide gravel track joining from the left behind (from that earlier four-way junction). In 90m ignore another right turning track and *veer a little to the left*, and in 40m ignore a left bearing track, shortly passing a bridleway marker post. The path narrows a little and enters trees and you ignore a right fork to continue in the same direction (310°).

In 250m you have an open field on the left and pass the fenced garden of **Keepers Cottage** to the right. **Bewley Pond** (on the OS map) is 30m away to the right and in 35m you stay to the right of a small fenced piggery to aim for a metal gate 40m away leading into a large field. There is a bridleway marker on a fence post and you *bear right* (340°) across the field to a point about 40m to the left of a metal field gate, well to the right of some nearby farm buildings as well as some far away ones (Upper Horsehall Hill Farm, passed later). You leave the field through a gap in an electric fence and then over a stile in the boundary hedge onto **Chisbury Lane** by a two-way signpost. Continue a little to the right over a stile into a pasture ('Knowle Farm 1 1/2') and *veer left* towards another stile by a treeline. **Chisbury Lane Farm** is away to the left and in 70m you go over a set of stiles either side of a farm track.

Follow a right-hand fence along that treeline and in 280m go over a stile in the far-right field corner and *bear right* to another stile 20m away. Cross the stile and then a gravel car wide track ('Monk's Lane' as per the OS map, and a public bridleway) a little to the right to go through an electric fence (with a handle) by a yellow marker into a large pasture and follow its right-hand boundary along **Heron's Point** wood (passing through one more electric fence en route). In 350m in the far-right field corner, exit over a late-seen stile onto a lane (**London Ride** as per the OS map) by **Upper Horsehall Hill Farm**. *Turn left* along the lane.

\*) The lane turns to the right and in 125m you *turn right* off the tarmac with a footpath marker on a fence post and *bear left* along the treeline on the left (i.e.: ignore the gravel track to a new house ahead). In 130m go through an electric fence (with a handle) and in 10m *turn left* through another electric fence (with a handle) to go downhill steeply through a large scenic pasture (240°). You aim for the bottom-left field corner and a stile eventually visible in a fence around a copse. In 200m go over the stile and pass a hidden house on the right and in 20m continue along the house's gravel drive. In 90m cross a road by a footpath signpost on the left (with the sign missing) and continue in the same direction along the left-hand field boundary of an arable field. [This can be rough walking as the field tends to be ploughed all the way to the growth, leaving only little walkable margin.]

In 550m in the far field corner, you continue in the same direction along a car wide drive past a cottage on the right and in 50m by a footpath signpost continue in the same direction at a three-way road junction. You have **Bedwyn Common** (wood) on the left and pastures on the right. In 500m you pass a double metal field gate on the right and in another 70m (opposite a layby and a forest track on the left), *turn right* over a wobbly stile with footpath and **Pewsey Vale Circular Walk** (PVCW) markers. Follow the markers pointing a little to the left towards a line of oak trees (290°) and in 90m go over a stile in an electric fence. Continue along the oak avenue through a pasture and in 250m go through an electric fence (with a handle) onto a farm track this side of a fenced wood. This is **Birch Copse**, an uninspiring plantation but with **some fine patches of bluebells** in season, and the most south easterly part of the (contiguous part of the) vast **Savernake Forest**.

Enter the plantation wood to the right of a locked metal field gate over a stile of sorts: there is a wooden block to step on and the barbed wire has rubber tube wrapped around it. You follow a faint path which bears to the right in 15m and in another 30m at a T-junction with a more defined path, by a multi-stemmed beech tree on the left, *turn left* along the path. The path converges with the boundary of the wood in 80m and *bears right* to continue parallel to the boundary, with a large pasture away to the left, while skirting around the odd fallen tree. In 350m you pass a right turning path, this leads in 65m to **The King of Limbs**, one of the signature trees in Savernake Forest (the best views of it you get from its far side). In 140m, you skirt to the right around a fallen tree, just before the corner of the field on the left, and *turn left* along a narrow path just inside the wood, ignoring the clearer continuation ahead. In 30m a narrow path joins from the right and in 350m at a T-junction with a wide gravel path, you *turn right* (320°). In 60m you meet **Three Oak Hill Drive** at a bend.

**For an 300m each-way out-and-back** to the signed **Crockmere Oak**, *bear right* along the track and in 230m *turn right* (ignore a track ahead) to the tree 70m away.

**Else**, *turn left* (225°). In 130m go past a wooden car barrier and in 20m cross the broad gravel **Grand Avenue** and continue in the same direction past a metal car barrier. In 90m *turn right* along **The Gallops** at a crossing, immediately passing a wooden car barrier. You now follow this wide gravel footpath for 900m, crossing one track en route (**Drury Lane**), then skirting to the left around a circular depression and otherwise ignoring all turns. You eventually descend towards a car barrier by a field on the left. [!] 20m before the barrier, on the left just off the path and overgrown, surrounded by a part-collapsed wrought iron fence, you can find the 'monument' shown on the OS map: supposedly **a marker or tomb** for a rider suffering a fatal fall.

*Bear right* past a small car park area to the **Grand Avenue** and *turn left* along it. The avenue gently ascends through a wooded strip, with pastures visible to the left and right beyond the trees initially, then through a wood. In 400m you cross the **Pig Sty (Track)**, a car wide gravel track blocked by car barriers and in 160m the path levels

out, with open areas away to the left and right. In 70m you pass a 15-mile speed restriction sign on the right and in 130m arrive at **Eight Walks**, an eight-way junction of radial drives. The second track on the right is a private drive to **Luton Lye Cottages**.

*Turn left* along the third left track (**Great Lodge Drive**), on a bearing of 280°, in 15m passing a 'No Through Road'-sign on the left. In 75m you emerge from the trees, with pastures on both sides behind fences and in 20m pass a car barrier. You walk through a circular copse in the middle of this large field (split into two by the track) and in 300m re-enter a wood. In 160m a path joins from the left out of the trees and in 50m you pass the drive into **Thornhill Nursery** on the left.

### **Here you have a choice:**

**For a route passing the True Braydon Oak** (adds 150m and is more mud-prone), *turn hard right* back on yourself and follow an earthen path with a barbed wire fence on the left. In 140m curve to the left with the fence and in 50m by a field corner on the right, you *turn left* through a metal gate to the right of a metal field gate into an enclosure and follow a winding path through it. In 250m, just before an open area to the right, you have the signed **True Braydon Oak** 30m away to the left. In 25m pass a barbed wire fence corner, around the grounds of **Braydon Hook House**, and in 160m the Main Walk joins from the left behind. Continue one paragraph below: "In 100m...".

**For the Main Walk**, continue in the same direction and in 80m another path joins from the left and in 60m, just before the track starts to descend, you *turn right* at a crosspaths, through a metal gate to the left of a wooden field gate and follow a clear wide track through the wood (**Braydon Oak Wood**). There are plenty of old oak trees in this area and in 380m you reach a T-junction with a path and with the fenced grounds of **Braydon Hook House** ahead. *Turn left* gently downhill. [But the signed **True Braydon Oak** can be found 185m up to the right, 30m off path to the right.]

In 100m ignore a faint left fork and in 40m you reach the bottom of the drop by a metal gate to the right of a wooden field gate on the right, with the gravel drive to the house visible 30m beyond it at a bend. *Turn left* for 20m to a four-way junction (three clear tracks plus one narrow path from the left), and *turn right* (due W) along a wide track, in 20m reaching a crossing of a faint path.

### **Here you have a choice:**

**For a Shortcut through this part of Savernake Forest** (cut 550m), missing out on up to three named significant trees, continue in the same direction. In 50m you have an open area on the right (**Great Lodge Bottom**) and in 90m cross a broad grass track at the far end of the open area and ascend in the same direction along a narrow gravel path into trees. This is **Grey Road** (Track). In 550m you reach a four-way junction with **Church Walk (Track)**, a public bridleway and the only Right of Way through Savernake Forest. The longer route joins from the right. Continue three paragraphs below: "Here you have a choice:"

**For the Main Walk**, *turn right* along a broad forest track. In 30m *turn right* along a crossing path into trees and in 45m emerge in an open area (**Great Lodge Bottom**) with a small formerly fenced area on the right (fence posts without a fence). Cross the open area and in 30m cross a broad grass track at the far end of the open area and *bear left* into trees, gently ascending. In 20m *bear up to the right* (295°) (a path joins from the left out of the open area). In 200m *turn left* at a four-way junction of paths, up a deteriorating tarmac path (**Long Harry**) which in 35m curves to the right. In 120m the path veers to the left and in another 90m back to the right.

In 25m by a 5 metre-stump of a tree on the right with a still live branch growing out of it, a narrow path turns right. *Turn right* and in 40m down that path you find the signed **Saddle Oak II**, and *bear left* for 35m to the also signed **Saddle Oak I**. *Turn left* to return to the main path in 50m and *turn right* for 100m to the four-way junction with **Church Walk (Track)**, an unmarked public bridleway and the only Right of Way through Savernake Forest. You find the signed **Old Paunchy** 120m away to the right, going through a slight dip in 60m. Else, *turn left* along Church Walk. In 180m you reach a four-way junction with **Grey Road (Track)**.

### Here you have a choice:

**For a Major Shortcut** (cut 8.6 km/5.4 mi and 133m ascent), cutting the remaining named trees in the northerly part of the forest and the loop through Marlborough, **follow Church Walk (Track)** in a south westerly direction, i.e.: continue in the same direction if coming down Church Walk on the Main Walk, or *turn left* if coming up Grey Road (Track) along the Shortcut. In 770m you reach the busy **A346 in Cadley** hamlet by Cadley Church on the left (private). Cross the road and *turn left* along a gravel track to the right of a row of trees. Pick up the directions below at the double asterisk \*\*).

**For the Main Walk, continue along Grey Road (Track)**, in a north westerly direction, i.e.: *turn right* if coming down Church Walk on the Main Walk, or continue in the same direction if coming up Grey Road (Track) along the Shortcut. In 100m you pass a **fine tree** about 15m away to the right. In 45m an indistinct path turns left to reach the unsigned **Great Sweet Chestnut** in 40m. In another 125m another narrow path turns left to the unsigned **Great Beech**, about 15m from the main path. Several of the multiple trunks have broken, others are dead, but one is still alive and growing. In 230m you go through a metal gate to the left of a wooden field gate and in 20m reach a car wide gravel track (**White Road**), with the signed **White Road Oak** just to the right.

### Here you have a choice:

**For an Extension Loop through this part of Savernake Forest** (add 700m), passing Young Paunchy and the Cathedral Oak, but missing out the Bumble Oak, *turn right* and in 230m cross **Long Harry** by an info panel on the right about the **Great Lodge Enclosure**. In 120m you pass the signed **Young Paunchy** tree 30m away on the right in the fenced enclosure. In 170m *turn left* along a narrow path and in 30m *turn left* at a T-junction with a clear path running along the wood's boundary. You have open fields to the right of the wood and in 120m get fine views to a grand newly built Palladian house (**Seymour Place**) and in 40m pass the signed **Cathedral Oak** on the right. In 335m you emerge in a small clearing with a dead tree and a larger clearing away to the right.

*Turn right* past the dead tree and through the larger clearing and leave it in its far-left corner through some trees to in 45m *turn right* (305°) along a broad gravel track (**Long Harry**). In 140m a path joins from the right behind and in 70m you can see a car barrier 50m ahead and a car park beyond it. *Turn right* here along a grassy track along the edge of a picnic area. In 25m another path joins from the right behind and you pass to the left of some picnic benches (300°). In 50m pass some more picnic benches and ignore a faint path turning right. In 110m you pass a third set of picnic benches with some more visible 30m ahead and continue to the last set of benches. Continue one paragraph below: "In 15m *turn right*..."

**For the Main Walk**, missing out on Young Paunchy and the Cathedral Oak, but passing the Bumble Oak, continue in the same direction. In 600m you pass an open area on the left, with a car park visible beyond it and in 60m reach a drive (tarmac on the left, gravel to the right), from the A road on the left to another car park on the right, with a grassy area away to the right. A toilet block (open 09.00-19.00 daily) and the signed



**Bumble Oak** are opposite and an info panel on the left. *Turn right* along the drive and in 30m *turn left* across the grassy picnic area to cross it towards its narrow far end. Converge to the right-hand side where there are some picnic benches and continue to the last of those benches.

In 15m *turn right* (about 10m before a left turn) into the trees and in 15m pass a bench on the right. In 30m walk through redundant posts of a missing car barrier and follow the path a little to the left through an open area and in 130m (now in trees again) a faint path joins from the right, as you *bear left* downhill with the path. In 100m you reach a junction with a public footpath with a couple of markers on a fence post opposite. Cross the public footpath to continue downhill along a clear path, with views across the **Kennet Valley** to some part-wooded hills and pastures. In 75m you get views on the left to parts of **Marlborough** and on 300° of a wooded hilltop. In 80m you emerge at a bend of a gravel track by a Sustrans four-way signpost. A tarmac path joins from the left and a public footpath joins down from the right out of the wood.

*Turn right* on the level in a north easterly direction along a wide gravel path, the dismantled **Swindon, Marlborough & Andover** railway, now **National Cycle Network Route 482**. In 220m the path starts to descend to in 100m go under the **A4 London Road** and in 180m you pass another Sustrans signpost and ignore a path turning right to a road (**Chopping Knife Lane**). In 80m the track crosses **Elcot Lane** on a bridge. In 80m you cross the **Kennet River** on a viaduct, with a sewage plant away on the left below. You continue high above the water level on the railway embankment between tall trees and [!] in 190m *turn down to the left* along a steep stepped path at a crossing of a signposted footpath. At the bottom of the steps cross a stile to continue in the same direction and in 10m go through a gate and follow a path through some dense growth. In 25m *turn left* in an open area, following the trees and bushes on the left, ignoring a right fork uphill.

[!] In 320m *turn left* along a clear path to a bridge 20m away and cross the Kennet on it. You *turn right* along a faint meandering narrow path through the river meadow and curve to the left with the Kennet. In 500m *turn right* at a T-junction with a tarmac path and cross the Kennet. You now follow the tarmac path, in 80m gently uphill, into **Marlborough**, in 240m emerging on a main road, **St. Martin's**. *Turn left* along the road and in 200m you emerge on **The Green**, the centre of the Old Town, to in 40m cross the **A346** at a set of lights. Continue veering left along a tarmac path between pollarded trees passing some benches and then pass to the left of the cottage where **William Golding** lived, while his father taught at the Grammar School (blue plaque).

You pass the churchyard and church of **St. Mary's, Marlborough** but *veer left* through a wall into a small parklet which contains a fine viewing point down onto and along the town's **famous High Street** (the second widest in Britain, after Stockton-on-Tees). Return to the path past the church (**Patten Alley**) leading to **Kingsbury Street** at a bend, by **Franklyns Bistro** on the right and with the imposing **Town Hall** on the left. Down on the left you find: **Raj, Il Gusto d'Italia, The Bear Hotel**. Continue ahead along High Street, passing **Costa Coffee** and **Coffi Lab**. In 100m from Kingsbury, you pass the 17<sup>th</sup> century tile-hung (silk) **Merchant's House** (and garden) on the right (open for visitors). In 60m you pass the Lloyds Bank **bus stop for services to Bedwyn or Hungerford stations**. These other pubs, cafés and restaurants are **further along High Street: The Green Dragon** (left), **The Castle & Ball** (right), **Caffè Nero, The Polly Tea Rooms** (left), **The Royal Oak** (right), a couple of chain pizzeria, **Bunce's Bakehouse** on the right, **Rick Stein, The Wellington Arms, The Food Gallery** (all on the left), **The Marlborough, La Bobina** (both on the right).

Continue down the High Street along either arm (although there are more of the interesting courtyards and backstreets off the right-hand arm) and at the far end pass

**St. Peter's and Paul's** (Thomas Wolsey, later Cardinal and Lord Chancellor, was ordained here, the church is now a community hub) and *turn left* along the **A345 Pewsey Road**, signed 'Amesbury', gently downhill towards the Kennet. In 180m cross the river one last time and in 25m *turn right* along a signposted bridleway with **White Horse Trail** and **Wansdyke Path** markers along a car wide gravel track to the right of a residential road (Granham Close). [!] In 140m by a marker post on the left, *turn left* along an easy-to-miss gravel then stepped and railed path up the slope to the residential road at its end and *turn right* along a gravel track in continuation of the road, passing a wooden field gate. In 30m *turn left* through a metal field gate into a grassy slope and *bear right* along a clear path.

You rise up to the level of the A road on the top of the rise and in 160m *turn left* through a metal field gate by a footpath signpost onto the road. *Turn right* along the grassy verge and in 30m *turn left* across the road and continue along a concealed path with a footpath signpost amongst some trees (plenty of wild garlic here in season). In 160m by the corner of a garden fence on the right, *bear left* downhill along a field boundary. In 90m overcome a usually locked metal field gate with an overgrown stile to the left onto a tarmac lane leading to **St. John's Academy** (a school) on the left. Cross a stile opposite into a wooded area and in 10m go up some steps up a bank (a dismantled railway line) and down some steps on the far side. Follow a fenced path with trees on the left and an arable field on the right to and into a wood.

[**This path can be very overgrown**, alternatives are:

- slip through the growth on the left into an adjacent field and follow its boundary up to the right and in 220m in the top-right corner, follow a faint path through the undergrowth of a lightly wooded area and in 30m pick up a clear path within the wooded area, further uphill;
- climb over the fence on the right and continue up through the field and in its top-left corner enter a wooded area, continuing further uphill along a clear path.]

In 180m leave the wood over a stile near the top of the rise and *turn up to the left* along a fenced path, with trees on the left and a pasture on the right. In 110m *turn right* with the path and in 25m *turn left* and in 40m go through a wooden gate onto a car wide gravel track and *turn left* along it. In 50m you have fine views on the left to some part-wooded hills across the **Kennet Valley** and then ignore all ways off for 800m all the way to the fringes of **Brown's Farm** near **Savernake Forest**, after 450m continuing along tarmac. Just before the farm, 75m before a metal field gate visible ahead, and by the start of a man-height metal bar fence on the left, you [!] *turn right* into an arable field and follow a bumpy left-hand field boundary.

In 160m by a wide gap in the boundary growth, *bear right* (190°) across the field along a usually well-cleared path. The part-wooded hill on the half right on a bearing of 220° is **Martinsell Hill** (SWC 127 Pewsey Circular). In 200m go through a boundary gap into the adjacent arable field and *veer left* along a usually well-cleared path towards a point somewhat to the left of the bottom-right corner. In 220m leave the field through a wide gap (at time of writing a dismantled metal field gate is leaning against the hedge to the side) and in 15m *bear right* down a tarmac lane at a bend. In 60m the lane enters trees and in 50m an unmarked bridleway joins out of the trees on the left. In 50m, where the lane turns to the right, you continue in the same direction over a stile with a footpath marker and along the fenced wood on the left. In 180m the wood discontinues and you continue in the same direction along a large undulating arable field's right-hand boundary, gently uphill. In 120m continue over the brow of the rise and in 80m *turn left* in the far-right field corner along a margin between fields.

In 50m step into the next field and *turn right* immediately along a grassy field boundary. In 180m go through a dip and in 140m go through a gap into the next large

field and *bear left* (75°) along a usually well-cleared path, staying clear to the right of a scenic farm nestling in a fold on the left (**Great Lodge Farm** as per the OS map). You aim for a metal gate at the far end of the field and a grey corrugated iron shed beyond it. Past the gate, continue in the same direction through a pasture and *curve to the right* with the path towards a wooden gate by a house in **Cadley** hamlet. Follow a gravel drive between houses to the audible **A346** 90m away, ignoring a right turning private drive en route. [There is a signposted bridleway bearing left on the far side of the A road, this passes close to the **picturesque Cadley Church** (now a private residence).] **[!]** *Turn right* this side of the A road, to the right of a row of trees.

**\*\*)** In 50m, by a **bus shelter for services to Marlborough and Swindon**, with the **stop for services to Great Bedwyn** opposite, you *bear right* with the track a little further away from the noisy road and continue parallel to it. In 130m emerge in an open area by some business premises on the right and a road junction beyond a green, where a signposted footpath joins from the right down a lane. Proceed across the green to the junction of the side lane and the A road and *turn left* across the A road to continue down a car wide tarmac track **back into Savernake Forest**, in 80m passing a wooden car barrier. In 25m continue along gravel and in 60m *turn right* along a clear path into trees, initially parallel to an open area on the right. In 100m, by a **very old oak tree** on the right, *turn left* along a clear path. In 230m you pass the signed **Brudenell Oak** on the right and in 60m have a fenced pheasant enclosure on the left. The path veers to the right away from the enclosure and in 160m you reach a broad car wide gravel track, the **New Road Bottom (Track)**, with a continuation path uphill ahead. This area is less densely packed with trees and therefore brighter than other parts of the forest.

**For an 200m each-way out-and-back** to the signed **Spiral Oak**, *turn left* along the track and in 140m *turn left* along a clear path to the tree 60m away.

**Else**, *turn right* along the track. In 180m you go through a metal gate to the left of a wooden field gate and continue in the same direction. In 300m, about 30m away on the left, there is an oak with some **bracket fungus running all of three metres up its trunk**. In another 100m you reach a four-way track junction with the **Sawpit Drive**.

**For an 350m each-way out-and-back** to the signed **Big Belly Oak** (1 of 50 Great British Trees), *turn right* along Sawpit Drive and in 100m *turn right* at a four-way junction with **Marie Louise Ride (Track)**. In 140m *turn left* along a clear path for 100m to a stile in a barbed wire fence, with the tree a few metres behind.

**Else**, continue in the same direction. In 280m go through a metal gate to the right of a wooden field gate and in 30m you reach another four-way junction.

**For an 180m each-way out-and-back** to the signed **Cluster Oak**, continue ahead and in 160m at another junction, you have the tree 20m ahead.

**Else**, *turn left* gently uphill along **Charcoal Burners Road**. In 250m ignore a path turning left through a metal gate into a fenced enclosure (the Pig Stye Track). The path bends to the right before descending ever so gently, with a barbed wire fence on the left. In another 270m, you reach the bottom of the drop at a four-way junction.

**Here you have a choice:**

**For an (very recommended) Extension Loop past six more named trees** (add 1.2 km), *turn left* through a metal gate to the left of a wooden field gate, in 15m ignoring a left bearing path. This is the **Postwives Walk (Track)**, and in 150m you pass the signed **New Queen Oak** on the left and in 180m the signed **Original Queen Oak**, also on the left, but now only a stump of a tree (although still alive!). In another 60m you

pass the signed **Spider Oak** on the right and in 170m *turn left* for 20m along a narrow path to find the fenced and signed **Replacement King Oak**. [The **King Oak shown on the OS map** was cut to pieces after WWII as souvenirs for American and Canadian soldiers billeted in the area.] A further 50m along is the signed **Pointing Oak**, an impressive tree with some large fallen branches at the back, away from the path.

Return to the Postwives Walk and *turn left* along it. In 30m you reach a broad rutted track, the **Twelve O'Clock Drive (Track)**. *Turn hard right* back on yourself (due S) and in 70m *turn left* off the broad track to continue along a fine forest path. In 60m you pass the imposing, signed **Ayers Oak** 20m away on the left. The path continues gently downhill and in 165m passes through a dip in a semi-open area and gently re-ascends. In another 200m a clear car wide track joins from the left and leads to a metal gate to the right of a wooden field gate visible about 100m ahead. **Ignore!** *Turn right* (185°) along a grassy path (**Cheval Bottom** on the OS map) and in 320m go through a metal gate to the right of a wooden field gate out of the fenced Cheval Bottom enclosure, by an info panel and in 25m *turn left* along the **Charcoal Burners Road** again. Pick up the directions one paragraph below ('The track goes gently uphill...').

**For the Main Walk**, continue on the track and in 400m cross the **Twelve O'Clock Drive**. In another 140m you cross Cheval Bottom (another track).

The track goes gently uphill and in 350m at a T-junction with the **Three Oak Hill Drive**, you *turn right* and in 30m *turn left* through a fence gap to the **Ailesbury Column**, in a wide grassy clearing between fenced woods. There is a plaque up on the far side of the column explaining its origin and the views from there go down the **Column Ride** towards **Tottenham House**, 2.2 km away (foliage permitting). Return to Three Oak Hill Drive and *turn left* along it past a wooden car barrier. In 480m you pass another wooden car barrier and in another 70m at a four-way junction of tracks, *turn hard left* back on yourself along a car wide gravel lane (100°). In 35m ignore an earth track turning right towards a field and in 60m a drive on the right to a house. In 100m the track starts to descend and in 40m you ignore a drive on the right to a field gate; in 165m a path joins on the left through a metal gate out of the enclosure. You now have open pastures away on the left and continue for 880m to a T-junction with a road in the hamlet of **Durley**, with some fine patches of bluebells in season.

With **Durley Gate** (house) opposite, you *turn left* along the road, in 20m passing a footpath signpost on the right ('St. Katharine's 1 ¾'), pointing into the overgrown area on the right. In another 25m *turn right* by a fence corner on the right and in 25m go through a wooden kissing gate into a large pasture and *bear left* towards a point slightly to the right of the middle of a copse 230m away (75°). At the copse you pass a footpath marker post and pass a pond on the left (can be dry in summer). In 80m cross the tarmac drive to **Tottenham House** on the right, with views on the left back along the Column Ride to the **Ailesbury Column**. In 60m you emerge from the far half of the copse by another marker post and follow a clear path to another copse 300m away. On this stretch you eventually get partial views of the house. Go through the copse and continue towards a wood which you enter in 120m through a wooden kissing gate.

You cross a track, then - without a trace on the ground - the course of **one of the Roman Roads** that run through Savernake Forest and then the main tarmac drive to the estate buildings (this is the extension of the **Grand Avenue** through Savernake Forest). In 40m go through a wooden kissing gate with a footpath marker and follow a wide gravel track through a wide wooded belt. In 300m cross a farm track and in 200m behind wrought iron gates on the left pass the moated grounds of **St. Katharine's Church**. In 100m pass a footpath signpost ('Stokke ½', 'Chisbury 2') with a PVCW marker, ignoring left and right turns. In 140m continue in the same direction, ignoring a left bearing public footpath (to Chisbury) and in 550m ignore a left turning gravel

bridleway by a three-way signpost. You go through a slight dip and in 420m from the three-way bridleway junction, reach another track junction by a signpost. A bridleway turns right along a gravel track and a footpath turns left along tarmac further along.

### Here you have a choice:

**For the shortest route into Great Bedwyn** (cuts 700m, but involves 500m along a busy road), *turn left* along the tarmac lane with **Stokke Manor** away on the right. Just before a T-junction with a main road, **[!]** *turn up to the right* through a metal kissing gate into a pasture and follow its left-hand boundary, close to and above the road. In 60m go through a metal gate and continue in the same direction through the next field. You have fine views into the valley towards **Great Bedwyn** and a low wooded ridge on the far side, beyond the **Kennet & Avon Canal**. In 190m leave the field through a metal kissing gate onto the road by a signpost ('Stokke ½' back, 'Great Bedwyn ½' ahead). Walk along a newly cut earthen path along the right-hand bank for 500m as you start to descend with the road. Eventually a gravel drive and a signposted footpath along a field margin join from the left and you cross over to a pavement on the left. In 90m you pass a 'Great Bedwyn'-sign by some houses and in 250m **The Three Tuns Freehouse** at a street corner and continue in the same direction along a tarmac path to the left of the road. In 120m on the right, there is **The Stores** (open to 19.30 Mon-Sat and to 13.00 Sun). In 100m *veer left* with the path and in 25m cross **The Knapp** (road) and *bear left* to the near platform 2 at **Bedwyn Station** for London bound trains.

**For the longer but road-free route into Great Bedwyn** (adds 700m), *turn right* along the bridleway, a car wide gravel track. In 180m, by a Transport for London Bus Stop sign on the right, you ignore the continuation ahead to some houses (signed '23 Stokke') and *bear left* with the main track. Ignore a left turn into a field and continue through the wood. The track is mostly much degraded tarmac and there are fields away to the left. In 250m you pass a field boundary on the left and the track curves to the left, now along the fringe of the wood. In 200m, there is a house ahead behind a fence and the track turns hard right into the wood. **[!]** Continue in the same direction towards the fenced house along its drive and in 40m by a double wooden car gate, *bear left* along the wooden fence with a (broken) footpath marker post ('Great Bedwyn Church').

In 20m go through a wooden kissing gate and *turn right* in a field, to the left of the fence. In 60m go through a metal gate into an arable field and continue in the same direction along the right-hand field boundary. There are some oak trees on the right, but you still get fine views into a shallow valley. In 80m you pass a fenced hanging copse on the right and in 50m have a bramble hedge on the right, with occasional breaks. In 160m go through a metal kissing gate in the far field corner and continue in the same direction along **Shawgrove Copse** on the left (carpeted with bluebells in season). In 280m at the far corner of the wood, an unmarked public footpath joins from the right behind across an arable field and you continue in the same direction along a clear track between arable fields, gently descending. **Great Bedwyn** is visible away on the left and in 30m there are some houses visible ahead in the valley below.

In 80m by a marker post, ignore a left turning public footpath between arable fields, and continue downhill. In 310m by the first houses, you continue in the same direction between hedges along an earthen path and in 60m *bear left* along a residential road (**Shawgrove**) at a bend. In 60m, at a T-junction with Church Street, *turn left* along its pavement. You pass **St. Mary's Church, Great Bedwyn** and then a **Post Office/Shop** (open 08.30-17.30 Mon-Fri, 09.00-15.00 Sat and 08.00-11.00 Sun). In another 150m you reach **Great Bedwyn Square**, with **The Stores** (open to 19.30 Mon-Sat and to 13.00 Sun) 30m away to the left, and **The Three Tuns Freehouse** further up the square. *Turn right* along **Brook Street**, cross **The Knapp** (road) and *bear left* to the near platform 2 at **Bedwyn Station** for Newbury, Reading and London bound trains.

## Chisbury Hillfort Route (add 750m and 20m ascent)

You pass a bus stop for services to Marlborough and in 40m the London bound platform 2 of the train station and continue parallel to the railway line along **The Knapp**, a residential road. In 160m *curve to the left* with the lane and in 120m *turn right* at a T-junction with **Spaines**. In 150m ignore **Wansdyke Road** on the left and continue to the right of **Great Bedwyn CoE Primary School**. In 20m by number **44 Spaines**, *veer left* along a tarmac path between fences and in 40m continue in the same direction along an arable field's left-hand boundary. You follow a hedge on the left initially and in 50m *veer left* along a usually well-cleared path to the far-left field corner and in 160m leave it through a gap in the boundary growth onto a farm track and *turn left* for a few metres to a road junction. Cross the road a little to the left and go uphill along a tarmac lane, signed 'Chisbury' and 'Ramsbury' (in effect *bearing left* from the direction across the field), towards the now wooded **Chisbury Camp**, a former Iron Age hillfort site, with a hedge to the right and an arable field on the left. In 600m you pass **Manor Farm** on the right and enter the Camp through the outer earth bank, still gently uphill. In 100m cross the brow of the rise and in 200m reach the entrance to **Chisbury Manor Stud**.

[**St. Martin's Chapel**, an early 13<sup>th</sup> century former chapel (now English Heritage) can be reached by going into the farmyard and turning right then left between the sheds and stables to reach the chapel.]

In 40m you pass the grand entrance to the **Manor House** and in another 75m you leave the hillfort site through the outer earth bank and continue downhill between trees. In 120m ignore **Chisbury Lane** to the right and a signed public footpath from the left out of a field. In 30m, at a three-way road junction by a triangular green in the village centre, continue in the same direction to the right of a telephone booth and follow a hidden footpath signpost (with **Pewsey Vale Circular Walk** (PVCW) markers) to the right of a garage and to the left of a garden fence along a narrow path (can be overgrown). In 60m by a marker post, *turn right* in a grassy strip this side of a garden and in 50m *turn left* with the path. In 30m go over a stile into a field and follow a fenced path with paddocks on the left. In 125m go over a stile into an arable field and cut its corner to continue in the same direction along a usually well-cleared path (skirt to the left along the car wide grassy boundary if unclear or freshly ploughed). In 340m leave the field about 50m to the right of the far-left corner through a boundary gap with a yellow marker on a fence post on the far side of the gap.

Follow the left-hand grassy boundary and in 400m cross a bridleway (**Monk's Lane (Track)**) and continue along a fenced path for 20m then *turn right* over a stepless stile into another field and following its left-hand boundary fence. In 75m go over a stile in an electric fence (may be impermanent) and pass some concrete cattle troughs. In 100m go over another stile in an electric fence (may be impermanent) and in 100m leave the field over a stepless stile with a yellow marker into a lightly overgrown area, keep left and in 10m go over another stile into **Heron's Point** wood. You follow a clear path through the wood and in 110m leave it over a stile and *veer left* with a grass path, in 50m through an open area clear to the left of some outbuildings of **Upper Horsehall Hill Farm**. In 70m *turn left* along a gravel track at a T-junction. In 50m ignore the drive on the right to the farmhouse. The track continues as a tarmac drive and in 10m a footpath joins from the left over a stile. This is the short and direct route from Bedwyn.

Pick up the directions above at the asterisk \*).