Oakmere & Parkfield

Tree trail
Potters Bar

Introduction

History of the Parks

Oakmere and Parkfield have a combined area of 17 hectares, straddling the High Street in Potters Bar, and were acquired by the Potters Bar Urban District Council during the 1930s. Both of these parks have much to offer the local community, and contain interesting features such as wildlife habitats, picnic areas, lakes or water features, play areas, walks and public art.

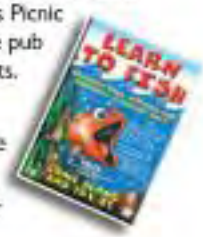
Oakmere Park

Oakmere Park was once the private grounds of Oakmere House which is now operated as the Oakmere Restaurant and Public House and provides a welcoming retreat with pleasing views across the park.

The classic 19th century layout of the park with lakes and specimen trees is still largely intact, although the grand entrance lodges and sweeping carriage way have been removed. In 1999, the main entrance was redesigned with new entrance gates and railings which promote the presence of the park and was based on the original design. Included with this refurbishment was new play equipment, desilting the lakes and new park furniture and signage.

The park has a lot of history attached to it. On the night of 1 October 1916, a 'Super Zeppelin' was shot down over the park by Second-Lieutenant WJ Tempest. The road that borders the park was named Tempest Avenue in his honour. The Zeppelin crashed onto an oak tree to the west of the park and the pilot and all his crew were killed. A plaque to commemorate this event is planned to be located near the site.

Events are a major feature of the park and are organised in conjunction with the Potters Bar Under Fives Group and Oakmere House Pub and Restaurant. Events include the Easter Egg Hunt, Jazz at the Oakmere Pub, Teddy Bears Picnic and Learn to Fish Day. The notice board by the pub is regularly updated so watch out for new events.



The Potters Bar In Focus group are actively involved in the management and progress of the park. Oakmere Park received the prestigious Green Flag Award in 2002/2003 and 2003/2004.

Parkfield

On the other side of the High Street you have Parkfield which is a more natural open space, part of which is managed as a traditional hay meadow. It also contains the formal Japanese Garden. The focal point is the Acer palmatum (Japanese Maple) which is a beautiful sight in Autumn. Nearby, a Roman kiln was discovered in the 1950s and an archaeological survey was carried out with local schools in 2002. An information panel with all the facts can be found close to the site.

Both parks contain over 1,000 trees in total. Oakmere has more introduced species as they were originally planted as part of the estate, and Parkfield has more native species.

The magic of trees

In this trail you are going to meet some of the gentle giants that have lived here for many, many years. 'Native' trees are trees that have grown in England since the Ice Age which is over 12,000 years ago, before the formation of the English Channel. A lot of the trees you see today were introduced by explorers to other countries who risked their lives to bring back some of the beautiful examples you will find in your own garden, local park and woodland. These trees are referred to as 'non-native' or 'aliens'. Each tree has an interesting story to tell.

Did you know?

- Native trees support a wider range of wildlife.
- The majority of Britain used to be covered by broad-leaved woodland with trees such as oak, beech and hornbeam. A lot of woodland was cleared in ancient times to make way for agriculture.
- Trees are 'pollution eaters' – absorbing the carbon dioxide in the air and producing oxygen.
- Tree roots help to prevent soil erosion such as on slopes and riverbanks.
- Trees suffer from stresses, just like us, and have to adapt in order to survive strains such as pollution and dry weather.
- Trees provide shade and protection for animals and for us as well. Where is the best place to sit on a hot summer's day?
- Trees have provided shelter and food for us since the ancient times – from constructing houses and boats to providing fruit for the harvest.
- All trees and plants have a 'Latin name' – similar to a family name. This is so its name can be recognised all around the world by gardeners, horticulturalists, and botanists. The 'common name' can vary from country to country and from region to region – almost like a 'nick name'.
- Sunlight provides food for trees and plants.
- Deciduous trees shed all their leaves annually in autumn and mark the changes of the seasons.

About the tree trail

This trail is designed to give an interesting insight into the many trees found in both parks. The trail should take about 45 minutes to complete. Wheelchair access is limited in some areas of Parkfield due to its woodland setting or where some trees are away from the formal pathways. You are advised to wear suitable footwear in autumn and winter when the ground can get muddy!

Although the trees are numbered on the map, you can start the trail at either Oakmere or Parkfield. Each tree included on the trail is numbered and labelled on the tree trunk.

Oakmere House Pub and Restaurant

The Oakmere provides a welcoming retreat, offering pleasing views of the park. Why not finish off your trail with a cooling drink or a winter warmer? There is a varied menu to choose from offering mouth-watering meals. The pub can also be hired for special events. For further information or to make a booking at the restaurant, contact the Manager on: 01707-664035

What is Watling Chase?

Watling Chase is a Community Forest project where local people and organisations are working together to create a more sustainable and vibrant environment. It extends over 72 square miles, of southern Hertfordshire (including all of Hertsmere Borough) and parts of the London Borough of Barnet.

Community Forests are more than just trees. In Watling Chase the vision is for a rich mosaic of woodlands, farmland, and green spaces, together with opportunities for recreation, nature conservation, employment and education. Delivery on the ground is through the Countryside Management Service and Groundwork Hertfordshire.

If you wish to speak to someone about Watling Chase or the many activities delivered by the partners there, please contact the Countryside Management Service:
Tel: 020 8447 5466 Email: south_cms@hertscc.gov.uk

Meet the trees

1. **Wellingtonia**
Latin name: *Sequoiadendron giganteum*
Origin: California

This evergreen conifer is also referred to as the 'Californian Big Tree' and, as its name suggests, can grow to quite a height in its native home (over 110 metres) and can live for over 3,000 years. Here in the UK it can reach 45 metres. It has a 'spire'-like form. The cones can take up to 2 years to mature. The scale-like leaves have a strong aniseed smell when crushed. The bark is pinkish-brown and develops ridges as it ages.

2. **Sycamore**
Latin name: *Acer pseudoplatanus*
Origin: Introduced

The Sycamore scatters yellow winged fruit in autumn, often called 'helicopters', which can quickly set seed. It is said that the Tolpuddle Martyrs formed the first trade union underneath a Sycamore tree which is the oldest Sycamore in Britain dating over 250 years. The Sycamore can reach a height of 30 metres. The palmate leaves are dark and leathery and it produces clusters of yellow flowers in April. The wood has numerous uses, from violins to wooden spoons. The Sycamore is resistant to pollution. The 'Tree of Life' statue nearby has been carved from a Sycamore trunk in 1999.

3. **Atlas Cedar**
Latin name: *Cedrus atlantica*
Origin: Algeria and Morocco

This Cedar has ascending branches of attractive blue foliage with needle-like leaves. It was introduced as an ornament in parks and gardens in Europe and North America. It has attractive barrel-shaped cones which take 2-3 years to develop.

4. **Alder**
Latin name: *Alnus glutinosa*
Origin: Native

This is a water-loving tree and grows along streams and riverbanks creating shade for plants and fish. It is quite a small tree, growing to 21 metres, and can live for 150 years. The Alder produces small female cones which last throughout the winter, and has a display of dark yellow male catkins in March. The wood is used for whistles and pipes. The leaf buds are used as a purple colour dye. Charcoal from this tree was traditionally used in the making of gunpowder and copses of alder were planted near gun power factories.

5. **Scots Pine**
Latin name: *Pinus sylvestris*
Origin: Native (Scotland)

This evergreen conifer can grow up to 35 metres tall. The Scots Pine could be found in the wild forests in Scotland over 2000 years ago and travellers had to risk passing through the wilderness where highwaymen and wolves lurked. The wood was used to build roofs and ships, and is still used now in forestry. The egg-shaped cones can be used as kindling and the bark resin as antiseptic oil. It has attractive red flaky bark.

6. **Maidenhair Tree**
Latin name: *Ginkgo biloba*
Origin: China

This is the oldest tree surviving in the world today and would have been grazed by dinosaurs over 350 million years ago! The imprint of the unique fan shaped leaf has been found in fossils. The Maidenhair has been known to live to over 1000 years old. The tree is used to the hot Asian summers and cannot survive exposed cold areas. It can grow to over 30 metres. The leaves appear in April, turning bright yellow in October before falling in November. Kew Gardens contains a specimen which is over 230 years old.

7. Field Maple
Latin name: *Acer campestre*
Origin: Native

This small tree has lobed leaves which give a colourful display. When the leaves are young they are bright red, as they mature they turn green. In the autumn they turn yellow and red. The winged fruits produced in autumn provide food for small animals.

The field maple is grown in hedgerows and makes an excellent nesting site for birds. This group of field maples were planted to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Potters Bar in Focus group, Friends of the park.

8. Wild Cherry
Latin name: *Prunus avium*
Origin: Native

This is a beautiful native woodland tree and can grow up to 30 metres. It has shiny red-brown bark which peels and delicate white blossom appears in April-May just before the leaves. Bitter fruits (cherries) turn from yellow to dark-red as they ripen and are popular with birds, mice and squirrels. You will often find cherry stones around the base of the tree in late summer. The leaves turn fiery colours of yellow and crimson in autumn. The wood is used for making musical instruments and crafts.

9. 'Wildlife Tree'

Dead wood is important for wildlife and where it is safe so to do it is retained. Standing dead trees and high branches are important for woodpeckers, bats, beetles and fungi whilst dead wood lying on the ground will provide a home for different species. Turn to the back pages to see what you might find.

10. Snakebark Maple
Latin name: *Acer davidii*
Origin: China

As the tree ages, it develops a beautiful smooth 'snakeskin' bark with olive green and white stripes. It is quite a small tree, growing to a height of 15 metres and is used as a specimen in parks and gardens. It has small green flowers in spring followed by winged fruit. The tree puts on a colourful autumn display. The specimens in Oakmere are quite young examples and were planted in 1999.

11. Hawthorn
Latin name: *Crataegus monogyna*
Origin: Native

Be careful – this tree has very sharp thorns! The Hawthorn can reach 10 metres and forms an attractive umbrella shape in spring. It is often found in traditional hedgerows. Dark red berries provide food for many of our native and winter visiting birds. It has beautiful fragrant, white flowers known as May blossom, which appear in spring. It is also known as the 'May Tree' due its ancient associations with May Day festivities (used as May Pole and May Day garlands) and much superstition surrounds it. It is unlucky to bring flowers inside the home. It is also referred to as 'Christ's Crown of Thorns' due to the sharp thorns.

12. Common Lime
Latin name: *Tilia x europoea*
Origin: Introduced

This tree provides colour all year round with fragrant clusters of yellow flowers in July and bright green heart shaped leaves. In winter, attractive, vibrant red buds appear ready to start the life cycle all over again. A distinctive feature of the lime are the 'suckers' produced at the base of the trunk.

13. The English Yew
Latin name: *Taxus baccata*
Origin: Native

The Yew is the oldest living tree in Europe (the Fortingall Yew in Scotland is believed to be 3 – 5000 yrs old). It has sacred origins from the Druid and Celtic times. It is often found in churchyards as churches were often established on these sacred sites. The Yew can reach 20 metres. The evergreen leaves were once used as 'palms' for Palm Sunday. The smooth bark is purple/brown and peels as the tree ages. Both the leaves and bright red seeds are poisonous. It is used for topiary.

14. Cedar-of-Lebanon

Latin name: *Cedrus libani*
Origin: South West Asia

This Cedar is recognised by its flat, shelf-like foliage. In Turkey, they can grow to over 1000 years old. However, the soil is richer in the UK so the tree grows too quickly (over 40 metres) and can become top heavy and is at risk in storms. It is pollution resistant and has become a popular ornamental in parks. The cones take two years to ripen and the foliage colour can vary from dark green to grey blue.

15. Silver Birch

Latin name: *Betula pendula*
Origin: Native

The Silver Birch is a slender elegant tree, reaching 30 metres, with ghostly white bark and develops 'warts' as it ages. Its timber is used in making plywood and is popular amongst wood turners. Its wispy branches were used in making besom (witches) broom heads. Its attractive yellow drooping catkins appear in Spring and oval bright green leaves follow, turning yellow in autumn.

16. Horse Chestnut

Latin name: *Aesculus hippocastanum*
Origin: Balkan Peninsula

This is a magnificent spreading tree which can grow up to 35 metres and casts a welcoming shade in summer. The tree has big leaves, almost like fingers, and showy candle-like flowers in May. It has sticky dark red buds in winter. Look out for horseshoe marks and 'nail holes' on the branches around where the buds appear. The fruit is enclosed in leathery cases providing a popular autumn game – 'conkers'. This is a popular tree in parks, avenues and is often seen on village greens. The wood is not very strong and is used for making small items such as toys.

17. Common Hornbeam

Latin name: *Carpinus betulus*
Origin: Native

The hornbeam is often found in hedgerows and woodlands and can reach a height of between 19-30 metres. Because it is such a hard wood its timber is used for mallets, skittles and the moving parts in pianos. The tree flowers in March and the leaves turn bright yellow in autumn. The bark is pale grey stripped with brown. As the bark ages in becomes ridged. The leaves are sharply pointed with a serrated edge.

18. Japanese Maple

Latin name: *Acer palmatum*
Origin: Japan and Korea

This is a truly beautiful tree growing to 16 metres with a spreading habit. It is very eye-catching in autumn with the reflections in the water. The leaves are 'palmate', almost like the shape of the hand, with long delicate fingers. The leaves turn from green to purple to red. This tree was planted in the 1990s to enhance the Japanese Garden.

19. Holly

Latin name: *Ilex aquifolium*
Origin: Native

The female tree produces the bright red berries which provide winter fuel for birds. To produce the berries, there must be a male holly nearby for which the pollen can be transferred by insects drawn to the smell of flowers. The glossy dark green leaves are sharp and prickly. Higher up the tree the leaves are less prickly as the tree does not need to protect itself.

Many myths surround the holly. There is a superstitious belief that it is unlucky to cut a holly down as it has always been seen as a tree that would ward off evil. Nowadays we still use holly leaves and berries for Christmas decorations and wood for carving, sculpture and walking sticks.

20. English Oak
Latin name: *Quercus robur*
Origin: Native

The Oak supports the most variety of wildlife out of all the trees in Britain. It is often referred to as 'The Tree of Life'. The Oak is one of the oldest trees in England and can live to over 1000 years and may reach an eventual height of 30 metres.

The acorn provides an abundant source for squirrels and jays who you will see rushing around in autumn burying their store ready for winter. Often these acorns are forgotten and young oak trees, 'saplings', start to appear.

Being of such ancient origin, there are many myths that surround the tree: Merlin's wand was made from oak, King Arthur's Round Table was made from one enormous slice of oak tree; Charles II hid in an oak tree following his defeat at the Battle of Worcester and this became the Royal Oak; couples used to be married under oak trees before the establishment of churches.

The Oak can be recognised by its spreading form and its distinctive leaves.

21. Elder
Latin name: *Sambucus nigra*
Origin: Native

The Elder is common in open woods, hedgerows and on waste ground and can grow to 10 metres. Clusters of flowers appear in June followed by berries in August and September, which are edible and rich in Vitamin C. The berries and flowers are used in jams, jellies and winemaking to produce a potent brew. The distinctive bark is grooved and corky.

22. Parkfield Statue
(made from Oak)

This statue was carved in the early 1990s to commemorate the people of Potters Bar. It is carved from a complete oak trunk and the figures depict all life that depends on a tree to live. The sculpture is by a local artist who also designed the Caterpillar Tree in King George Recreation Ground, Bushey.

23. Lombardy Poplar
Latin name: *Populus nigra var. italica*
Origin: Himalayas

A very easy tree to identify due to its tall narrow shape with its branches point stiffly upwards. It can reach a height of 30 metres. The Lombardy Poplar is often found alongside roads in Continental Europe. Furry catkins appear in March-April before the triangular leaves. The Poplar is planted in parks or in rows to form a screen. Poplars can weep' a sticky residue. This was thought to be linked to a Greek legend, representing the tears of the seven Heliades, the sisters of Phaeton, who was punished by Zeus.

24. Common Ash
Latin name: *Fraxinus excelsior*
Origin: Native

The ash is an important timber tree. The light coloured wood is strong and hard wearing and used in furniture and home interiors. Vikings used ash to make their boats and weapons. The tree can reach a height of between 30-40 metres and is common on damp soils. Tiny flowers appear in April with a purple tint. Winged fruits called "keys" develop in late summer and turn brown in autumn. It has distinctive black buds in winter.

25. Ornamental Pear
Latin name: *Pyrus calleryana*
'Chanticleer'
Origin: Introduced

A tough and hardy tree which can reach a height of 12 metres and has a conical shape. It has glossy green leaves which turn red/purple in autumn and brown fruits. It is a useful tree in exposed areas. A beautiful sight in spring when it forms a pillar of white flowers.

26. White Willow
Latin name: *Salix alba*
Origin: Native

The willow grows wild on riversides and can reach a height of 25 metres. Catkins appear in late April to May. The white appearance comes from the silky hairs on the leaves. The willow is a sacred tree – the term 'knocking on wood' comes from knocking on the willow tree to do away with evil and bring good luck. The salicylic acid in the bark and leaves is a source of aspirin.

27. Corsican Pine

Latin name: *Pinus nigra var. maritima*
Origin: Corsica, Southern Italy & Sicily

Now one of Britain's most important forestry trees due to its strong timber. It grows to 45 metres, with a slender narrow shape. It produces egg-shaped yellow brown cones. The bark is nearly black and scaly. This Pine is often planted as a shelterbelt to protect areas from strong winds.

28. Deodar

Latin name: *Cedrus deodara*
Origin: Himalayas

A quick growing conifer which can reach a height of 25 metres and is long lived. It is also known as the 'Himalayan Cedar'. The long needles grow in a 'spiral' and are a grey-green colour. This cedar has drooping lower branches.

29. Sweet Chestnut

Latin name: *Castinea sativa*
Origin: Southern Europe

The Sweet Chestnut was probably introduced by the Romans to bring us a harvest of nuts which can be roasted or ground for flour. It can grow to over 30 metres and is long lived. Cord-like catkins appear at the end of June. The leaves turn bright yellow in Autumn. The chestnuts develop in groups of 1-3 in yellow hairy cases and fall to the ground in the autumn. Can you see how the bark twists and cracks?

30. Copper Beech

Latin name: *Fagus sylvatica purpurea*
Origin: Europe

Young beech trees keep their leaves in winter putting on a russet display: you will often see it used in hedging. The beech has shallow roots but it can grow to a magnificent height of over 30 metres. The name comes from the Greek word 'fagein' meaning 'eat' as the nuts were used in pig fodder. The Cooper Beech has dark purple leaves which turn copper in autumn. The Beech can be identified by its sharp long leaf buds in winter.

Further information

We hope you enjoy your tree trail around Oakmere and Parkfield. If you require any further information on trees, woodland management and habitats, here are some suitable contacts:

www.hertsdirect.org/cms
The Countryside Management Service (CMS) works throughout Hertfordshire to enable local communities to enjoy, care for and enhance their local environment.

Interested in becoming a conservation volunteer? CMS would be delighted to hear from you.

Countryside Management Service
Barnet Countryside Centre, Byng Road, Barnet
Hertfordshire, EN5 4NP
Tel: 020 8447 5466 Fax: 020 8447 5465
Email: south_cms@hertscc.gov.uk

www.countryside.gov.uk
The Countryside Agency is the statutory champion and watchdog working to make the quality of life better for people in the countryside and the quality of the countryside better for everyone.

www.forestry.gov.uk
The **Forestry Commission** of Great Britain is the government department responsible for the protection and expansion of Britain's forests and woodlands. There is a Woodland Grant Scheme available for planting and looking after woodlands.

www.nhm.ac.uk/science/projects/fff/SearchPC.htm
The Natural History Museum
The Postcode Plants Database. You can look up native trees and plant species to your home postcode!

Hertsmere Parks & Amenities Section
If you require further information on the parks in Hertsmere, please contact the Parks & Amenities Section:

Freephone: 0800 731 1810

Parks & Amenities Section, Hertsmere Borough Council, Civic Offices, Elstree Way, Borehamwood, Hertfordshire, WD6 1WA

The Countryside Agency

Countryside Management Service

The magic of wildlife

Imagine a park without bird song...

From nest building to surviving winter, birds are just one of many animals that depend on trees for their food and home. Plants are an essential part of the food chain. Each park or even each tree has many different food chains

Trees are able to use energy from sunlight to grow and produce new leaves. All this plant material provides food and homes for a huge variety of wildlife. Tiny insects and fungi swarm throughout a tree but you can only see them if you get really close up. Larger animals such as squirrels make homes in the branches, whilst worms and beetles find food amongst the roots and soil. This amazing array of wildlife is known as biodiversity.

Native trees offer a wider variety of food than trees that have been introduced They are like giant supermarkets that have all the basic foods, but also things of interest to all kinds of specialist groups.

Tree	Insect species recorded
Oak	284
Silver Birch	229
White Willow	200
Alder	90
Beech	64
Ash	41

Sweet Chestnut, an introduced tree, has only 5 insect species recorded.

New life from old

Dead wood, such as our 'wildlife tree', is very important for biodiversity.

Standing and laying deadwood support different wildlife. The rare stag beetle is reliant upon standing dead wood, which tends to rot from the inside to the outside. This can start to happen while the tree is still alive. Many living ancient trees are hollow. Can you see any beetles in the wildlife tree?

Laying dead wood rots from the outside into the middle. It becomes infested with specialist dead wood eaters such as woodlice and certain beetles.

An example of a food chain

What causes the rot? FUNGUS! Look out for their colourful fruiting bodies in the autumn.

Dead wood and rot can also be seen on living trees and create important habitat areas. Loose bark creates hollows for centipedes, click beetles and moths. These in turn provide food for bats and birds.

As with living trees, dead and dying native trees tend to support the widest range of insects and fungi. An old Oak tree can take a long time to decay, providing a stable habitat for hundreds of years.

Management

Native woodlands have been managed by people for hundreds of years. Why? Because the wood provided a crop, like farming but on a longer time scale! Woods provided valuable timber for house and ship building, along with firewood and other products. This changed in the middle of the 20th century. Woodland produce was expected to come from fast growing coniferous woodlands and traditional broad-leaved woodlands were no longer managed or were planted up with pine trees.

It has since been realised that woodland biodiversity depends on the management of our traditional woodlands. Woodland wildflowers need light to grow in. Butterflies need small flowering plants to feed from. Trees need space to grow in. A managed woodland provides habitats for all sorts of wildlife, and creates a beautiful place for people to visit.

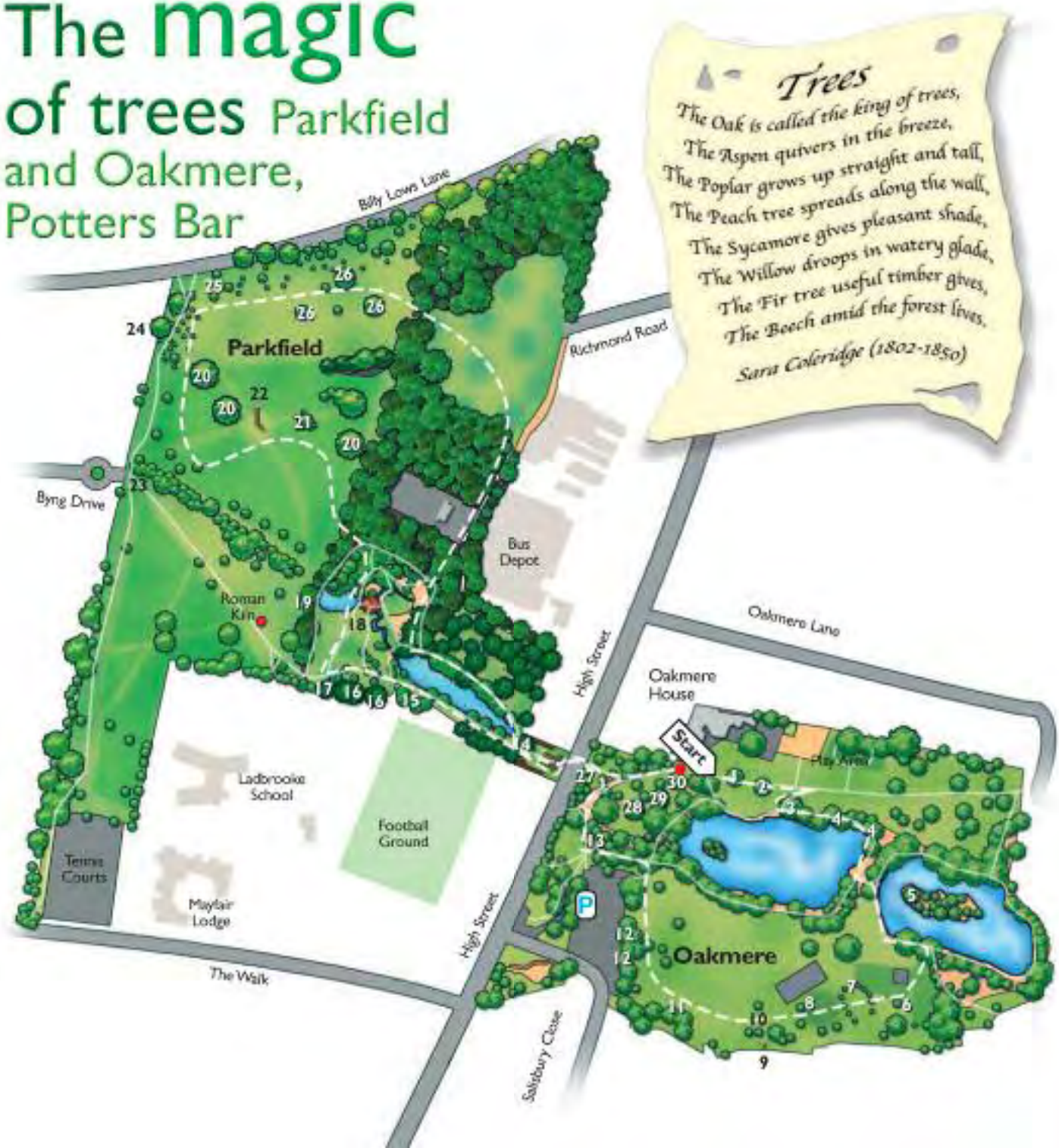
Some traditional management techniques:

Coppicing. Picture. Visit Furzefield Wood in Potters Bar to see the effects of coppicing. The trees are cut every 7 – 15 years in winter allowing the stumps to resprout an abundance of stems. These were used for charcoal making.

Thinning – taking out selected trees to let other trees grow on so they are not in competition for sunlight and space.

More and more trees are being planted to provide 'green' areas in towns and cities, thereby improving the air quality and creating a pleasant environment. Woodland cover is actually on the increase in Hertfordshire!

The magic of trees Parkfield and Oakmere, Potters Bar



How to get there

Potters Bar station (from Kings Cross and Moorgate mainline stations) is approximately 15 minutes walk from Oakmere and Parkfield..

Buses PB1, 84, 242, 302, 312, 398, 610, 611 & 841 all stop at the Bus Garage on the High Street by Parkfield.

Parking a small car park, situated off Salisbury Close, is available for users of Oakmere Park and Parkfield.

Hertsmere Borough Council

This leaflet has been produced by Hertsmere Borough Council with sponsorship from Watling Chase.

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The Countryside Agency

Countryside Management Service

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