



America Wood

Management Plan 2014-2019

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THE WOODLAND TRUST

INTRODUCTION

The Trust's corporate aims and management approach guide the management of all the Trust's properties, and are described on Page 4. These determine basic management policies and methods, which apply to all sites unless specifically stated otherwise. Such policies include free public access; keeping local people informed of major proposed work; the retention of old trees and dead wood; and a desire for management to be as unobtrusive as possible. The Trust also has available Policy Statements covering a variety of woodland management issues.

The Trust's management plans are based on the identification of Key Features for the site and setting objectives for their management. A monitoring programme (not included in this plan) ensures that these objectives are met and any necessary management works are carried out.

Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATING

The information presented in this Management plan is held in a database which is continuously being amended and updated on our website. Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.

Please either consult The Woodland Trust website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk or contact the Woodland Trust (wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk) to confirm details of the current management programme.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and a summary of monitoring results can be obtained on request.

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The management of our woods is based on our charitable purposes, and is therefore focused on improving woodland biodiversity and increasing peoples' understanding and enjoyment of woodland. Our strategic aims are to:

- Protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future
- Work with others to create more native woodlands and places rich in trees
- Inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees

All our sites have a management plan which is freely accessible via our website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk. Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) under licence FSC-C009406 and through independent audit.

In addition to the guidelines below we have specific guidance and policies on issues of woodland management which we review and update from time to time.

We recognise that all woods are different and that the management of our sites should also reflect their local landscape and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives. Guidelines like these provide a necessary overarching framework to guide the management of our sites but such management also requires decisions based on local circumstances and our Site Manager's intimate knowledge of each site.

The following guidelines help to direct our woodland management:

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.
2. We establish new native woodland using both natural regeneration and tree planting, but largely the latter, particularly when there are opportunities for involving people.
3. We provide free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe.
4. The long term vision for our non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites is to restore them to predominantly native species composition and semi-natural structure, a vision that equally applies to our secondary woods.
5. Existing semi-natural open-ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained and new open ground habitats created where appropriate.
6. The heritage and cultural value of sites is taken into account in our management and, in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.
7. Woods can offer the potential to generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We will therefore consider the potential to generate income from our estate to help support our aims.
8. We work with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders in developing the management of our woods. We recognise the benefits of local community woodland ownership and management. Where appropriate we allow our woods to be used to support local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.
9. We use and offer the estate where appropriate, for the purpose of demonstration, evidence gathering and research associated with the conservation, recreational and sustainable management of woodlands. In particular we will develop and maintain a network of long-term monitoring sites across the estate.
10. Any activities we undertake will conform to sustainable forest management principles, be appropriate for the site and will be balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

SUMMARY

This public management plan briefly describes the site, specifically mentions information on public access, sets out the long term policy and lists the Key Features which drive management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site - their significance is outlined together with their long (50 year+) and short (5 year) term objectives. The short term objectives are complemented by a detailed Work Programme for the period of this management plan. Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. A short glossary of technical terms is at the end. The Key Features and general woodland condition of this site are subject to a formal monitoring programme which is maintained in a central database. A summary of monitoring results is available on request.

1.0 SITE DETAILS

Site name:	America Wood
Location:	Shanklin
Grid reference:	SZ567820, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 196
Area:	10.98 hectares (27.13 acres)
Designations:	Site of Special Scientific Interest, Tree Preservation Order

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Unusually for the Isle of Wight, most of this wood is high oak forest with downy birch. The storms of 1987 and 1990 have created open sections gradually reverting to woodland. A badger sett has been reported and red squirrels occasionally spotted.

2.2 Extended Description

America Wood is an area of ancient semi-natural woodland located north east of the town of Shanklin on the Isle of Wight. It is quite difficult for visitors to reach due to the lack of accessible parking, though it is well served by public footpaths and a public bridleway, which can be used by the more active visitor. The public bridleway is well used by horse-riders and mountain bikers.

In 1985 the Woodland Trust acquired 10.98 hectares (the western area), with the remainder of the woodland being in private ownership. The wood is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (totalling 21.4ha) and the Woodland Trusts area was assessed as favourable in 2014. There is a Tree Preservation Order on the woodland.

America Wood lies on the steep slopes of a trench cut into the margin of the Lower Greensand by a small, northward flowing stream. There are numerous springs on the valley sides and the deep cut stream provides a shady and humid habitat for a relatively rich lichen and moss flora. The soil is strongly acidic peat to peaty silt overlying Lower Greensand, ie ferruginous sands and sandrock beds.

America Wood is mainly oak high forest (predominantly pedunculate but with some sessile), with downy birch, a generally scattered hazel and holly dominated shrub layer, plus occasional and sometimes large stands of other species, particularly sweet chestnut. This is a type of woodland rarely found on the Isle of Wight. It is thought that it may be an example of ancient pasture woodland due to the presence of a number of mature oak pollards (many of which are outside of WT ownership, north of the wood but within the areas classed as America Wood SSSI) and trees of an open-grown nature. Some of these may have originated as far back as the 17th Century. If this is the case, then it appears to have been a considerable time ago since it was managed in this way due to the presence of a younger generation of oak now covering much of America Wood. The 1864 map shows conifers planted in the northern half of the wood, thus suggesting that any grazing is likely to have stopped before this date. There is a great deal of holly in the under storey, which is otherwise generally sparse and the ground flora is poor. These characteristics support the possibility that the wood may have a woodland pasture origin, especially as much of this parish is documented as being grazed heathland even up to the late 18th Century. Notable among mammals are the red squirrel and dormouse, both of which have been seen in the wood and are of National importance.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

America Wood has no parking nearby and can only be accessed by public footpaths or bridleways. A bridleway runs north-south from Ninham down to the A3020 with another branch veering east towards Shanklin. Footpaths enter the wood from Apse Heath on the west side and Shanklin to the east.

Within the wood there are maintained permissive footpaths. These are mostly bare earth and liable to become muddy in wet weather. Some are steep in places. There are 2 small bridges over streams.

Nearest Bus Stop : Whiteley Bank Crossroads on A3020. Accessible from Newport and Shanklin on Southern Vectis Route No. 2 (Information from www.islandbuses.info 0871 2002233). From there walk 1 mile east along A3020

Nearest Station : Shanklin 1 mile

Nearest Public Toilet : Shanklin Esplanade (1 mile) (disabled facilities) (Information from www.iwight.com May 2007)

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

In 50 years time America Wood will be a mature broadleaved woodland with a diverse structure and range of species. Careful consideration has been given to the long-term development of the site as woodland as opposed to wood pasture. No documentary evidence is available to support the hypothesis that America Wood was a pasture woodland for much of its history. Furthermore, English Nature confirmed that there was no strong conservation case for pursuing wood pasture on this site. However, evidence strongly suggests that America Wood is at least partially an 'Old Growth' woodland and in order to perpetuate these characteristics, existing trees will be managed on a minimal intervention basis well beyond their biological age of maturity in order to prolong the conditions required by those specialist species which depend on this rare habitat for their survival. Where it is safe to do so, standing and fallen deadwood will be left to provide an increasing deadwood habitat to develop which will in turn support a large range of invertebrates and fungi.

The areas of open ground will be allowed to develop good woodland flora by preventing the trees, bracken and bramble from dominating.

The current arrangement for bicycle and horse rider access is likely to continue, namely encouraging them to stay on the public bridleway and off the footpaths through the use of strategically placed fencing. Visitor numbers are relatively high, especially considering its semi-rural location with limited parking within 500m. Most visitors are therefore very local. The management of the public access infrastructure and the well-maintained network of paths will therefore have to keep abreast of this high public use.

In this way the Woodland Trust's corporate objectives are achieved to protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future and to inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees.

5.0 KEY FEATURES

The Key Features of the site are identified and described below. They encapsulate what is important about the site. The short and long-term objectives are stated and any management necessary to maintain and improve the Key Feature.

5.1 Old Growth Stand

Description

America Wood is mainly oak high forest (predominantly pedunculate but with some sessile), with birch, a generally scattered and hazel dominated shrub layer, plus occasional and sometimes large stands of other species, particularly sweet chestnut. Although the dominant age class is mature at >150 years, a younger generation of species now covers much of America Wood although this tends to be of species other than oak. The 'Old Growth' description refers to the fact that there has been a long continuity of very old trees at the site with currently still many (particularly oak) trees over 200 years of age. There is a proliferation of holly in the understorey in parts and the ground flora is generally poor. Sweet chestnut dominates the central section of the wood, close to America Cottages. This is the part that is likely to be non ancient in origin. The 1894 map also shows conifers planted in the northern half of America Wood. The sweet chestnut is likely to have been planted, possibly around the same time.

English Nature was of the view that America Wood is thought to have formed part of a complex of extensive rough grazing grounds of Apse Heath. A large proportion of the wood appears to be of ancient origin. However, the 1864 6 inch OS map indicates conifers mixed with broadleaves in the northern part of the wood, and annotations on the 1981 woodland record sheet suggest that approximately a quarter of the wood north of Tinkers Hole and opposite America Cottages is not ancient. The lack of any substantial earthworks around the wood may suggest that it was originally part of a larger unit, the present woodland having survived due to the difficulty of access for timber removal. This characteristic remains today. The "Mudge Map" of 1792 shows the area of woodland named "America" having the same boundaries as are in existence today. Parts of the site thus indicate "Old Growth" characteristics because not only are there a large proportion of old trees but there has been a long term continuity of old trees at the site.

Significance

It is one of the Trust's beliefs that there should be no further loss of ASNW. This wood is a SSSI with many mature trees, some going back as far as the 17th Century. Oak, hazel, sweet chestnut and honeysuckle provide food for the red squirrel and dormice present in the wood. 'Old Growth' is particularly important because it is the long term continuity of over-mature trees which provide the rare and fragile conditions and niches for specialist species, particularly fungi and lichen, to survive and regenerate.

America Wood is one of only a few remaining woodlands of this type on the Isle of Wight.

Opportunities & Constraints

The thick leaf litter and vigorous bracken growth is a constraint to oak natural regeneration. Low levels of oak natural regeneration in the past 20 years has resulted in an age-class gap for this dominant species. Vandalism, including arson has occurred in the past.

The openness of the canopy provides the opportunity for natural regeneration where mineral soil is present.

Factors Causing Change

Sycamore and holly can become invasive

Long term Objective (50 years+)

America Wood will be a mature broadleaved woodland with a diverse structure and range of species. Gradual increase in canopy cover to continuous high forest through general crown spread and natural regeneration 'Old Growth' characteristics of the site to be maintained and enhanced through a policy of deliberate retention of overmature trees in significant numbers. Where it is safe to do so, standing and fallen deadwood will be left to provide an increasing deadwood habitat to develop which will in turn support a large range of invertebrates and fungi. The areas of open ground will be allowed to develop good woodland flora by preventing the trees, bracken and bramble from dominating.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

During this plan period the short term objective is to allow the wood to continue to develop naturally. This will be achieved by the following specific actions:

- a Woodland Condition Assessment will be carried out in spring 2015 to establish baseline data for canopy cover, species diversity and age structure
- existing trees will be managed on a minimal intervention basis
- Where it is safe to do so, standing and fallen deadwood will be left to provide an increasing deadwood habitat to develop which will in turn support a large range of invertebrates and fungi.
- The path edges and areas of open ground will be allowed to develop good woodland flora by brushcutting the bracken and bramble annually (in August)

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

One public bridleway and three public footpaths cross the wood. The public bridleway is particularly heavily used by both horse-riders and bike riders. In the recent past there have been problems with both of these user groups causing damage to other paths and the body of the wood itself which has a good network of maintained permissive footpaths.

Significance

The public rights of way in the wood form part of the extensive local rights of way network. These are particularly well used by local horse riders and mountain bikers, the latter being predominantly children. The public footpath and other paths in the wood are well-used by the more athletic walkers. Informal public access to America Wood fulfills the Trust's corporate aim of inspiring everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees

Opportunities & Constraints

Undulating and in some parts steepness of ground precludes some types of access.
3 wet areas, 2 on public rights of way requiring bridging or board walking, which is the responsibility of the local Council.
Relative remoteness and difficulty of parking limits visitor numbers.
A neighbouring landowner runs courses for adults with physical and learning disabilities and there may be the possibility of them utilising America Wood more fully.

Factors Causing Change

Increased public access leading to increased numbers of paths.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

A well established and safe network of paths for informal public access. Visitors will find the woods aesthetically pleasing, with the entrances and paths allowing easy access to enjoy the woodland environment.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

Objective: Site will be welcoming and accessible.

During the plan period this will be achieved by:

- implementing an appropriate path cutting regime along approximately 1.8km of maintained paths, one cut in July/August.
- All site infrastructure such as signs, footbridges, culverts and steps will be inspected annually and any remedial work undertaken in the appropriate timescale.
- A walk-over tree safety survey will be undertaken along maintained paths and rides annually with any remedial work undertaken in the appropriate timescale.

6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By
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APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	10.90	other oak spp		High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site		Site of Special Scientific Interest, Tree Preservation Order

The area is dominated by mature W10 Oak- Birch woodland on the higher ground and plateaus with significant stands of sweet chestnut. Much of the chestnut occupies the area shown as non-ancient in origin in the woodland survey information. The understorey is generally sparse, though holly is now beginning to take over in some places along with birch regeneration. There is also a substantial amount of open space from the general open nature of the wood but also resulting from windblow. The ground flora is dominated by bluebell in the spring which is replaced by dense bracken and bramble later in the summer.

GLOSSARY

Ancient Woodland

Ancient woods are defined as those where there has been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD. In Scotland ancient woods are defined strictly as sites shown as semi-natural woodland on the 'Roy' maps (a military survey carried out in 1750 AD, which is the best source of historical map evidence) and as woodland all subsequent maps. However, they have been combined with long-established woods of semi-natural origin (originating from between 1750 and 1860) into a single category of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland to take account of uncertainties in their identification. Ancient woods include Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (see below). May support many species that are only found in ancient woodland.

Ancient Semi - Natural Woodland

Stands in ancient woods defined as those consisting predominantly of native trees and shrubs that have not obviously been planted, which have arisen from natural regeneration or coppice regrowth.

Ancient Woodland Site

Stands in ancient woods that have been converted to plantations, of coniferous, broadleaved or mixed species, usually for timber production, including plantations of native species planted so closely together that any semi-natural elements of the understorey have been suppressed.

Beating Up

Replacing any newly planted trees that have died in the first few years after planting.

Broadleaf

A tree having broad leaves (such as oak) rather than needles found on conifers (such as Scots pine).

Canopy

The uppermost layer of vegetation in a woodland, or the upper foliage and branches of an individual tree.

Clearfell

Felling of all trees within a defined area.

Compartment

Permanent management division of a woodland, usually defined on site by permanent features such as roads. See Sub-compartments.

Conifer

A tree having needles, rather than broadleaves, and typically bearing cones.

Continuous Cover forestry

A term used for managing woods to ensure that there are groups or individual trees of different ages scattered over the whole wood and that some mature tree cover is always maintained. Management is by repeated thinning and no large areas are ever completely felled all at once.

Coppice

Trees which are cut back to ground levels at regular intervals (3-25 years).

Exotic (non-native) Species

Species originating from other countries (or other parts of the UK) that have been introduced by humans, deliberately or accidentally.

Field Layer

Layer of small, non-woody herbaceous plants such as bluebells.

Group Fell

The felling of a small group of trees, often to promote natural regeneration or allow planting.

Long Term Retention

Discrete groups of trees (or in some cases single trees) that are retained significantly past their economic felling age. Operations may still be carried out within them and thinning is often necessary to maintain stability.

Minimum Intervention

Areas where no operations (such as thinning) will take place other than to protect public safety or possibly to control invasive exotic species.

Mixed Woodland

Woodland made up of broadleaved and coniferous trees.

National vegetation classification (NVC)

A classification scheme that allows an area of vegetation to be assigned to the standardised type that best matches the combination of plant species that it contains. All woodlands in the UK can be described as being one of 18 main woodland types (W1 - W18), which principally reflect soil and climatic conditions. For example, Upland Oakwoods are type W11, and normally occur on well drained infertile soils in the cooler and wetter north and west of Britain. Each main type can be subdivided into numerous subtypes. Most real woods contain more than one type or sub-type and inevitably some woods are intermediate in character and can't be properly described by any sub type.

Native Species

Species that arrived in Britain without human assistance.

Natural Regeneration

Naturally grown trees from seeds falling from mature trees. Also regeneration from coppicing and suckering.

Origin & Provenance

The provenance of a tree or seed is the place where seed was collected to grow the tree or plant. The origin is the geographical location within the natural range of a species from where seeds/tree originally derives. Thus an acorn collected from a Turkey oak in Edinburgh would have an Edinburgh provenance and a southern European origin.

Re-Stocking

Re-planting an area of woodland, after it has been felled.

Shrub Layer

Formed by woody plants 1-10m tall.

Silviculture

The growing and care of trees in woodlands.

Stand

Trees of one type or species, grouped together within a woodland.

Sub-Compartment

Temporary management division of a compartment, which may change between management plan periods.

Thinning

The felling of a proportion of individual trees within a given area. The remaining trees grow to fill in the space created.

Tubex or Grow or Tuley Tubes

Tubes placed over newly planted trees or natural regeneration that promote growth and provide protection from animals such as rabbits and deer.

Weeding

The control of vegetation immediately around newly planted trees or natural regeneration to promote tree growth until they become established. Either by hand cutting or with carefully selected weed killers such as glyphosate.

Windblow/Windthrow

Trees or groups of trees blown over (usually uprooted) by strong winds and gales.