



WOODLAND
TRUST

How to estimate the age of an oak

Ancient trees are trees of great age – over 300 years for an oak tree

Ancient oaks may show some of these characteristics:

- far fatter than usual with a very wide trunk
- a squat or dumpy appearance
- gnarled
- showing signs of decay
- hollow inside
- gnarled roots above ground
- may look in poor shape to the untrained eye (but in reality are probably very healthy for great age)

You will need:

- a soft 'ribbon type' 6m tape measure
or
- a piece of string or rope
or
- be prepared to use your arms
or
- some friends to help you



Here is how you do it:

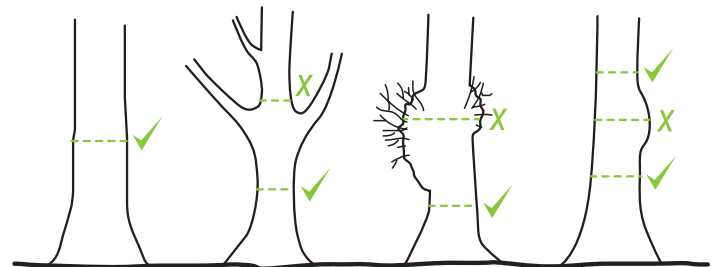
Measure the tree at approximately 1.5m from the ground.

NB If the tree is very bulbous, then at a point where the tree reverts to its usual 'waist' size.

Mark your start point by noting the place you start or by leaning a branch against the tree as a marker or by asking a companion to mark the place with their fingers.

The ready reckoner on the reverse will work out the approximate age of an oak for you.

Other tree species will be different as they grow at different rates, don't live so long (except for yews) and reach different sizes. They can be considered 'ancient' at a much younger age than oaks.



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Oak leaves: moorhen.demon.co.uk

Oak bud: Pete Holmes

Oak tree illustration: Reproduced from an original drawing by John White, Forest Research © Crown Copyright 2007. 3212 03/07

Ready Reckoner for estimating the age of an oak tree

| Girth of tree in feet and inches | Girth of tree in metres and centimetres | Equals Estimated age in years | Historical connections |
|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|---|
| 6ft 2ins | 1m 85cm | 75 | 1930, George V Amy Johnson's solo flight to Australia |
| 6ft 7ins | 1m 98cm | 80 | 1926, George V Year of the General Strike |
| 8ft 3ins | 2m 48cm | 103 | 1903, Edward VII First manned flight by the Wright Brothers |
| 10ft 4ins | 3m 10cm | 138 | 1868, Victoria Thomas Edison patented his 1st invention, an electric voice machine |
| 12ft 4ins | 3m 70cm | 181 | 1825, George IV Stockton to Darlington Railway opens (1st in the world) |
| 14ft 5ins | 4m 33cm | 232 | 1815, George III British victory over Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo |
| 16ft 6ins | 4m 95cm | 291 | 1715, George I First Jacobite rebellion in Scotland |
| 18ft 7ins | 5m 58cm | 358 | 1638, Charles I Last year of the English Civil War |
| 20ft 8ins | 6m 20cm | 433 | 1573, Elizabeth I The first maps in England were made by Christopher Saxton |
| 22ft 8ins | 6m 80cm | 515 | 1491, Henry VII The future King, Henry VIII born at Greenwich |
| 24ft 9ins | 7m 43cm | 606 | 1400, Henry IV Rebellion in Wales under Owain Glyndwr |
| 26ft 9ins | 8m 03cm | 704 | 1302, Edward I Dante is exiled from Florence |
| 28ft 10ins | 8m 65cm | 810 | 1196, Richard I According to legend, Prince Madog of Gwynedd reached North America |
| 30ft 11ins | 9m 28cm | 924 | 1082, William the Conqueror Completion of Rochester Cathedral |
| 32ft 11ins | 9m.88cm | 1046 | 960, Edgar Mieczyslaw I becomes first ruler of Poland |

NB These estimates are based on measurements by John White on oaks growing in open conditions in the south-east of England. Ages will vary for trees growing in different conditions and in other parts of the UK.