



# Dean Heritage Centre

## Large Print Guide

Heritage  
Ability



**Hello and welcome!**

**This booklet provides information about the Dean Heritage Centre for visitors who prefer to use Large Print.**

**This booklet is intended to be used with an A3 map.**

**Please ask at reception if you do not have the A3 map.**

## **Introduction**

**The Dean Heritage Centre is a unique attraction located in the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire. The centre is fully interactive and aims to protect and preserve the unique history and heritage of the Forest of Dean.**

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as a reward for being instrumental in recapturing Berwick-upon-Tweed during his reign. However the right to be a Freeminer only applies to any man born within the Forest of Dean's traditional boundaries (known as the 'Hundred of St Briavels'), and who has worked underground for a year and a day.

There is also a café, gift shop and adventure playground on site.

Please return this guide to reception before you leave, thank you.

## Dean Heritage Centre

The centre is run by the Dean Heritage Museum Trust, who started as a charity in 1979 and then became an educational trust in 1981, the same year the site was acquired.

The museum opened in 1983, with the help of the community programme, local government and local businesses.

The museum is located inside the Old Camp Mill building since 1981 and houses over 20 thousand precious objects and documents relating to the heritage of the Forest of Dean. These include a working Beam Engine, Sopwith's unique geological model of the Forest of Dean, and an extensive collection of 18th century Voyce clocks.

**There is a wide range of things to see and do at the site, including:**

- 1. The Old Camp Mill building, a scenic Millpond and authentic Water Wheel.**
- 2. Five galleries – exploring the history of the Forest – from the Ice Age to the present day.**
- 3. A reconstructed Forester's cottage, with a cottage garden.**
- 4. An authentic Victorian schoolroom.**
- 5. The Gage Library.**
- 6. The Gruffalo Woodland Trail.**
- 7. Charcoal Burner's Camp.**
- 8. Harvey's Folly – Freemine entrance.**

**forest. Nowadays, it is sold mainly for barbeques.**

- 8. Harvey's Folly – Freemine entrance**  
**Harvey's Folly is a replica of a Freemine entrance built for the centre by retired Freeminer Dave Harvey.**

**Freemining is an important part of the history of the Forest of Dean and has been around for many hundreds of years. Freemining is when miners in the area are given special permission to mine their own personal plots of land, known as 'gales'. The Forest of Dean is the only place in the UK with Freemines. The right to Freemine is believed to have been bestowed by Edward I in the 13th century;**

forest for months at a time during the summer, to provide the constant supervision needed to keep several burns maintained at one time.

The Heritage Centre continues the tradition by conducting a charcoal burn once a year on the May bank holiday weekend. The hut was built in the traditional turf and earth method, where the wood is stacked tightly together in a dome, and then covered in turf and earth to starve the fire of oxygen. This is done to ensure that the wood dries out at a high temperature, but does not burn.

The charcoal produced would in the past have been used to achieve the high temperatures necessary to smelt the Iron ore mined in the

## 1. The Old Camp Mill Building

The Dean Heritage Centre building is over 4 hundred years old, and used to be the Old Camp Mill. The building was developed as an Iron Forge between 1612 and 1624, changing usage several times over the years before becoming a museum in 1983.

During its history it has also been:

- a Corn Mill (1876 – 1888)
- a Leather Board Factory (1888 – 1908)
- a Saw Mill (1922 – 1952)
- a Scrap Metal Yard (1960 – 1981).

In 1981 it was purchased by the Dean Heritage Museum Trust to be developed into a museum and re-opened as the Dean Heritage Centre in 1983.

The pond in the front of the centre is also an original feature and would have powered the old mills. The water from the pond would turn a large water wheel (which can be seen by the old cider press), and this would generate electricity to power the mill.

## 2. Five galleries – exploring the history of the Forest.

### a. Gallery One – Pre-historic and early history.

This gallery investigates the landscape and geology of the Forest of Dean.

There are also various displays showing the fossilised remains of plants and animals that once inhabited the local area, as well as pre-historic tools the first farmers used to make a living.

and philanthropist with a great personal interest in the area, who died in 1994.

The Gage library is only open by appointment.

## 6. The Gruffalo Woodland Trail

This is an accessible woodland path through the forest, based on the much-loved children's book, 'The Gruffalo'. Visitors can wander with the famous mouse as he makes his journey through the woodlands surrounding the centre.

## 7. Charcoal Burner's Camp

The Charcoal Burners' Camp is located in a forest clearing with a stone-and-turf built hut, constructed as they have been for centuries. Whole families would have camped in the

during this period are on display to touch and play with.

Certainly very different from today's technology! Younger visitors can dress up in traditional Victorian costumes.

### **5. The Gage Library**

Opened in 1995, the Gage Library contains local history resources for the Forest of Dean. The Library contains over 15 hundred volumes covering the history, geography and natural history of the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley. It also possesses an impressive collection of historical maps dating back to the 18th century, along with the papers of many significant local figures from the last two centuries. It also houses a considerable gift from Laurie Gage, an antiquarian book dealer

The gallery also features information about Early Roman occupation and the early Iron industry.

### **b. Gallery Two – Medieval to 18th century**

This gallery explores the history of the Forest of Dean as a Royal medieval hunting ground. Forest Laws were eventually introduced to protect the wild deer and boar from being over hunted, as well as the land they grazed on. Special courts and officials known as 'Verderers' ensured the rules were followed.

You can also find out more about the part played by the people who lived in the Forest of Dean during the English Civil war.

The gallery also discusses how wood from the Forest of Dean was used to build ships for the British Navy during this time and how Admiral Nelson saved the Forest from destruction.

#### **c. Gallery Three – Industry and Society**

This gallery shows the Forest of Dean's industrial legacy from the Victorian times onwards. It examines the fishing industries generated by the Rivers Severn and Wye, to the many cottage crafts used in the area such as cobbling, carpentry and blacksmithing.

These would include chickens to provide eggs, and pigs to provide meat for the family.

The pigs would graze under the trees on fallen apples and were released into the woodland to feed on acorns during the late summer, known as 'Pannage'. Two ferrets would also be kept in the garden; these traditionally were used (and still are) by Foresters to catch rabbits for the table.

#### **4. Authentic Victorian schoolroom**

Visitors can also experience what it was like to go to school in Victorian times by visiting the Victorian schoolroom featured onsite.

Details such as the slate and chalk they used to write on and the games they used to play

Upstairs there are two bedrooms, with a children's room, and a master bedroom which also contains a cot. The bedrooms do not have wardrobes, but like most houses at this time, includes a chest to store clothing.

Outside there is a wash-house containing copper for washing clothes, along with a washing dolly and mangle, which were common tools of the time.

Behind the house, there is also a typical Cottage Garden, planted with vegetables of authentic period varieties. The garden would also be home to animals which would traditionally have been kept by Foresters (people that live in the Forest of Dean).

A significant part of the gallery is dedicated to the Dean's coal mining past, from stories of mining disasters and rescues to the everyday tools and objects that were part of the miner's life.

#### d. Gallery Four

This gallery is known as the community gallery and is also called Gallery 41, as 41 parishes made up the Forest of Dean district at this time.

The gallery features information about the Forest during the Second World War. It also features a changing programme of exhibitions, telling the story of the Forest people, past and present.

### **e. Gallery Five – Power and Transport**

**This gallery focuses on the development of steam power and transport from the 1800s. The gallery features a working Beam Engine, which was made at Hewlett's iron foundry (one of the mills located in the building where Dean Heritage now resides).**

**It also features other working models and interactive displays demonstrating the use of steam power and what it was used for.**

### **3. The Forester's Cottage**

**In the museum grounds, there is a reconstructed early-20th century Forester's Cottage. The cottage shows how local people would have lived during this period, and is furnished and decorated in authentic Victorian and Edwardian style. The cottage was moved from its original location 'stone by stone' and brought to the centre for display.**

**Like many Forester's cottages at this time, it is a two-up, two-down house. On the first floor, there is a well-appointed sitting room with a harmonium, Victorian chaise-longue and a collection of period china, and a kitchen with an authentic cast-iron range.**