



Gritstone @Alex Morley

The Derwent Valley

The Derwent rises in upland Derbyshire where the high valley sides are tough gritstone and flows on to join the Trent south of Derby. The county's gritstones were laid down in a wide prehistoric river delta 300 million years ago. The gritstone erodes to soils which naturally favour oak woodlands, forming a particular community of plants, animals, and fungi. The name Derwent is ancient in origin and also used elsewhere in the British Isles, meaning "valley of oaks" in the pre-Romano British Celtic Brythonic language.

Gregory Tunnel

The tunnel cuts through the tough gritstone, originally to carry the canal between Cromford and Langley Mill. The cool temperatures here allow harts tongue ferns to grow on the structure.

IMPORTANT

Please note that from Gregory tunnel onwards the walk involves steep, narrow paths and uneven ground. Only the points from Aqueduct Cottage to Gregory Tunnel, along Cromford Canal towpath, are accessible for wheelchair users and those with limited mobility.



Gregory Tunnel @Kayleigh Wright

Wood Sculpture

This finger post in the woods, crafted by a local sculpture artist, showcases just some of the wildlife that can be found at Lea Wood.



Sculpture, Lea Wood



Derbyshire Wildlife Trust

Supported by friends of Derbyshire Asbestos Support Team for all those whose lives have been affected by asbestos disease.

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Cover image: Lea Wood @Kayleigh Wright



Derbyshire Wildlife Trust



LEA WOOD Sculpture Trail



www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk

Lea Wood

On behalf of the local community, The Lea Wood Trust gifted this spectacular woodland to Derbyshire Wildlife Trust in 2012.

It is a beautiful semi natural ancient woodland, located in the Lower Derwent Valley.

In Spring, the woodland floor is carpeted with bluebells and wild daffodils. It is home to northern wood ants and 96 species of fungi.

Lea Wood is managed for conservation and recreation. Among its varied birds are several that are declining in numbers, including pied flycatcher which regularly breed in the wood, lesser spotted woodpeckers and spotted flycatchers.

Why not keep the adventure going by combining a walk here with a walk along Cromford Canal, keeping an eye out for grass snakes and dragonflies along the way.

Aqueduct Cottage

The cottage was originally built in 19th century to house the lock keeper for the Lea Wood arm of the canal but fell into disrepair and eventual ruin from 1970. With the help of partner organisations, local businesses and a team of volunteers, it was restored in 2023 by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. The cottage acts as an information centre for the Lea Wood Nature Reserve and the wider Derwent Valley landscape.



Aqueduct Cottage @Peakclass



Lea Wood @Kayleigh Wright



Follow the sculpture trail, can you spot the creature carved in each post?



4: Gritstone and daffodils

The local gritstone is close to the surface, forming boulder slopes, and also making it easy to quarry. The woodland here, becomes flush with flowers in spring: bluebells, greater stitchwort and delicate wild daffodils.

7: Fabulous Fungi

An impressive 96 species of fungi have been recorded around the reserve with autumn being the prime time to spot the enchanting fairytale like fly agaric which can be found mostly beneath birch trees.



8: Hazel

You will find a number of hazel trees in Lea Wood, as historically hazel was coppiced for charcoal. These trees are famous for their long, yellow catkins in spring and a crop of hazelnuts in summer. Hazelnuts are favoured by dormice and wood mice, and some small mammals will cache their finds, storing them in burrows or old birds' nests.

5: Oaks

Did you know that the English oak tree is a haven for over 2,300 wildlife species, providing a place to eat, shelter and breed. Look out for large populations of the northern hairy wood ant, these little engineers change the woodland floor and can form colonies of several hundred thousand.



9: Ancient Woodland

Areas of Lea Wood are ancient woodland. Dog's mercury is one of many indicator plants for the oldest woodlands in the British Isles and can be found throughout the reserve. The woodland is also home to many bird species: listen for the screeching of jays and the 'dwip dwip' call of nuthatches, and watch out for treecreepers scaling the trees.



1: Derwentside Nature Reserve

Large alder trees grow where the Derwentside Nature Reserve meets the Derwent, and their river washed roots are perfect cover for otters. The rough grassland includes willow, and large swathes of butterbur and wild daffodils. The sun trap encourages butterflies and other invertebrates, and is the perfect feeding ground for bats roosting in the larger trees alongside the river.



2: Cromford Canal SSSI

Last used as a working waterway about 1938, this section of the Cromford Canal is now an SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) for its entire length from Cromford Wharf to Ambergate. Whatever the time of year, you are likely to spot ducks, little grebes and other water birds on the canal itself.



3: Springs in the Wood

A nearby spring flows through here adding a different habitat to the woodland, where large pendulous sedge grows. This spring flows down into the Cromford canal, and can be seen from the Cromford canal footpath as it trickles gently down into the valley. As you continue along the path, look out for an old waymarker and turn right at this point towards sculpture number 4.

6: Lea Wood Meadow

Stop here to take a view of the meadow. During spring and summer, the meadow is alive with greater stitchwort and red campion. Slow worms and grass snakes have been spotted around the meadow, hiding amongst the vegetation.



10: Wych Elms

Here is where the dry bed of the old Lea Wood canal lies. Moist soils here favour wild garlic in spring and the wych elms along the dry bed support the white letter hairstreak butterfly. They spend most of their time up in the treetops and get their name from the white lines that form a 'W' shape on their underside.

