

# BUCK WOOD STONES



## FRIENDS of BUCK WOOD



In Buck Wood we're surrounded by history. The trees tell a tale of centuries of planting and growth for timber, the paths tell us where people strode through the Wood to the Mill to grind their corn, or to cross the River, or drive their animals to market.

And the stones? They tell a far longer story about Buck Wood, one that stretches back millions of years.



The fossils in Buck Wood date back to a time around 300 million years ago when the land was covered in a tropical forest of giant tree-like plants.

The last Ice Age changed the landscape of the area, when a massive glacier carved out the Aire Valley. As it receded the glacier left layers of ice-smoothed stones,

shaped by the grinding of the ice, embedded in the steep valley sides.

About 4000 years ago, in higher areas untouched by ice, large rocks were used by early man to make rough walls to corral cattle or terrace the woodland slopes. They carved symbols and patterns in some prominent rocks, leaving messages for one another that no-one now understands, though many have tried to guess their meaning. Later groups built sturdy defensive walls out of smaller stones to encircle their huts and living site, These early settlers also used the ice-rounded stones as hearth stones and pot-boilers, and later re-used some of them in the walls of their huts and enclosure.



Over the centuries, quantities of stones were collected to build dry-stone walls around fields cleared in the woodland for pasture and crops - many of which still exist today.

Much nearer our own times large flat rocks were cut and shaped within the Wood to make millstones. Eventually, parts of Buck Wood were quarried for stones to build Bradford's expanding industrial townscape.



And now, to link the past with the present of Buck Wood, we have stone carvings based on suggestions from the people of Thackley - from the local children who learn about the Wood and its history, and from the adults who care

for the Wood and have long memories of playing and walking here throughout their lives. The carvings have been created by Ian Taylor, a renowned sculptor and stone carver, who has interpreted the ideas using stones in the wood, His inspiration comes from the shape and texture of the stones, and the light and shade from the trees and the sky above the Wood

So, why not take a walk in Buck Wood and see if you can find all nine stones?

Most of them are to be found not far from the main path through the wood - but you'll need to keep your eyes open to spot some of them!



The first stone is near the site of the former Open Air School. It's an image chosen by pupils at the Idle C of E Primary School, to commemorate the School which was built in Buck Wood over a hundred years ago. Older people will remember the 'torch' road sign that warned motorists that they were near a school. Maybe the Open Air School pupils saw them on their way to school - though not as close to the school as this one!

Students at Immanuel Community College thought about the early inhabitants of the Wood and their way of life. This prompted two stones, close to where the first prehistoric carved rocks were found.

One is carved with the word 'hunt' and the other (you must hunt



for this) with a representation of a wild boar. This also reminds us of the story of the hunt for the last wild boar of Bradford, a symbol that we see used around the city.



The students also chose the word 'dappled' as a description of the Wood and its light: find the stone further down near the path with this word carved on it, and if it's a sunny day the stone itself might be dappled!

Three animal carvings come next alongside the path, all creatures seen in Buck Wood (although the name Buck Wood comes from the family that once owned the land, not from the deer that live here). The

rabbit and the squirrel are shown on the first page.

Look at how Ian Taylor has used the contours and faults of the stones to form his carvings and make them stand out, and how some parts like the young deer's head, are smooth enough to stroke. And do please stroke it if you wish! The grey squirrel is probably the



commonest animal in the Wood, and like the carving, usually seen searching for food on the woodland floor or trees overhead. The rabbits are more often to be seen at night, but Ian Taylor 'saw' his rabbit in the stone, and carved it around an existing piece of old incised graffiti.

Solvitur  
Ambulando?  
What does  
that mean?



Think about which parts of the Latin words are like English words, and maybe you'll work it out - or look it up later in a dictionary or the Internet! But enjoy the carving for the way it fits into the space on the stone, and for the additional carved detail of the leaves and acorns from the most widespread tree in Buck Wood, the oak.

And then walk on to find the last carving of all, which was inspired by the shape of the stone itself: the ram's head with its magnificent spiral horn is symbolic of Bradford's (and Thackley's) past industry, and the mills that made the city famous.



*© photos & text: Dr C Alvin*

*Friends of Buck Wood wish to thank Ian Taylor, sculptor, for all his inspired and hard work, also Ged Walker of Artworks Creative Communities, and Irene Lofthouse, creative writer, for their help with the stones project, which was funded by the Thackley Urban Village scheme.*

*For further information on Buck Wood go to [www.friendsofbuckwood.org.uk](http://www.friendsofbuckwood.org.uk)*

