

BUCK WOOD:

A WALK ROUND THE ROCK CARVINGS



Buck Wood is full of history. We can see it in the rocks, where there are ancient fossils and the scars of glaciation. We can see it in the remains of the prehistoric site, where stones were used to build sturdy walls to protect the people, and in their daily life for cooking, grinding corn and building huts. Our prehistoric wood-dwellers also carved individual rocks, such as those known as cup and ring stones, the purpose of which no-one yet knows. And from those early inhabitants until near-modern times stones have been used to build boundaries throughout Buck Wood for fields where cattle and other animals were kept.

In 2011, a link was made between the past and the present of Buck Wood, with a series of carvings created by Ian Taylor, a renowned sculptor and stone carver. He based his carvings on suggestions from the people of Thackley: from the local children who learnt about the Wood and its history, and from the adults who care for Buck Wood and have long memories of playing and walking there throughout their lives. Ian Taylor interpreted their ideas using stones already in the wood. His inspiration came from the shape and texture of the stones, and from the light and shade of the trees and the sky above the Wood

So, why not take a walk in Buck Wood and see if you can find all the stones? This leaflet and map will guide you on a route where you should find all the rocks, as 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!



1. The first stone is near the site of the former Open Air School. The raised area, now a bike-track, was used as a playground by the pupils at the Open Air School. On the far side there are concrete steps leading down to the path which ran along the front of the school buildings. At the top of the steps is the first carving, an image chosen by pupils at the Idle C of E Primary School, to commemorate the very special School which was built in Buck Wood over a hundred years ago. Older people may remember the 'torch of learning' road sign that alerted motorists that there was a school nearby. Probably the Open Air School pupils saw these torch signs on the journeys to their school by bus or tram. It wasn't until the 1950s that the design was changed to one showing two children crossing a road.

Walk down the steps and turn right along the school path which brings you back to the main path, which is also the bridleway. Turn left down the path, which bisects the prehistoric site.

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



2 & 3. The stone carved with the word 'hunt' on the upper surface is part of a line of rocks identified as being a prehistoric orthostat wall. They are on your right: look for the uneven line of big stones leading into the hollies. Above left, the photo shows the view from the stone, looking back towards the large rock set against a dry-stone wall, carved with a representation of a wild boar. You might need to hunt for it! 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. In the 14th century "a ravenous wild boar of an enormous size", haunted Cliffe Wood, and was thought so dangerous that a reward was offered to anyone who killed it and brought its head to the king. The first hunter who killed the boar cut off its tongue and left the carcass behind; another hunter found the dead body, cut off its head and hurried to court with it, but then couldn't explain why the boar had no tongue. Meanwhile the original hunter arrived with the tongue, and rightly claimed the reward. That is why the boar on Bradford's coat of arms is distinguished by having no tongue.

4. School students also chose the word 'dappled' as a description of the Wood and its light. Find this stone further down beside a small track on the left, before the main path turns right down hill and becomes steeper. If it's a sunny day the stone itself might be dappled - or it could be dappled with rain drops if it's wet!



Now turn to follow the main path as it turns right.

5. On the left, at the turn, there is a large stone, carved with a young deer. The families or groups of roe deer are not often spotted, except at very quiet times when there are few people (or dogs) around, but they range throughout Buck Wood, although the name Buck Wood comes from the family that once owned the land, not from the deer that live here and in the adjoining woods. This beautiful carving uses the natural contours and lines of the stone to make the features of the young animal stand out. See how some parts like the head are smooth enough to stroke. And do please stroke it if you wish!



6. Continue down the path and on your right at the top of the low bank is a flat stone carved with this squirrel holding acorns. The grey squirrel is probably the commonest animal seen in the Wood, and as the carving shows, is usually caught sight of searching for food on the woodland floor or

trees overhead. They nibble pine cones, beechmast, sweet chestnuts, and of course acorns.

7. A little further along the path there is a large square shaped rock on top of the bank. On the top surface was some very old incised graffiti. Ian Taylor, the sculptor, 'saw' this rabbit in the stone, and carved it around the existing marks. There are rabbits throughout Buck Wood, but they are more often to be seen at night, or as a quick flash of a fluffy white tail as they run off to hide until it's safe to venture out.

Carry on down the path a little further, and look for the next carved rock, on the same side as the rabbit, but in an unmissable position.



tree in Buck Wood, the oak.

8. Solvitur Ambulando: what does that mean? Few people study Latin nowadays, but this phrase dates from Roman times (or maybe earlier) and it means "it is solved by walking". If you have a problem, something that's worrying or upsetting you, or even a practical dilemma, walking often helps to sort things out or put your mind at rest. Try it and see. Or just enjoy the carving, and notice the way it fits into the space on the stone, and look at the additional carved detail of the leaves and acorns from the most widespread



9. And then walk on to find the last carving beside this path. You need to walk a bit further to find it, and please don't be put off by the mud! The carving is on a prominent earthbound stone on the shallow bank on the right, about two metres away from the path itself. If you come to the part of the path where the trees have been cleared you've walked a little too far. The carving was inspired by the shape of the stone itself, and the ram's head with its magnificent spiral horn is symbolic of Bradford's (and Thackley's) past industry, and the woollen mills that made the city famous.

There is one more stone to see, so now you can either explore more of Buck Wood or retrace your footsteps back towards Ainsbury Avenue, to find the final stone within the boundary of the Access for All path, which you can reach via a side track from the main path.

10. The logo of the Friends of Buck Wood is on a large flat stone, set beneath the trees and amongst the grass and wildflowers, in an area popular with children and adults, and accessible to people with limited mobility who can enjoy the atmosphere of Buck Wood, whatever the season and weather.

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For further information on Buck Wood go to www.friendsofbuckwood.org.uk



