



The Woodland Walk and Sculpture Trail



Introduction

The following pages will guide you through our woodland walk and sculpture trail. What you see will vary with the season but there is always something that will catch your eye.

Most of the sculptures were carved by our resident sculptor, Andrew Frost, in his outdoor studio here at Crich. He works with a chainsaw, carving a basic shape from a tree trunk and then working on the detail.

Follow the woodland walk signs from the Village or catch a tram to Glory Mine and alight at Wakebridge on the return journey.

On the top of the cliff is Crich Stand, a memorial to the Sherwood Foresters Regiment. The current tower was erected in 1923 and is the third to be built. You can also see a beacon, one of a series of national beacons that are lit on special occasions.

Along the way you will come across a series of five sculptures made from tram rail. Use the Conversations and Memories Discovery Trail to explore the stories behind these, our First World War commemorative sculptures.

The Woodland

The woods at the Museum are mixed ash woodland, common to limestone areas. Besides ash, sycamore, alder and silver birch can be found. The shrub layer consists of a wide range of species including hazel, wych elm, wild rose, elder and hawthorn.



Ash trees thrive in limestone areas such as Crich, supporting a variety of wildlife and providing perfect nesting places for nuthatches, woodpeckers and other birds. The bark of mature ash trees provides a habitat for insects which in turn provide food for birds. Look for the bunches of seed pods (ash keys) hanging from the branches.

Silver birch trees have beautiful silver-grey bark with black fissures running vertically down the trunk. The flowers and seeds are called catkins and are dispersed by the wind over the autumn months.

Hawthorn tends to grow as shrubs and small trees. It produces pink and white flowers in the spring and early summer. The flowers die off leaving bright red haws which contain the seeds. Birds eat the haws over winter.



Plants and Flowers



The light shade of the ash canopy and the rare calcareous grassland provides a very diverse ground flora with primrose, early purple orchid, cowslip, ladies bedstraw, wild varieties of marjoram, garlic and strawberries.

Wild marjoram thrives in calcareous soil and likes to colonise sparsely vegetated ground such as old quarry sites like this. The flowers are particularly attractive to butterflies.

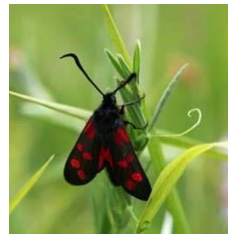
Blackberries and wild strawberries grow in abundance in and around the woods. The tiny strawberries ripen from July onwards and the blackberries from the end of summer into autumn.



Throughout April and May the smell of the wild garlic is a predominant feature of the woodland walk, look out for the carpets of white flower heads.

Wildlife

There are many different creatures to be seen throughout the woods varying depending on the time of year. Woodpeckers, greenfinches, buzzards and peregrines; skippers, peacocks, common blue butterflies and burnet moths; grasshoppers, cardinal beetles and wood ants; snails, slugs, common lizards and newts; rabbits, foxes, stoats and badgers.



The Shelter



Start your exploration in the shelter where there is information about the trees you could see through the woods.

From here there is a good view of the limestone cliff with Crich Stand, watch out for the perigrines that nest on the cliffside.

Opposite the shelter stand the Engineers – one of five groups of sculptures that make up Conversations and Memories, our First World War commemorations. Find out more about the stories behind these sculptures in the Conversations and Memories Discovery Trail leaflet.

To the left of the Engineers is a piece of land that is of designated Special Scientific Interest. This is calcareous grassland that supports flora and fauna typical of a limestone landscape.

The Leaf Track



These two sculptures mark the entrance to the leaf track.

Along the track are a series of plaques showing many of the different trees and shrubs growing in the wood. Rubbings can be taken of these plaques to help with your study.

The land that the Museum is on used to be one of four limestone quarries in Crich and the rail along the Leaf Track is from the original quarry. The limestone would have been carried in carts along tracks like this.

The Labyrinth

As you leave the leaf track you will see a grandfather clock and a sofa – take a few minutes to rest here. The stone labyrinth is opposite. The limestone rocks were donated by the quarry and if you look carefully it's possible to see fossils in some of them. The tall stone pillars flanking the entrance have glass panels depicting the Derwent Valley in sunlight and moonlight.

Do you know the difference between a labyrinth and a maze? They can both be any shape or size and look similar, but they are not. A maze has dead ends and paths crossing, giving a choice of direction and the possibility of getting lost. A labyrinth, no matter how confusing it looks, has only one twisting path that weaves its way to the centre and back



out again. The labyrinth is associated with the story of the Minotaur, the half-man half-bull monster that dwelt in a labyrinth on the island of Crete. Theseus found his way to the centre of the labyrinth, slew the Minotaur and found his way out again by following the thread he had unwound on the way in. This story has caused confusion ever since, because clearly the Minotaur's lair was a maze not a labyrinth. See if you can find out more about this story.

Derwent View

Walk across the grass to have a look at the view over the valley. What can you see? There is usually a lot of activity in the valley. Where do you think the river is? This is a good spot to have a picnic or just sit and enjoy the view. Play dominoes and noughts and crosses, try out the drum kit or follow the finger labyrinth. Lift the flaps in the shelter and try some of the activities.

The Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site follows the river from Derby in the south (to the left) to Matlock Bath in the north (to the right).



The Fairy Ring and Willow Tunnel

Walk across the grass to the fairy ring. How many toadstools are there? How many rocks protect the ring? What is in the centre?

Walk through the willow tunnel. This is a living sculpture so is bare of leaves early and late in the year, but green and completely covered during the summer. As you walk through look at how the willow is growing, how it is bound and what it is bound with. See if you can see any creatures – there are usually plenty of snails.



The Sword in the Stone and Winstan the Wizard



As you exit the Willow Tunnel you will see a large sword held tightly in a stone – have a go at pulling it out. How strong are you?

A path to the left leads to Winstan the Wizard. He is sculpted from the trunk of a cedar tree which stood in the garden of Winstan Bond, who was a volunteer at the Museum for more than forty years. Winstan walked through the woods almost every day and was a keen supporter for the development of the Woodland Walk. We wanted to remember him in a special way, and this is the result.



Storyteller's Chair

To the left of the main path is a spur which leads down to the storyteller's chair. Here children are told stories in the woodland setting. Can you spot the books and any small creatures? What type of leaves are on the seats in front of the chair?



Spirits of the Forest



In the past the British Isles were covered with more forests than today. These forests supplied the people with wood for building, heating and cooking as well as food such as fruits, nuts, deer and rabbits. People believed the forest was looked after by spirits and took great care not to upset them for fear of losing their source of food and fuel. Take a good look at our woodland spirits. How many are there? Do you think they are looking after our wood? See if you can find any stories about woodland spirits.



Trample the Troll and Mr Potato Head



As you enter the wood you will spot a wooden walkway to the right. Follow this to the bridge and be sure to keep as quiet as possible as Trample the Troll lies in wait for the unwary, especially Billy Goats! Although he looks fierce, he is harmless as long as no one upsets him.

The word troll comes from Sweden and describes a mythical, human like creature who can be fierce or helpful depending on his mood, although you would be wise not to cross him. They are usually described as ugly and, if you use your brains, easy to trick out of their gold and jewels.

At the end of the bridge is Mr Potato Head. His facial features can be changed and moved around.



The Green Man

The origins of the green man are lost in time. His leafy face peers down from buildings throughout the world and he has been the subject of much research. He is known by countless different names: Jack in the Green, Robin Hood, the King of the May, John Barleycorn and many others. Some stories say that he closes his eyes at the end of autumn to sleep through winter and wake again as spring brings new life to the woods. He represents the cycle of death to the birth of new life; he is the caretaker of nature.

The Green Man could be described as the male equivalent to Mother Nature; the protector of the earth, the fertility of spring. It is only through his death in winter that there can be rebirth in the summer.



If you look at the back of the green man's head you can see two round holes where woodpeckers made their nests.

The Giant Ant

This ant is designed to be climbed on, so take a ride. If you look carefully, you should be able to see real wood ants scurrying about carrying food and building materials to their nest. Do not touch the ants or the nest as when they feel under threat they spray formic acid, which can sting.

The Wood Ant is the largest British ant; it builds nests of twigs, leaves and pine needles which can contain up to 300,000 ants. The worker ants are most active on warm, dull, humid days, although they forage constantly.

The workers keep the nest at the correct temperature. If the mound is in danger of becoming too cool, they 'sunbathe' on top and then go inside to release the heat stored in their bodies; if the mound is likely to get too warm, they open up vents on the surface to allow in cool air.

When the nest is disturbed, the workers swarm out to confront the intruder, biting with their strong mouth parts and rearing up to spray formic acid from their rears. Their fierce aggression and sheer numbers make them formidable opponents for most other woodland inhabitants.



Wakebridge



Make your way along the path to the tram stop at Wakebridge. Explore the lead mining exhibition, listen to the stories of the miners in the Adit and the Coe and set Minehead's mouth moving. Climb up the steps for another view over the valley and say hello to Ernest, the last of the conversations and Memories sculptures.

The toilet here at Wakebridge is a worm composting toilet. All the waste from the toilet goes into a special chamber where the worms break it down into compost that can be recycled into the woods.

From here you can catch a tram back to the Village.



Nothing lasts forever

Over the years, the elements have taken their toll on some of our sculptures. Trample the Troll and the Wood Ant returned to the soil but have been reborn. Badgers claw at the wood to get at grubs, large splits and impressive fungus take their toll. As the older sculptures are removed new sculptures take their place, so our woodland is constantly changing.