

Post No. 5

The steps here were made by a party of Friends of Allestree Park, Derbyshire Conservation Volunteers and members of the public, to make the steep pathway safer and to reduce erosion. Go down the steps to the bottom and on a clear day you can enjoy a panoramic view over the Park and the Derwent Valley, shown in its summer green-ness in the photograph above. Allestree Hall lies just behind the trees ahead of you. After enjoying the view, come back up the steps, return along the path and take the narrow track branching off on the right - about 25 metres beyond the top of the steps.



Post No. 6

You are on the top of a steep cliff (take care!) of a small sand quarry (see picture on the cover), probably dating back to the time of the building of the Hall. The sandstone here is about 250 million years old! It was formed in a vast hot desert in the Triassic Period when what is now Britain was part of a huge continent lying over the equator. Within the sandstone are pebbles, mainly of quartzite, which were worn to their present smooth shapes by the action of powerful short-lived desert rivers. Now follow the path back to the main one.

Post No. 7
Reach this by going back along the main path about 100 metres to where it divides beyond the yew trees and take the right branch. In spring there are more bluebells here. Common Hemp Nettle, looking a little like Stinging Nettle, is a sting-less member of the mint family, is also abundant. The Wood Avengers, flowering in early summer, has hooked seed heads which cling to clothing. In spring and also in late summer, look out for the exquisitely camouflaged Speckled Wood Butterfly. In Spring you may also see the bright yellow Brimstone and the also well-named Orange Tip Butterfly.



Post No. 8
Almost opposite post 7, take the side path on the left. You soon come out onto an open grassy area (a former land-fill site) with two picnic tables. Walk along the woodland edge on the left. Here is a margin of Stinging Nettles, Cow Parsley and Hogweed. Nettle is vital as the food-plant of several butterflies while, during the summer, flowers of the other two plants attract an array of various insects in search of nectar and pollen - and also the predators of these. A very small selection are shown here.



Follow the broad path through the trees back to the car park where the trail started. The trail only covers a fraction of the wildlife you are likely to see. More information is on the Friends of Allestree Park web-site. Contact us through this if you want to know more. Also 'phone the City Council on their Derby Direct no. - 01332 291111, especially if you are concerned about anything happening in the Park.



Post No. 4 continued

This is as good a place as any to look under small fallen logs to see what small creatures are lurking beneath. However, so these survive, please return any logs to exactly the position you found them! Here is a small selection of the (harmless) life-forms that you may see:

Allestree Park Big Wood Nature Trail



Produced by the
Friends of Allestree Park

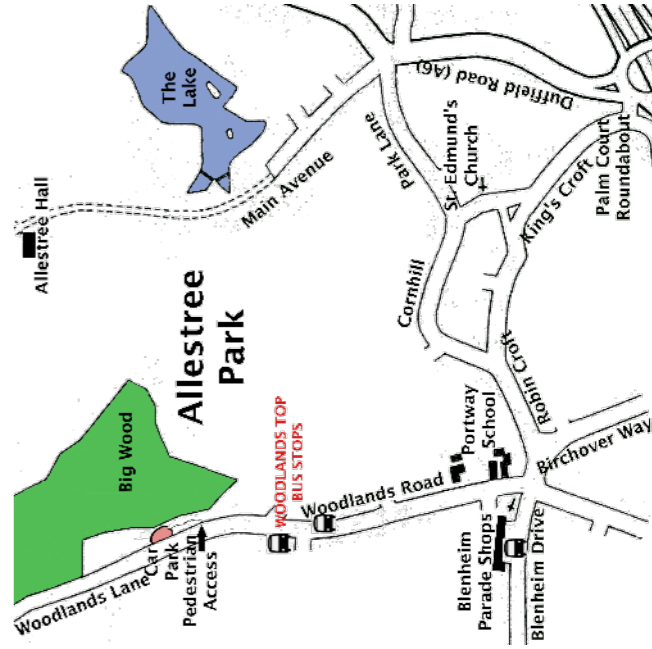
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Introduction

Big Wood is the largest wood within Allestree Park and, indeed, the largest in Derby. It lies over sandstone, producing a dry acidic soil, which encourages the growth of birch trees and bracken.

Old maps show very little tree cover where the wood now stands, so most of the woodland would have grown up in the last 200 years. However, the presence of bluebells and other ancient woodland indicator plants suggests that there was woodland on the site much further back in time.

Getting There: By Car: From Derby City Centre, follow Duffield Road (A6) and turn left into Allestree at the second roundabout. Go up Woodlands Road and turn into the small car park on the right 200 metres beyond the last house - DE22 2HH). By Bus: Take the **Allestree Bus (Trent-Barton)** and get off at Woodlands Top. The car park for the start of the trail is 300 metres uphill on the right.



To start the trail, unfold
The leaflet and turn it over.

Allestree Park Big Wood Nature Trail

Start the trail by walking to the magnificent large tree at the northern end of the Woodlands Lane car park. To its right you will find the first of the numbered posts with an oak leaf motif.

Post No. 1

The large tree here is an English Oak; the largest tree on the nature trail and over 200 years old. It was almost certainly here before the Park was laid out and before the present wood grew up.



The oak leaf has a smooth rounded outline. The leaves fall off in the autumn, like most 'broad-leaved' trees

The oak produces flowers in spring - on the left are the male flowers. These produce pollen which is carried by the wind to the tiny female flowers on the right.



By late summer, fertilized female flowers have developed into acorns - nuts which each contain a single seed.



Oaks have extremely rugged bark, with long deep grooves and ridges. The winter buds are red-dish brown and oval in shape. These two features help to identify the oak in winter.



The route continues along the path (bordered by logs) to the right.

Post No. 2

From this point you can see a good sample of the different trees which grow in Big Wood, including some more oaks.

Silver birches were among the first trees to colonise Britain after the last episode of the ice age about 10 thousand years ago.



The largely smooth white bark of silver birch is very distinctive. The leaves are quite small and triangular in shape. Here they are shown in their autumn colour.

Post No. 2 continued

Another tree which is very common in Big Wood is Sycamore. It is not a native to Britain, being brought here about 500 years ago. As there are very few insects which feed on it, it grows at the expense of birches, oaks and other native trees. For this reason there is a current programme to reduce the number of Sycamore trees.



The quite rugged bark of a mature Sycamore has flatter 'ribs' than those of the oak. The leaf has a distinctive five-pointed shape.

Another alien plant, can be seen in this area - Rhododendron. The flowers are pretty, but this shrub, brought to Britain from the Himalayas many years ago for our gardens, has 'escaped' into our woodlands.



Rhododendron blanketing part of Big Wood and a single flower

Because nothing feeds on Rhododendron in Britain, it grows vigorously, completely shading out any native plants and young trees and it also carries sudden oak death disease. It is a particular problem in several parts of Big Wood but there is a programme underway to remove and replace it with native shrubs. The picture above right shows a 'rhododendron bash' in progress.

Post No. 3

In late April and early May, Bluebells flower thickly by the side of the path.



The flowers later develop into green seed pods. Did you know that Britain has the best show of bluebells in Europe? They are indicators of ancient woodland and have probably survived here from the original forests which pre-dated Big Wood.



Blackbird

At all times of the year, many species of birds live in the wood and if you keep still and quiet you may be lucky to see some of them at this point and elsewhere along the route.



Jay



Magpie



Robin



Great Spotted Woodpecker

Post No. 3 continued

This point is also a good as place as any to see fungi - mainly in autumn. The structures seen above ground or on dead logs or living trees are the spore-producing parts of the fungus, most of which lives out of sight as a system of branching threads. **BEWARE: Several kinds of fungi are extremely poisonous. Do not attempt to eat any if you are not experienced in identifying fungi.** A few of the species you are likely to see are pictured:



Post No. 4

This part of the woods is known as 'Black Knob'. It is certainly one of the darkest because of the deep shade cast by the evergreen Yew trees - native conifers, which have a (poisonous) berry-like structure rather than a cone. Very few plants grow directly under the yews but bracken, a vigorous kind of fern, grows thickly beyond their shade.



Bracken - in summer and in autumn

Yew - trunk and foliage with berries in winter

Further down the slope, much of the invasive Sycamore and Rhododendron has been cleared and replanted with a selection of native trees and shrubs. This work should greatly help the wildlife of the woodland.