

The sections of the wood between Point 9 and the stone seat in the open area is still predominantly sessile oak. Oak was the preferred wood for 'white coal', and the bark was also a source of tannin for the leather industry. There are many examples of relic coppiced or pollarded trees to be seen in this area.

At Point 8 below the track is another stone seat, known locally as 'Florence's Seat'. Continue along the track, which becomes indistinct through an area of stones, and look out for a path crossing from left to right. The trail continues ahead to reach a broad track. Follow this main carriageway leading to Point 9.



Near Point 7, the large stone slab resting on supports is known as the 'Big on Stone', reputed to have come from the Jacobean farmhouse incorporated into Lea Hurst. The channel and drain hole, suggest it might have been used for the preparation of meat for curing.

Point 7 is a large old quarry, thought to have been the source of stone for Lea Hurst, the house that William E. Nightingale built as the family's Derbyshire home. From this point the trail continues to the left.

From Point 5 the path zig-zags up the hillside. The 19th century development of the wood created carriageways, rides and several seating places such as that at Point 6. Ornamental plants such as rhododendron were also planted, which are now more of an invasive nuisance. After the seat, the path continues up to emerge onto a level carriageway.

Continue to Point 5 where the path forks, the trail continues up the path to the left but an optional diversion for woodland flora is to continue straight ahead and then return to point 5.

Wild daffodils are widespread in this area in late March/April and in May there is wood anemone, wood sorrel, golden saxifrage, bluebells and stitchwort. A local legend tells how Florence Nightingale received a gift of wild daffodils from wounded enemy Russian soldiers she had treated in the Crimea. If true, it may be that many of the wild daffodils in Lea Wood are descendants of those original flowers.

Continue down the track flanked by several beech and lime trees, some of which are up to 300 years old and will have been planted either as a source of wood or for decoration. Towards the bottom of this track on the right are covered water reservoirs associated with mills alongside Lea Brook. They are fed from two springs and the overflow creates a small stream flowing down the hillside, on which golden saxifrage can be found. Water for the now-demolished estate cottages at the top of the wood was fetched from these springs.

In the stone wall of this pit can be seen part of a quern, a small medieval grindstone for the hand milling of grain. Several have been found in the wood, where they may have been cut locally from the sandstone outcrops. Here the quern was most likely re-used after it was no longer needed.

At Point 9 steps on the left give access (with care) to another O pit. Climb the steps back to the track, turn right and return to where the path takes a hairpin bend to the right.

Return to the stone seat and follow the path south across the open area. Look out for the large 'hills' of wood ants, particularly near walled enclosures of conifer.

Along this path and other areas of the wood most of the common woodland birds can be seen and heard; pied and spotted flycatchers breed in the wood and woodpeckers frequent some areas, occasionally a woodcock may fly up and buzzards circle overhead.

To reach the end of the trail, continue down the track and turn left onto a driveway; there is no access via the private driveway to the right. Follow the driveway for a short distance to a cottage on the right. Wharf Cottage stands adjacent to what was the wharf at the end of the Nightingale branch from the main canal, with original stonework still visible. To return to the car park, take the signed footpath on the right to reach the road or continue ahead to rejoin the canal towpath near Aqueduct Cottage.

From High Peak Junction Car Park cross the river and railway to the south and turn left along the canal towpath. On your way toward the wood you will pass the Leawood Pumphouse on your left. Continue over the aqueduct and turn left along the side branch of the canal, before crossing it to Aqueduct Cottage.

Opened in 1794, the canal served the mills at Cromford. Water shortage required the building of a Pumphouse with a beam engine to raise water from the River Derwent.

Aqueduct Cottage, now largely ruined, was once the home of the lock keeper, charged with overseeing this stretch of the canal.

Enter Lea Wood by the footpath to the left of Aqueduct Cottage and head up the hill, taking the right branch at Point 1. At Point 2 the level area to the left of the path is a charcoal burning platform. A trench dug here revealed remnants of charcoal and pottery, some of which dated to the 13th-14th century. Above the platform are the remnants of a simple kiln or O-pit for the production of 'white coal' probably dating to the 17th and 18th centuries.

As you emerge into the open field at Point 3 look to your right for a circular stone feature, thought to be an 18th century or earlier water trough. Continue along the edge of the open area to a stone seat.

Look for a public footpath arrow at the north edge of the open area and go a short way downhill to Point 4. Below the path are the remains of a large stone wall with the remains of a small structure. Maps show a bounding running downslope from here, but none indicate the presence of a building of any sort and so the remains are a puzzle!

This pasture, likely one of several areas 'improved' by Peter Nightingale in 1740-50, was part of Leawood Farm. Now it is being managed to reduce invasive bracken. South of the pasture is a walled enclosure where farm buildings once stood. The farmhouse became two estate cottages, inhabited until the early 1950s; the remains have now become overgrown.

