



Points 6 & 7

6 You are now at the top of a ridge which is part of Buck Hill, an excellent place to stop, relax and admire the surrounding views over Loughborough to the east, and Charnwood to the west. Listen out for grasshoppers. The rocks here were originally volcanic ash, like the ash which came down the sides of the Montserrat volcanoes in 1993. Over time they have been changed into rock.

i The plants here include tormentil, heath bedstraw, rowan, early hair-grass and sheeps sorrel, which all thrive on the acid soil. Tormentil, with its yellow flowers, may derive its name from its ability to relieve pain and torment. Its astringency was used for tanning in the past. The leaves can be brewed into a tea and the roots eaten.

A New Stone-Age quern or hand mill was found down in the valley near this point, showing the long occupation of this area – at least 8,000 years. The richer soils at the bottom of the hill have red campion and other woodland plants growing in them.

After resting, continue round the side of the hill and through the bracken. Follow the path under the canopy of the next woodland, past oaks and the occasional Scots pine and then larch, England's only deciduous conifer.



Descend the path through the woodland, following the waymarkers.

G The needles that continuously drop from the conifer trees create a springy carpet under foot. There are more impressive rock outcrops here and because the wood is open more woodland flowers can be found here than in most conifer woods, for example broom, gorse, bluebells and tormentil.

7 You will come to a red and white estate 'dogs be kept on a lead' sign and after 15 metres go through a gap in the drystone wall to the right. Go out of the shady woodland along a path through bracken and beech trees. Another path joins from the left but continue forward past an iron gate and a yellow waymarker sign on your right. Walk along the path going down hill, passing shrubs, bracken, and blackberries in season until you come to more woodland near the bottom of the hill. To the left of the path are old corrugated iron pig shelters.

U By the pig shelters are trees with broad trunks. The circumference of a tree trunk has been chosen to indicate the oldest trees – if an oak or beech tree is over 3.77m round at chest height, or an ash or elm is over 3m round then it is classified as an ancient or veteran tree. Very old trees are now recognised as being very important both in themselves and for the insects and animals that live in and on them. Can you see any trees that big?

This area of woodland has a good mixture of traditional woodland plants growing in it, especially near the stream – wet woodlands like this are a declining habitat in the UK and are even more important to keep. Golden-saxifrage, broad-buckler fern and yellow loosestrife occur here.

