

# Whixall Walks

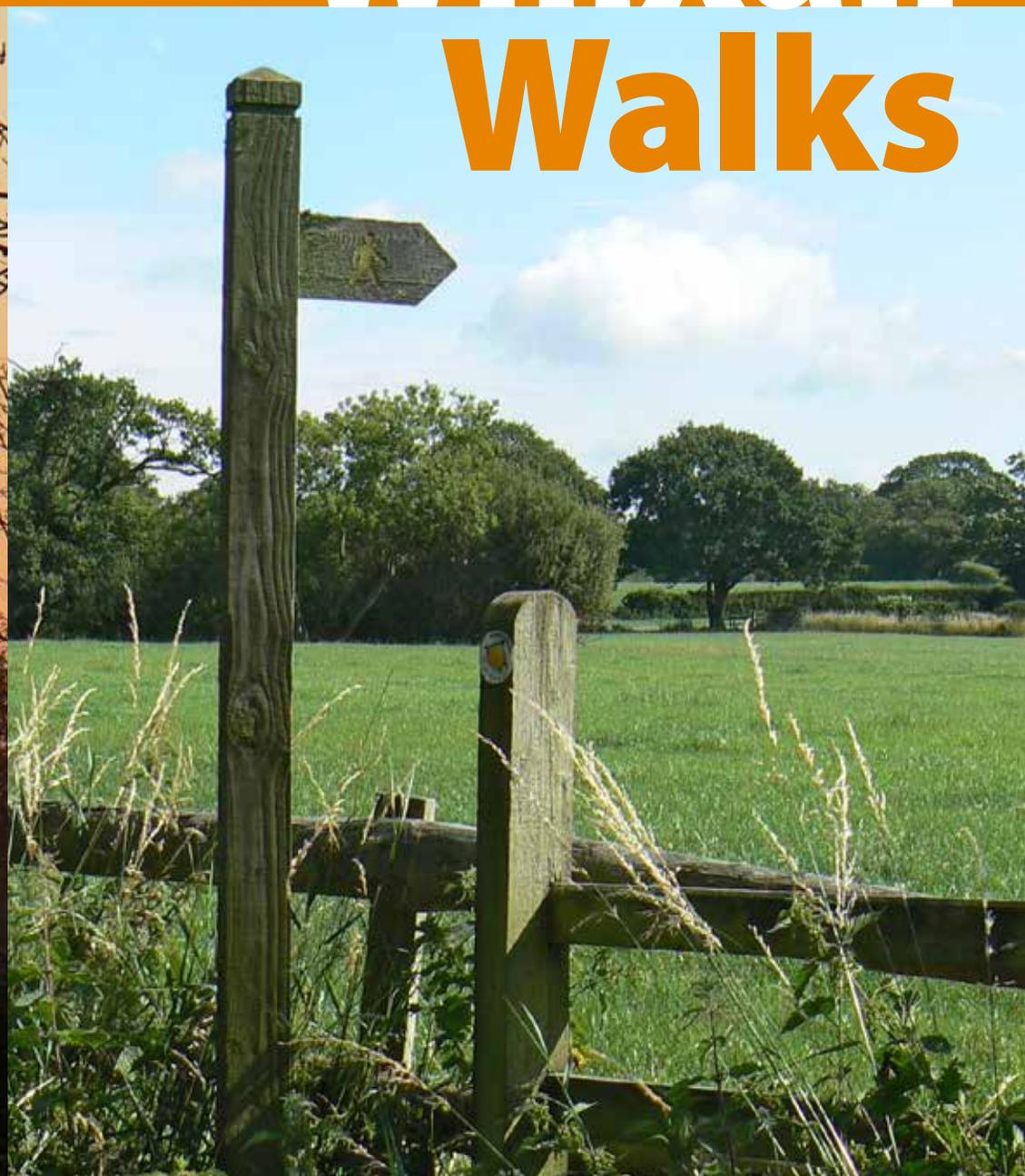
# Whixall Walks

Compiled by:  
Sharon Eversfield, Arnie Jones,  
Di McNeish, Sara Scott,  
Rob Sharam, Jen Spenser,  
Lynne Westworth

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the walks. Thanks also to Liz Evans  
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A special thank you to Luke Neal for  
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**Please:**

- Leave gates as you find them
- Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home
- Keep your dog under effective control ensuring it is not a danger or nuisance to farm animals, horses, wildlife or other people. If cattle or horses chase you and your dog it is safer for both of you to let your dog off the lead to allow it to run away from the animals – don't risk getting hurt by trying to protect it. Please see the Countryside Code for further details.  
**[www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code)**
- Please be aware that mobile phone signals are poor in this area.

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A digital copy of this publication is available on [www.whixallparish.org.uk](http://www.whixallparish.org.uk)

The **Meres and Mosses** has been declared a Nature Improvement Area in order to recognise its landscape character of international importance. This area is a mosaic of wetland types, most notably the meres and lowland peat bogs or mosses, that rival the Lake District and Norfolk Broads in their extent and ecological diversity.

The Meres and Mosses Landscape Partnership Scheme and Nature Improvement Area aims to:

- Create better understanding of the Meres and Mosses landscape
- Reconnect people with the landscape and to raise awareness of its global ecological significance and its cultural heritage
- Build capacity in the community so local people can actively shape their landscape for future generations
- Secure landscape conservation, now and in the future, by providing ways for farming, business and the community to work together for the benefit of the environment.
- Improve the natural connectivity between recognised sites.

There are a number of ways that you can get involved, from accessing a community or farm grant to volunteering opportunities both in the field and office. We are also keen to hear your views on the Meres and Me page of our website.

Mosses were formed when flooded shallow hollows, created by retreating glaciers 12,000 years ago, became gradually overgrown with Sphagnum moss which absorbs and acidifies rainwater. Dead plant material is pickled in the acidic water which then forms peat and creates lowland bogs (known locally as mosses).

On this water-logged peat surface only specialised plants and animals can survive, like the carnivorous sundew plant and the rare white-faced darter dragonfly.

Fenns, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses began growing 12,000 years ago from Wem Moss and extend to nearly 1,000 acres; together they are the third largest lowland bog in Britain. At one time the whole area, including Whixall, would have been an expanse of wetlands surrounding the mosses.

Meres are deep glacial hollows giving them different characteristics to lakes. Some you can hardly avoid, but most are hidden away in the hollows of this hummocky post-glacial landscape. Turn off the main roads, down narrow lanes and take to footpaths across the fields to discover these hidden gems.

Together these meres and mosses and their distinctive wildlife have created an internationally important and richly diverse landscape which we hope you will explore as you stroll the footpaths of Whixall.

This walk booklet has been funded by a **Meres and Mosses Landscape Partnership Scheme** and *Nature Improvement Area community grant*, and by the Department for Transport Local Sustainable Transport Fund through Shropshire Council.

If you are interested in finding out more please visit our website

**[www.themeresandmosses.co.uk](http://www.themeresandmosses.co.uk)**

Email: [info@themeresandmosses.co.uk](mailto:info@themeresandmosses.co.uk)

or phone 01743 284 280



If you would like to find out more please visit [www.themeresandmosses.co.uk](http://www.themeresandmosses.co.uk)

## Circular route from the Dog & Bull pub

Start/End	Pub car park
Grid reference	SJ 52876 34290
Distance	Approximately 6.5 miles
Time	Approximately 2.75 hours
Terrain	Lanes and field paths, can be muddy in places

Cross road, through kissing gate, walk right along the hedgerow to the next stile on your right. Go straight across field to roadside stile – *care needed as you cross this busy road.*

Go straight ahead and take first turning on the left into Gilberts Lane, Coton and then turn right opposite Park Villas into Gilberts Lane, Whixall. Follow this lane to the T junction at Braynes Hall Farm.

Turn right and at next T junction go right and then left past the Social Centre. Follow the road round past Church Farm, then St Mary's Church and keep going until you reach Oak Cottage on the left. Just before the cottage cross the stile on your left, through the paddock to the next stile. Follow the hedgerow to next stile, climb over this and immediately on your right cross the footbridge.

Walk straight across the field to a little wooded area with a small pond. Cross the stile and head towards the houses and tall fir tree keeping the pond in the field on your left. Go through the gate and follow the tarmac lane to the T junction, turn left and continue along the lane until you pass a left turn.



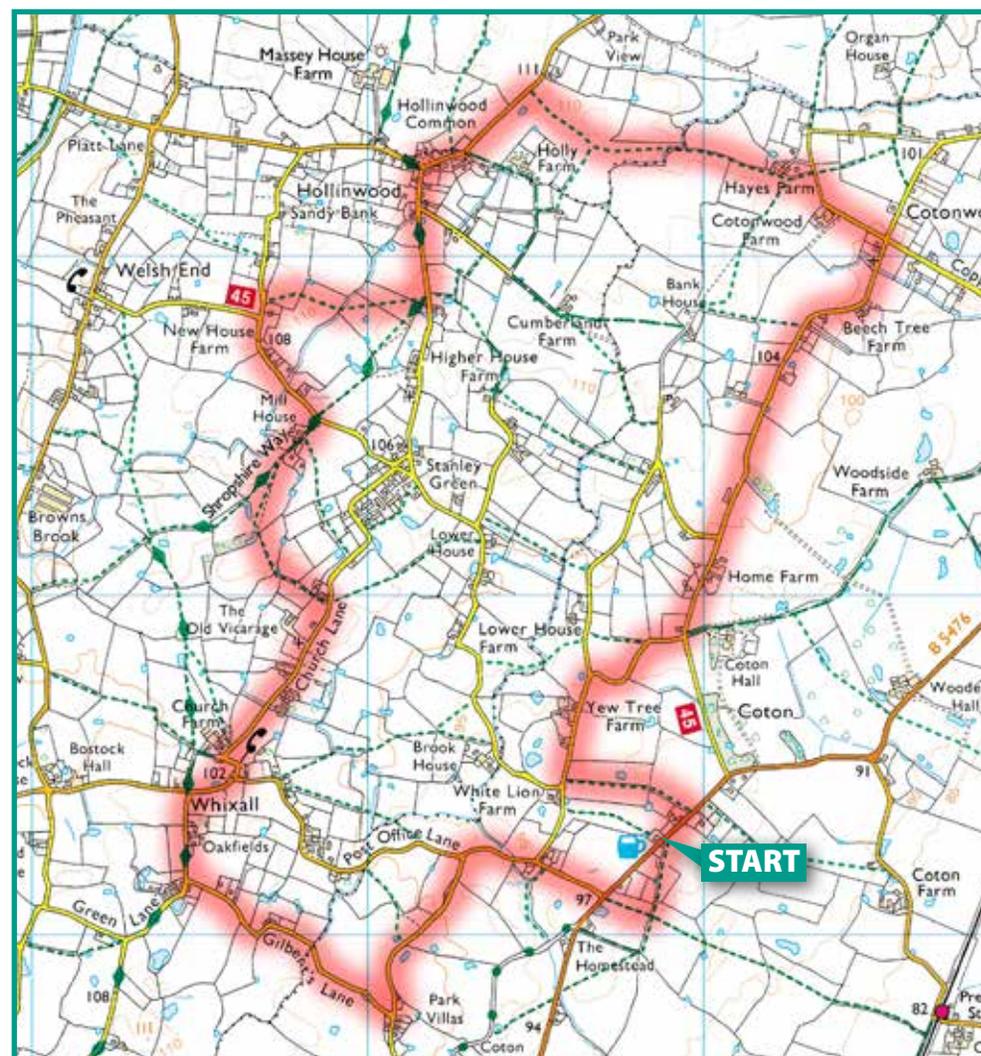
Take the footpath on the right after a few metres. Go through the field gate and cross the field to a stile. In the next field cross to stile opposite and then diagonally to next stile on your left and then diagonally again to next stile. Go through the field gate and turn left onto the lane.

Ignore the right turn into Cumberland Lane and at T junction (Hollinwood Green) go right. Follow the road out of Hollinwood and take second footpath on the right. Go straight across the field past the pylon and when you reach the hedge line turn left following the Whixall Walks signs to a footbridge. Cross the bridge and then, keeping the hedgerow on your left, follow the footpath through two fields to the lane.

Turn right onto the lane and at the cross roads turn right. Continue on this road for some time. Opposite Home Farm observe the cottage dated 1667 and particularly its chimneys.

Shortly after this take the turning on the right opposite the driveway to Coton Hall and then next left.

Before the junction with White Lion Farm take the footpath on the left through two fields and out to the very busy main Whitchurch to Wem road. Turn right and taking great care walk along the grass verge to the Dog & Bull pub. However, at the time of writing this walk we are hoping to reopen a footpath that will lead straight to the Dog & Bull beer garden. This is just after the junction. Go through a gate on your left just past White Lion Farm and walk across the field to the pub. Please be guided by the Whixall Walks signs.



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Start/End	Car park at Whixall Social Centre
Grid reference	SJ 51628 34483
Distance	Approximately 4 miles
Time	Approximately 2 hours
Terrain	Field paths, canal towpath and quiet lanes

Turn right out of the Social Centre car park on to Church Lane. After a few metres (and before Church Farm) take the unmade road on the left, reaching Farthing Cottage after approximately 100 metres. Go over a stile on your right and follow the footpath towards a drinking trough. Pass to the left of the trough, crossing a concrete cattle track and continue in a similar direction passing a pond (in the trees) on your left.

Cross a stile and follow the cattle track to the next gateway. Climb over the stile next to the gate and cross the field, keeping another pond (again surrounded by trees) to your right. Cross over two more stiles with a footbridge over a ditch and ignoring signs for the Shropshire Way, (which bears sharply right along the hedge line) follow the Whixall Walks sign towards a fenced gateway. Cross the wire fence to the left of the gateway (via blue plastic piping).

Take the path which cuts through a small thicket into the next field. Keep the hedgerow

to your left and after about 400 metres there is an oak tree. Cross the bridge and stile immediately to the right of the tree into a small field. Continue along the footpath, over another stile near a large twin-trunked oak tree into a field of rough grass. ***This patch of 'unimproved' grassland is valuable to wildlife especially barn owls.***

Continue to cross a stile in the bottom left corner of the field onto a lane, where you turn left to Welsh End.

At the T junction, turn right and follow the road to the Waggoners pub (now derelict) where you turn left, heading down to the canal. Just before the canal bridge turn left and follow the lane which runs parallel to the canal, passing a few canalside cottages along the way. After approximately ½ mile you reach Roundthorn Bridge. ***This stretch of canal is part of the former Ellesmere Canal built between 1797 and 1804 by William Jessop and Thomas Telford. It became part of the***



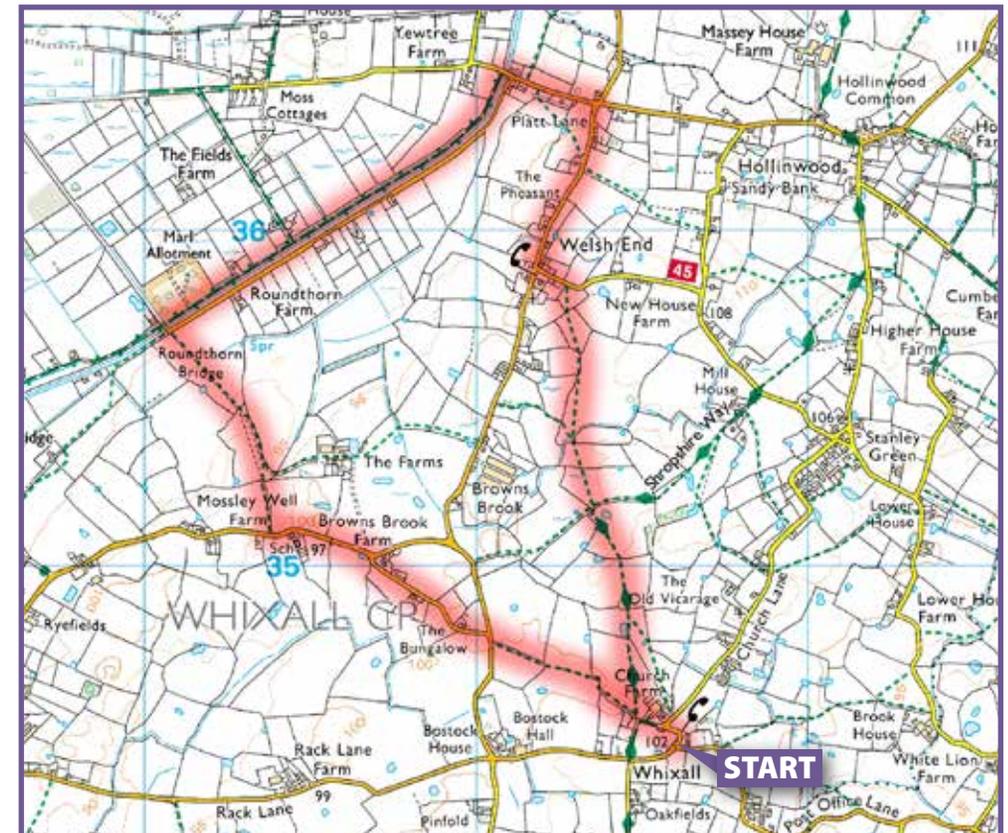
*The Church of England Primary School was established in 1967 and occupies the buildings of what was originally Whixall County School. The Social Centre where you start and finish the walk was once a second Whixall school.*

After passing the war memorial take the lane to your right and follow it for approximately ¼ mile to a T junction.

Cross the road and go over a stile which you will find about 15 metres to the right of a gate. Cross two fields and on exiting the second one beware of the electric wire fences each side of the stile through a hedge. Proceed along the field edge keeping the hedge and drainage ditch to your right and continue over a stile past Farthing Cottage on your right. Retrace the start of the walk along the track and back to the Social Centre.

***Shropshire Union in 1846. It is worth pausing here for the view from the bridge. By crossing over the canal you reach the Marl Allotment (see walk 10) and can access Whixall Moss.***

To continue the walk, do not cross the bridge, but bear sharp left just before it through a kissing gate to take a footpath across four fields. On reaching the road turn left, passing Whixall School on your right.



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Start/End	Car park at St Mary's Church, Church Lane, Whixall
Grid reference	SJ 51779 34808
Distance	Approximately 2 miles
Time	Approximately 1 hour at a leisurely pace
Terrain	Field paths, short distance on lane; can be overgrown in places

*St Mary's Church was built in 1867 at a cost of £3000. It is described in Kelly's Directory of 1909 as an edifice of brick and stone in plain Gothic style from designs by the late G E Street RA. It consists of Chancel, Nave of four bays, north aisle, south porch and a turret over the chancel arch containing one bell. The large picture behind the altar depicting the Risen Christ and two disciples on the road to Emmaeus is thought to be by a pupil of Caravaggio.*

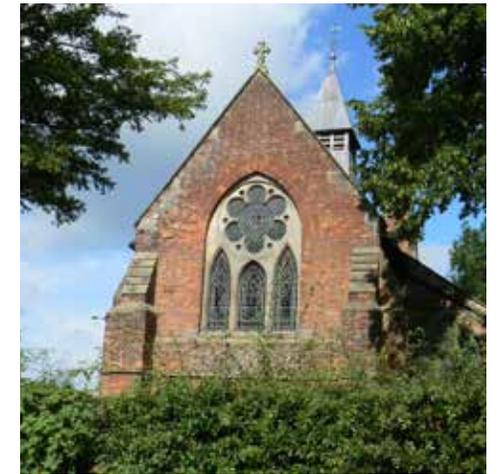


*The pond plays host to a wide range of wildlife.*

Keeping the house on your right follow the hedge line enclosing the garden, onto the track and through the farm gate. Continue straight on the track past Mill House Farm to a lane (Sandy Bank). Cross the road and go over the stile opposite, to the left of a farm gate. Continue ahead to stile in hedgerow, and then follow an obvious path across at a left hand angle to the next stile. Bear slightly right, passing behind Higher House Farm, over the next two stiles, to a field gate where you come out onto a road.

Turn left out of the car park at the church and follow Church Lane for about a quarter of a mile until you reach Oak Cottage on your left. Take the stile to the left of the cottage driveway and continue ahead over two more stiles. A few steps after the second stile, turn right and go through a gap in the trees to cross the walk boards.

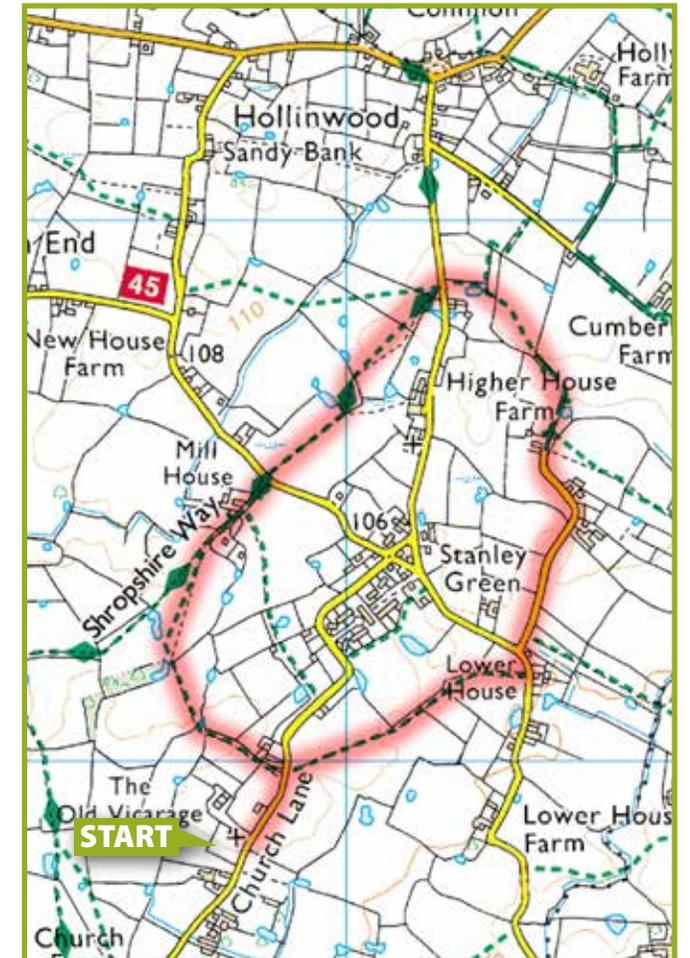
Cross the middle of this field towards a group of large trees at approximately 1 o'clock from the walk boards where there is another stile. Crossing this, turn half-right past a pond towards the closest house, Mill House Cottage.



*Higher House Farm is one of several half-timbered buildings in the area and is a Grade 2 listed building dating back to the mid 17th century.*

Cross the road and go over stile ahead, follow hedge line, go past pond and turn right towards another stile. Go over the stile and cross the field to the far right corner. Go over the stile onto a footpath between trees. This emerges next to a house at the top of Garners Lane. Ignoring the official diversion sign which relates to another footpath, continue to follow Whixall Walks signs to the end of the lane where it joins a road. Turn left (past another half-timbered house), immediately looking out for a stile on the right opposite Lower House stables.

Keep to the hedgerow along the right hand side of the field and cross the next stile maintaining the same direction. Crossing the next field you will go over a stile into Church Lane opposite Oak Cottage. Turn left along Church Lane, retracing the start of the route back to the church car park.



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Start/End	Car park at St Mary's Church, Church Lane, Whixall
Grid reference	SJ 51779 34808
Distance	Approximately 3.5 miles
Time	Approximately 1.5 hours
Terrain	Flat walking on mainly quiet lanes

**St Mary's Church of England:** Red brick with sandstone, a brass plaque in the chancel records that the church was built in 1867 in recognition of John Allen, Vicar of Prees and Archdeacon of Salop. Note the hexagonal font dated 1608. The churchyard has two Commonwealth war graves, one from each World War.

From the car park, turn right, passing Whixall Social Centre, then turn right at the end of Church Lane. Go straight on at the Braynes Hall turning. At the Bostock Hall crossroads, turn right (signposted Welsh End, Whixall Moss and Whixall School) and right again at the T junction (signposted Whitchurch).

*Bostock Hall was built around 1550 by Robert and Anne Bostock, but the site is much older being the site of a manorial house from the period 1200-1400. The Hall was demolished in the 1960s.*

You will soon reach the red brick of Welsh End Chapel on your right.

**Welsh End Methodist Chapel:** The first chapel on this site was built in 1829 on a piece of land purchased from The Pheasant Inn for five shillings, followed by a number of re-builds (the first in 1859) and renovations during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The chapel has its own burial ground. A pipe organ was installed in 1957.

Continue for another 100 yards or so, and turn right immediately after the telephone box and post box. On the right is Rowan Cottage.

*This is where the first Methodist meeting took place in Welsh End. In 1822 some young people were on their way to a Camp Meeting at Waterloo when a terrible storm came over and they got drenched. They turned into a "Preaching House" at Welsh End, now Rowan Cottage, to dry their clothes by a peat fire before journeying on to the meeting at Waterloo. From this Meeting requests were made for Services to be held in Welsh End.*

At the top of this lane, turn left onto Sandy Bank, and then right at the next junction.

This brings you into Hollinwood. On the right, opposite the community notice board and picnic bench is the former Hollinwood Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, currently being converted into a house. Opposite the green, turn right towards Stanley Green. Continue down this road and after Higher House Farm buildings, you will see the United Reformed Church.

**United Reformed Church (now closed):** In 1870, the present congregational chapel replaced the old chapel built in 1805. The two chapels were built at right angles to each other. A quirky historical fact is that this chapel was one of the first buildings in Whixall to benefit from electricity. In 1931, some 35 years before electricity was available throughout Whixall, the chapel happened to be close to an electric cable (belonging to the North Wales Electricity Board) which ran from Whitchurch to Wem. The chapel has a lovely rose window above the entrance and some interesting graves in its well-tended churchyard.

From here, continue past the large oak tree on your right and take the next right to a mini-roundabout. Go straight over; into Church Lane once again, continue past Windmill Gardens and you will soon be back at your car.



Start/End	Car park by Tilstock Church
Grid reference	SJ 54223 37842
Distance	Approximately 4.5 miles
Time	Approximately 3 hours
Terrain	Quiet lanes and across fields; can be boggy in places

Turn right out of the car park at Tilstock Church, take left hand fork and turn left at T junction then cross the road towards the Horseshoes pub.

*Tilstock Church was built from locally made bricks in 1835, at a cost of £2000, mainly paid for by the Countess of Bridgewater. The window frames were made at the foundries at Ironbridge with the stained glass east windows presented to the church by John Lee of Whitchurch in 1857. It is one of the few churches in the country that faces south.*

Take the road to the right of the pub, signposted to Hollinwood, passing the curiously named lane, Dig Lake, on your left. Continue on the road for approximately half a mile until you reach Maltkiln Cottages on your right, beside the private driveway to The Park. After the Cottages, take the next road on your right, signposted Alkington. At the first gateway on your left, pause to enjoy the view over to Hawkstone and the Lord Hill monument.

Proceed along the Alkington road until you reach a gate and a footpath on your left. Go through the gate and follow the Whixall walks signs over fields and through two more gates, keeping the hedge on your left. Go through another two gates and at the field corner follow the hedge as it bends right. *From here you can enjoy views of the Welsh Hills.* Where the hedge peters out, follow the Whixall Walks sign through another gate and skirt round Massey House Farm. Follow the driveway down to the road and turn left into Hollinwood.

Continue straight on past the green and the former red brick chapel (ignoring the turn off on the right), soon passing the Whixall village sign on your right. Keep on the road for several hundred metres until you reach a footpath on your right. *(If you reach Fair View, you've gone too far.)*

Take the footpath across the field until you reach the hedge, turn left (ignoring the footpath sign pointing through the hedge) keeping the hedge to your right. Follow the

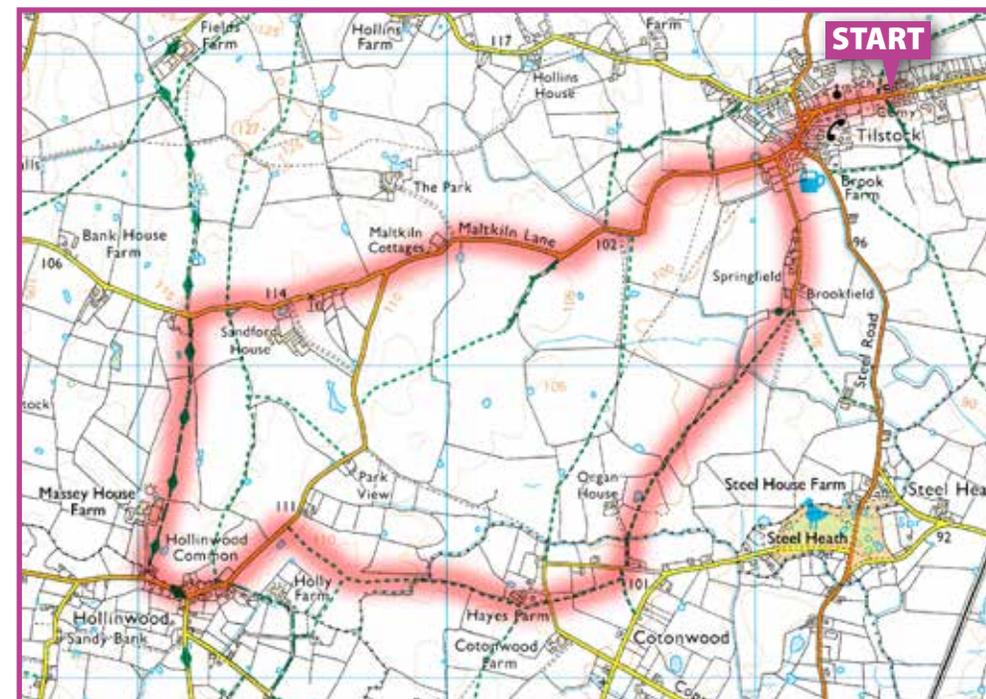
field edge until you see another footpath sign and a bridge. Cross the bridge, and turn left along the field hedge. In summer there are wild roses in the hedgerow and butterflies in the grass. At the end of the field, cross the stile and continue along the field edge with the hedge on your left. Cross the stile in the corner of this field and turn right onto a lane.

After just a few metres, take the footpath over a stile to your left, into a field. Continue along the field path over one more stile keeping beside the left hand hedge. *You will see a beautiful sycamore tree ahead of you in the second field.* Cross the stile to the left of this tree and turn right into a lane. Take the first left down a track. Halfway along the track at the bottom of the slope, turn right over a stile and keep left alongside a small paddock. Cross the stile ahead of you, and go across the next field, keeping the pond to your left *(the path can be boggy here).*

Cross the stile in the right hand corner of the field and follow the hedgerow to your left until you reach another stile. Cross this and keep to the right hand side of the field, alongside

the hedge. *Watch out for buzzards soaring overhead and crying to each other.*

Two thirds along the field, cross the stile on your right. Turn left, following the hedge on your left, to the field corner. Keep left and cross the stile in the hedge, before crossing the bridge. Turn right and keep to the edge of the field. When you meet a track, turn left, keeping the wire fence to your right, until you come to a gate. Go through the gate into Dig Lake. Follow this lane to the road, where you turn right and head back to the Horseshoes and the church car park.



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Start/End	Platt Lane bridge no 43, where there is space for a few cars
Grid reference	SJ 51099 36458
Distance	Approximately 3.25 miles
Time	Approximately 2.5 hours
Terrain	Canal towpath, lanes and across fields. Can be muddy in places and there may be cows in the fields



*Morris Bridge lift bridge is a Grade 2 listed structure built around 1800.*

Go over the bridge and walk along Moss Lane. *The fields either side of this lane flood each autumn and become home to many wintering geese and other wildfowl.*

*Near the top of the lane is this tiny cottage which is a surviving early dwelling. This would have been independently owned with a small parcel of land and peat digging rights on Whixall Moss called a turvey.*



From Platt Lane canal bridge walk up Canalside (with the canal on your right) following the tarmac lane to the next bridge which is Roundthorn Bridge. *You are on a stretch of the Shropshire Union Canal (formerly the Ellesmere Canal) built between 1797 and 1804 which at one time was used to transport peat from the Mosses.* Cross over Roundthorn Bridge (no 44) and turn left to walk along the towpath.

At Morris Bridge (no 45) take time to look at the information board about the local flora and fauna.

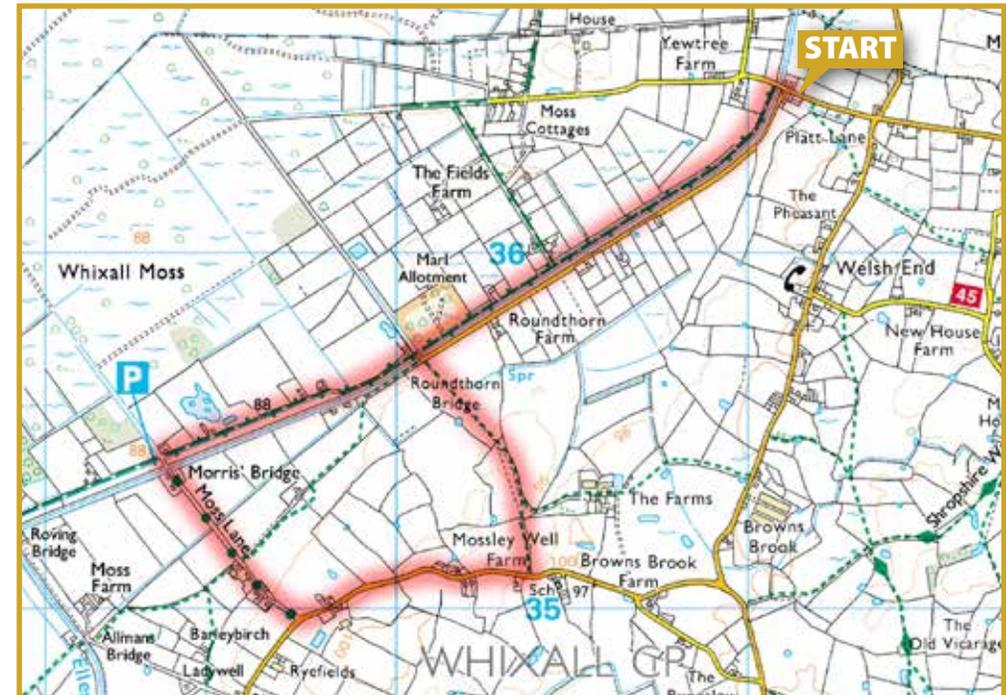


*for use as agricultural fertiliser. It is now a nature reserve where butterflies thrive in deep grassland, surrounded by glades of alder, willow, birch and oak.*

Continue along the track with the canal on your right. As it bends to the left, carry straight on to the towpath by three small horse chestnut trees. Continue for a short distance until you are back where you started.



Turn left at the T junction and carry on along the road until the school zone sign. Just after this there is a stile on your left. Follow the Shropshire Way signs across the fields until you reach the canal and Roundthorn Bridge again. Cross the bridge once more and this time turn right to take the track along the canal. *On your left is the Marl Allotment where there are picnic benches and an information board just inside the gate. The Marlot is Whixall's only common land where marl clay was once dug*



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# 7 The canal and old Shropshire Way

Start/End	Platt Lane bridge no 43, where there is space for a few cars
Grid reference	SJ 51099 36458
Distance	Approximately 5 miles
Time	Approximately 3 hours
Terrain	Canal towpath, lanes and across fields (can be wet and overgrown in places)

Walk over bridge and take gate on right to take canal path heading in a northerly direction (with the canal on your right). Continue along this quiet and pretty stretch of the Shropshire Union Canal past bridges 42 and 41. When you reach Blackoe Bridge (no 40) leave the canal path by the slip road on the left. At the end of this turn left again to go over the bridge. Continue along the road and after two thirds of a mile go past Fern Bank Farm on your right and then take the first road on the right.

At the T junction turn right up the no through road. Go through the farm gate at the end of the road signposted for the Shropshire Way and following the Whixall Walks sign. *This is a section of the Shropshire Way which is part of an 11 mile spur from Wem to join the Sandstone Trail at Grindley Brook. The Shropshire Way has recently been revamped to form both northern and southern long distance circuits and 27 shorter walks.*

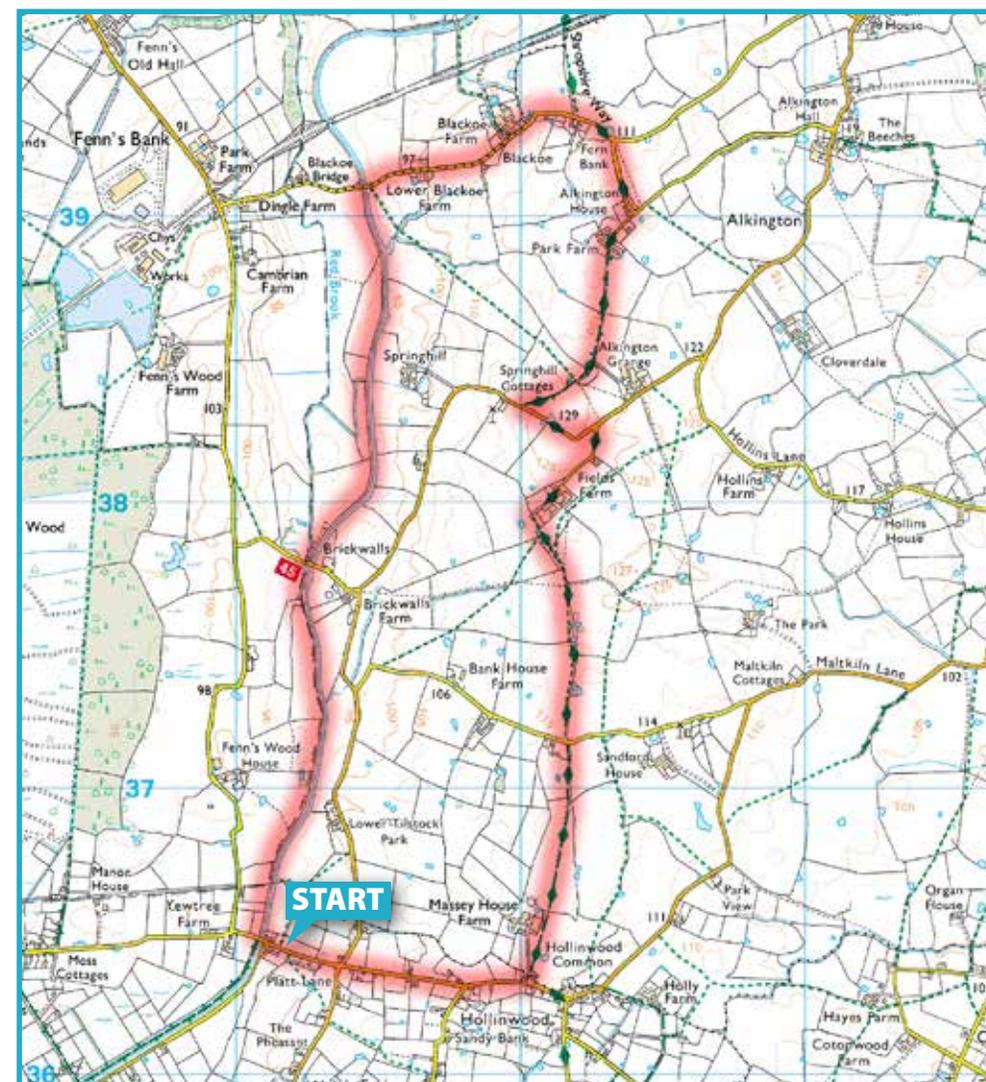
Follow the path along the right hand side of the field to a stile. Cross this and continue on the right side of the field. Go through a farm gate and carry on along the track. On your right is Fenns Meadow Green burial ground. Take the next stile and continue along the hedgerow to cross a stile onto the roadside. Go left along the road and after about 400 yards, take the right turning – signed as a no through road, still following the Shropshire Way and Whixall Walk signs. Continue past two houses on your left to Fields Farm.

At the end of the driveway cross the stile to a grassy track and at the end of this, take the next stile and proceed along the left hand hedgerow. After about 50 yards cross another stile and bear to your right, then go over the next stile and bear left along the edge of the field and follow the pathway round into the next field. Continue straight over this field and follow pathway/track through into the next field. Cross stile, go over the lane and through the brideway gate on the opposite side.



Go through next three brideway gates. Walk along the left hedgerow and follow it as it bears right to the left hand corner of the farm barns. Walk down the side of the barn (keeping it to your right) Make your way to the brideway gate in the corner of the field by the farm driveway. At the end of this driveway turn right onto the road and carry on to the cross roads.

Go straight over and follow the road to the canal bridge where you started.



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Start/End	Near Fenn's Cottage – accessed via a track to the left off the road from the Waggoners Inn towards Fenns Bank (approximately 1.5 miles from the Waggoners). Parking is about 50 metres beyond the cottage next to a wood store and cutting shed. Please do not block gateways. Please keep your dogs on a lead near the woodland at all times.
Grid reference	SJ 50763 38193
Distance	Approximately 3.5 miles
Time	Around 1.5 hours
Terrain	Mostly tracks which can be muddy at times



From the car parking area proceed along a clear grassy track towards the Moss, with a private conifer wood to your left and grazing land on your right. After about 300 metres you reach a crossroads of tracks and a Moss notice board. Turn right here and follow path along the edge of woodland keeping grazing to your right.

After about half a mile you will see a large lake on your right and the path joins the access track onto the Moss. Continue straight on and soon a second lake can be seen to your right and the blue clad aluminium works is visible. Follow the track round to the left until you reach The Conery.

At the crossing of paths, go straight ahead along the track with horse paddocks to both left and right. Shortly the land to your right becomes coniferous woodland and you will approach Moss Farm where you turn left

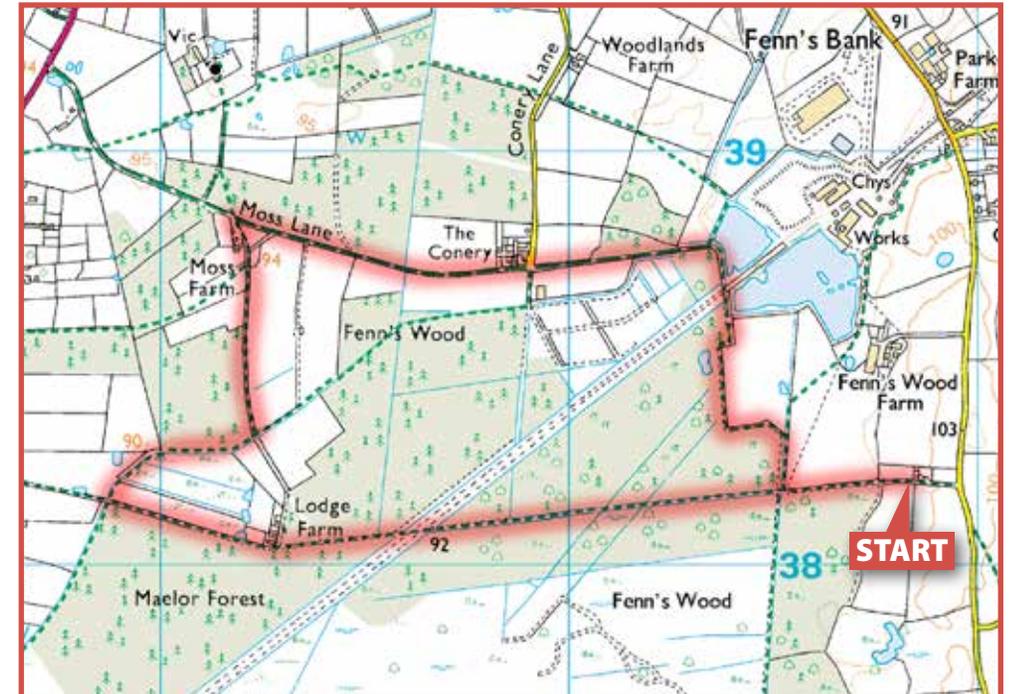
along a track. Follow this for about a quarter of a mile. At an access gate to track leading to Lodge Farm take a footpath to your right (this path is sometimes a little overgrown at the start) which follows the edge of the woodland and has an open ditch to the left.

Meander along the path for about a quarter of a mile (ignore the grassy walkway with no handrail), then go over two timber walkways with handrails to your left which cross the ditch. After crossing second walkway you need to turn immediately to the right and follow the path along the ditch line for about 400 yards until you reach a gateway.

Turn left after going through the gate and walk along the path with woodland to your right. Shortly you'll pass Lodge Farm on your left and the path goes through an area of bracken leading to a pedestrian gate. After going through this gate you pass through quite dense coniferous woodland before coming out onto the main Moss access track (the old railway).

*This railway was laid by the Oswestry, Ellesmere and Whitchurch Railway Company, the lines supported by layers of heather, bundles of birch faggots, timbers and then sand to prevent them from sinking into the peat. Opened in 1863, the line became part of the Cambrian Railway Co. in 1864, and Great Western in 1922. It was closed by Dr Beeching in 1963.*

Go straight on at this point crossing the old railway with woodland to your left and the expanses of Whixall Moss to your right. Continue for approximately half a mile to return to the starting point.



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Start/End	Roundthorn Bridge where you can park over the bridge next to the canal near the Marl Allotment.
Grid reference	SJ 50088 35730
Distance	Approximately 5 miles
Time	Allow at least 2 hours
Terrain	Towpath, quiet lanes and grassy tracks. This is an all-weather walk, though can be muddy in places after rain.

From the canal-side parking near the Marl Allotment cross Roundthorn Bridge and bear left to take the good tarmac track along Canalside. With the canal on your left you pass several cottages on your right before reaching Platt Lane.

Turn left to cross the bridge on Platt Lane and descend the steps to join the towpath on the other side of the canal, continuing in the same direction until you reach the next lift bridge. *This is bridge no 42, officially called the Tilstock Park lift bridge, but known locally as Brickwalls Bridge. This area can be a good place to see a kingfisher.*

Leave the canal at Brickwalls Bridge by turning left up the quiet lane which shortly meets the road between Whixall and Fenns Bank. Turn right here and, taking care of traffic, walk for about 800 yards to reach a track and footpath on the left leading to Fenns Cottage. Follow

the track past the cottage as it follows the edge of Fenns Wood. *This conifer plantation is a good place to see long-tailed tits and the tiny goldcrest.*

Continue for a short distance until you meet a crossroad of tracks with a Whixall and Fenns Moss map, turn left here onto another wide track to continue skirting the wood on your left with the expanse of Fenns Moss on your right. *This section is sometimes referred to locally as 'the long mile'.* At the end of the grassy track, if you take a slight detour to your right, you emerge near a History Trail notice board and leaflets.

*There is information here about the role played by the Mosses during the Second World War when Fenns Moss was a practice incendiary bombing range. Machine gun practice targeted a cut-out train on the peat railway, and there was a strategic 'starfish'*

*decoy site, where peat would be set alight, in order to divert German bombers from Liverpool. There is now a waymarked trail which takes you to some of the key points of interest concerning Operation Starfish.*

Go back to the original track and continue straight on towards Moss Cottages, passing through a metal gate. *Note that the bins outside the bungalow here have Wrexham written on them – the only sign that this walk crosses the Welsh/English border.*



Follow the tarmac track past some houses and the small playing field to the T junction, where you turn right and continue to where the tarmac runs out. *Moss Cottages now form a quiet hamlet on the edge of the nature reserve but 100 years ago they were a hive of activity. A succession of commercial peat firms cut Fenns Moss from 1851 until the Mosses were rescued for wildlife conservation in December 1990. From 1888 to 1915, the English Peat Moss Litter Co. extracted peat on horse-drawn trams to transport it via the mainline railway at Fenns Bank. Moss Cottages were built for their workers in 1889.*

About 400 yards after the last of the Moss Cottages, bear left on another track which curves round to take you back to the canal. When you reach it, turn sharp right on the track as it follows the canal back to the Marl Allotment and Roundthorn Bridge.



# 10 Walk along the fringe of the Moss

Start/End	Roundthorn Bridge where you can park over the bridge next to the canal near the Marl Allotment.
Grid reference	SJ 50088 35730
Distance	2.6 miles
Time	Allow 1.5 hours
Terrain	Canal towpath, grass and peaty tracks, possibly muddy.



**We recommend taking a pair of binoculars on this walk. If you are walking with a dog please remember that**

**they must be on a lead on the Nature Reserve from 1st March to the end of July.**

**Roundthorn Bridge sits in a pretty position on the Shropshire Union Canal. The bridge was built around 1800 by Thomas Telford and William Jessop. Taking the canal through such boggy terrain as the mosses was quite a challenge and meant that the banks had to be constantly built up with clay to prevent it sinking. The canal played a key role in transporting peat from the mosses.**

From the parking area walk along the canal side to the gateway into the Marl Allotment. **The Marlot was once used for extracting marl clay for agricultural use. It is now a nature**

**reserve and has undergone restoration in recent years so that it can continue to provide a habitat for wildlife.**

Go through the gate and walk straight along the grassy track to the back boundary and turn left by the Mosses Trail post no 4. At the next gate turn right onto the wide track, then pass through two gateways onto the Nature Reserve. Follow the track to trail post no 6, then turn left across Whixall Moss to trail post no 9. **On a clear day, there are distant glimpses of the Berwyn mountain range to the north west.**

**You are following one of several trails on the Mosses. Leaflets about these trails can be obtained from Natural England – or look out for the information boards sited around the reserve.**

During the summer months a small detour is recommended to view white faced darters and other dragonflies and damselflies. To do this instead of bearing left at post 6 continue on

the path for approximately 200 metres, turn right at crossroads and then right again shortly afterwards to take the path to the pools. If you're very lucky, you may see the small bird of prey called a hobby.

At trail post 9, turn left and at post 10 turn right. Follow trail posts 11 and 12 until you reach the steps going up to the canal towpath. A detour to the right along the towpath takes you to a boardwalk for a view out over the Moss and a pathway to a large dragonfly pool, where you may see hawkers and four spot chasers.

Return to the top of the steps and then follow the towpath, passing under the footbridge known as Roving Bridge.

**A roving bridge is a bridge over a canal constructed to allow a horse towing a boat to cross the canal when the towpath changes sides. Bridges at canal junctions and where the towpath is interrupted by side arms are strictly speaking side bridges, but are often referred to as roving bridges. At Roving Bridge**

**the canal branches. The right hand branch is known as the Prees branch, though only goes as far as Edstaston.**

**The square house opposite was built at the same time as the canal and was the toll keeper's cottage. It is a listed building and it was designed by Thomas Telford.**

After Roving Bridge simply continue along the towpath, past Morris' lift bridge and back to Roundthorn Bridge.



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# 11 To Bettisfield and back

Start/End	Car park next to Morris Bridge at the end of Moss Lane
Grid reference	SJ 49327 35407
Distance	Approximately 4.5 miles
Time	About 2.5 hours
Terrain	Canal towpath, tracks and field paths (can be muddy and wet in places)



From the car park at Morris Bridge, walk up the slope to the canal towpath and turn right. You will soon come to Roving Bridge which you cross to join the Prees branch of the canal near to Roving

Bridge Farm (*a former toll collector and land clerks cottage which is Grade 2 listed and was designed by Thomas Telford*).

Continue along the towpath of the Prees branch to the next lift bridge (Allman's Bridge). Cross Allman's Bridge and follow the track as it descends to a farm gate (marked Whixall Walks). With the brook on your left cross the field at a slight angle to a metal gate, go through the gate and up a small track to another gate. Turn immediately right after going through the gate and follow the track for about 300 yards.

The track veers sharp right but you continue straight on along a smaller grassy path through a lush alley of silver birch. After about a quarter of a mile you cross another path to continue straight on at post no 2. *You are now on Bettisfield Moss, lesser known sister of Whixall Moss.*

After another quarter of a mile you will pass through some wooden fence posts into a rough field to follow a fainter path. Cross a small wooden plank bridge over an open drainage ditch and follow the trail along the left hand hedge line, keeping to the left of a big oak tree. This soon brings you to a metal gate into a wooded area. Go through the gate and turn right along a clear path.

*Through the trees to your left you can see Bettisfield Windmill, an eighteenth century corn mill shown as still working on the 1873 Ordnance Survey, but disused by 1900. It is now a private house.*

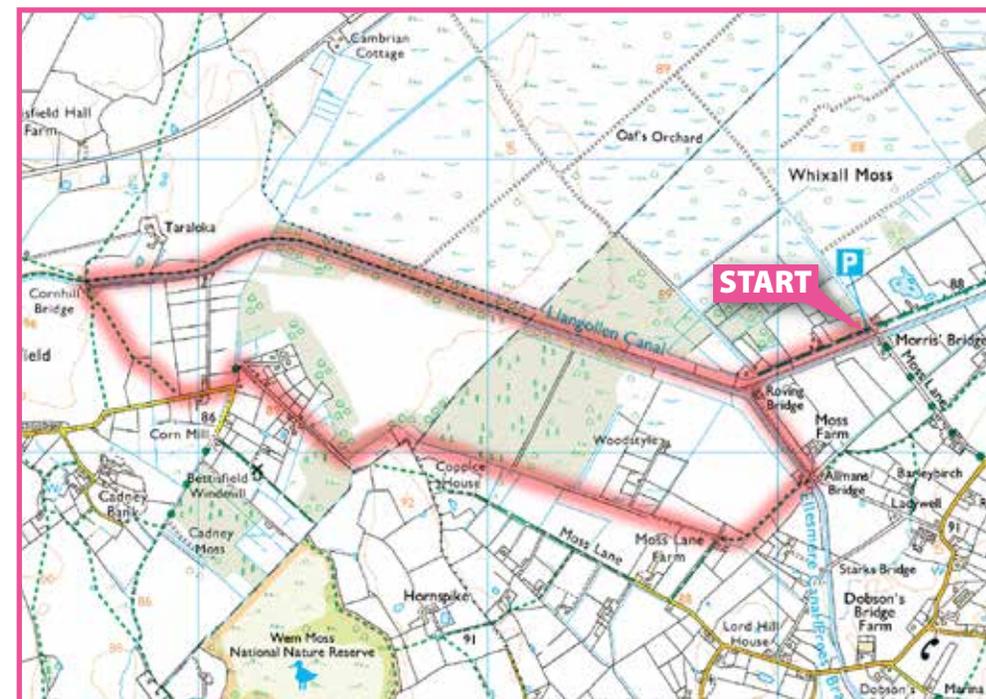
The path soon emerges onto Cadney Lane which you follow past some cottages. The path becomes a tarmac road. Follow this round a left hand bend. Shortly after the bend turn right opposite Brook House and look for a stile on the right after about 200 yards between some large oak trees. Cross the stile and head across fields towards the church in the distance. After crossing a brook and another stile cross the next field towards the copse of trees that is slightly to the right of the church spire. Enter the copse and you will reach the canal crossing it at Cornhill Bridge.

*To visit Bettisfield you would turn left along the canal and enter the village from the next canal bridge. There has long been a settlement at Bettisfield which appears in the Domesday book as 'Beda's field' – though who Beda was seems unknown.*

If you're not visiting Bettisfield, cross the bridge and turn right along the canal towpath. *The garden you can see through the trees along this stretch of canal is part of the Taraloka Buddhist Retreat Centre.*

Follow the towpath for about 1.5 miles back to Morris Bridge where the walk started. *This straight section of the canal is known locally as 'The Quob'. In 18th century English, this meant 'to quiver and throb', which possibly describes how the moss moves when walked on. This is a prime site for spotting the blue flash of a kingfisher.*

*About half way down you will cross the Welsh/English border marked by a wooden post. There are good views of the Mosses from a viewing platform situated just past the border marking post and in the spring, the strange looking butterbur flowers can be seen along the towpath.*



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# 12 Waterloo – the walk, not the battle

Start/End	The layby on the north west side of Dobson's Bridge (Bridge 3 on Ellesmere Canal, Prees Branch)
Grid reference	SJ 49218 34261
Distance	Approximately 3 miles
Time	Allow 1 hour
Terrain	Canal towpath, tracks and lanes. Level but muddy in places

Walk over Dobson's Bridge (*this fixed humpback bridge was designated as a Grade 2 listed building in 1987*) and take the steps down to the canal on the far right of the bridge, go under the bridge and follow the canal towpath until you reach the first lift bridge, Stark's Bridge.

*Stark's Bridge is a scheduled ancient monument, believed to be unique in this country. It is a parallelogram lift bridge, known as a skewed bridge.*

Turn left and cross the bridge and walk along Maltkiln Lane until you reach a T junction. *On your right is Lord Hill House. Originally built as an inn in 1810 and no doubt named in honour of Lord Rowland Hill who was born at nearby Hawkstone in 1772. A statue of Lord Hill stands on a tall column near County Hall in Shrewsbury. A distinguished General, he fought alongside Wellington at, yes, you've guessed it – Waterloo!*



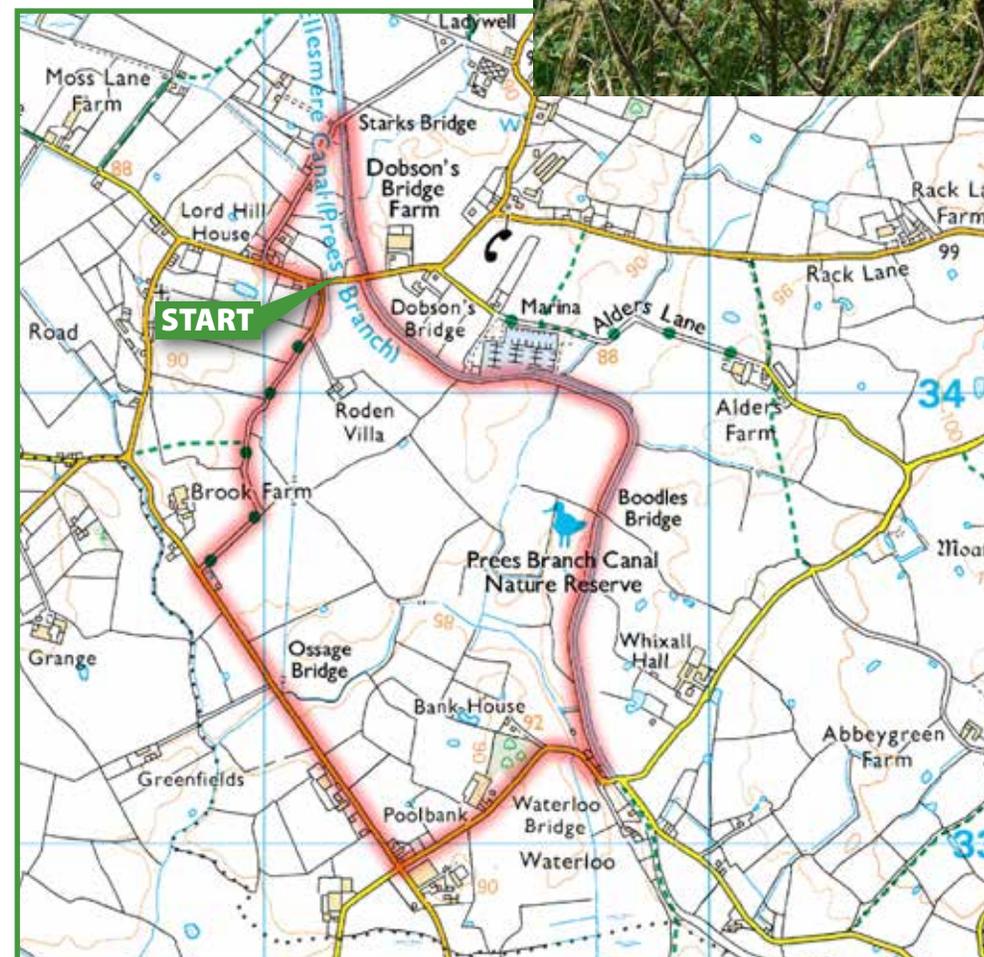
Turn left and take the first right just before the community notice board. When the tarmac veers left along a house driveway continue straight on, and follow this green lane until it meets Ossage Lane. Turn left into the lane and continue to the crossroads with Browns of Wem on the far corner. Turn left towards Waterloo until you reach the footpath and gate on your left at Waterloo Bridge. Go through the gate, behind the houses, not forgetting to read the Nature Reserve information board.

*You are now on the Prees branch of the Llangollen Canal although it never did reach Prees, stopping about 3 miles short at Edstaston. It is now navigable only as far as the marina and this stretch from Waterloo is a Shropshire Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve – home to a variety of flora, birdlife and the elusive water vole.*

Continue along the canal taking time to admire the wildflowers and look out for any wildlife along the route. Carry on under bridge 4, Boodles Bridge, and pass by Whixall Marina. *This Marina was once an important source of clay which was used to raise the height of the canal banks to prevent the canal from sinking into the peat bog that it was originally cut through. Maintaining the height of the*

*canal was a major feat. From when the canal opened in 1804 right up to the 1960s a group of men known as the Whixall Moss Gang was constantly employed to keep this up – these were in fact the longest serving 'navvies' in the country.*

Continue along this peaceful stretch of canal until you are back at Dobson's Bridge.



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# 13 A walk for all seasons

Start/End	Waterloo Bridge. There is limited parking space almost opposite Bridge Cottage where a wide track meets the road, please do not block the track.
Grid reference	SJ 49759 33138
Distance	Approximately 3 miles
Time	A leisurely 1¾ hours
Terrain	Mostly flat paths or roads, but Route 1 can be very wet for a short distance



Continue along the path under Boodles Bridge and onto Whixall Marina with its attractive array of narrow boats. Keep to the footpath until you reach Dobson's Bridge (No 3). Here you will need to go up onto the road and turn right across the bridge, before taking the steps that lead down to the opposite side of the canal.

Proceed in the same direction until you reach Starks Bridge (No 2). *This timber canal lift bridge is a very rare example of a skewed bridge, possibly unique. It was built around 1806 and is a scheduled ancient monument and Grade 2 listed.* Turn right along Windmill Lane.

When you reach the T junction, turn right, and then turn right again at the next T junction. Watch out for traffic here, making sure you are visible when rounding bends. You will pass a farm specialising in rare breed hens and selling fresh free range eggs. This area of Whixall is called Ladywell. Continue along this road, taking the first turning left into Rack Lane, signposted Bostock Hall, Wem and Whitchurch.

Cross the road from the parking space to Bridge Cottage and go up onto the bridge on your right. Go through the gate on your left and down the steps to the beginning of the footpath along the canal.

*This is the Prees Branch Canal Nature Reserve which is a SSSI due to the presence of rare pondweeds (Potamogeton). It is also the home of water voles, swans, kingfisher and other waterfowl. Otters sometimes occur but are rarely spotted.*



## Here you have a choice of routes:

### Route 1 (some wet ground)

Take the first footpath on your right opposite Orchard Cottage. Climb over the stile and cross the field, keeping to the right of the telegraph pole in the middle of the field. Cross the stile (take care – this stile can be slippery after rain) and turn left into the lane. Follow this past a blue Marina gate and continue straight on along the grassy track leading to Alders Lane. Keep following the track as it turns to the right and continue until the track becomes a road, just past Alders Farm. Despite the sometimes muddy conditions underfoot, this is a lovely secluded part of the walk.

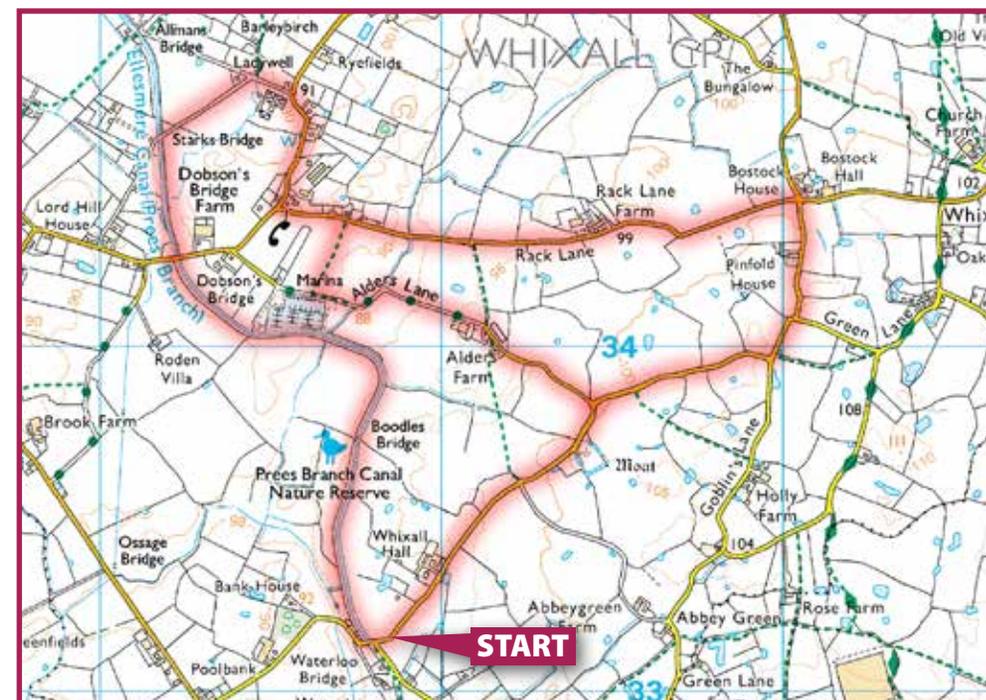
Follow the road until you reach a T junction with a grassy triangle, and turn right. *Not far along this road, look out for some earthworks on your left. This was once the site of an ancient farmhouse, built between 1200 and 1400. Its moat is still clearly discernible. Keep going, passing a pond on your left and Whixall Hall on your right.*

*Stop to admire the duck pond on your left and the drunken wall on your right!*

Continue along the lane until you reach Waterloo Bridge where you started.

### Route 2 (longer, but on roads)

Continue along Rack Lane ignoring the footpath used in Route 1 to reach the crossroads. Turn right into Goblins Lane (signposted Abbey Green and Waterloo) and then take the first turning on your right. Once you have passed Alders Lane on your right, you will rejoin Route 1



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- Walk 1**
- Walk 2**
- Walk 3**
- Walk 4**
- Walk 5**
- Walk 6**
- Walk 7**
- Walk 8**
- Walk 9**
- Walk 10**
- Walk 11**
- Walk 12**
- Walk 13**

