

Walk No 1

Ironbridge to Patten's Rock Quarry

Starting from the car park in Ironbridge opposite the Station Hotel, this fascinating walk takes in sections of a former **incline and tramway** associated with coal and clay mining, climbs through the steep woodland of Benthall Edge to **Patten's Rock Quarry**, the largest of the 18C and 19C limestone quarries on this side of the river. From its viewpoint there are magnificent views across the valley to Ironbridge and beyond. The walk continues down a remarkable flight of constructed steps with impressive views of the river and up the Coalbrookdale valley, before concluding along the line of the **old Severn Valley Railway** back to Ironbridge.

 **Accessibility:** Boots or stout shoes are advisable all year round for frequently muddy sections in this woodland walk. There are steep ascents and descents to/from Patten's Rock Quarry. There are step-over and step-through stiles at various points along the walk.

 **Key Features:** Industrial and cultural history, archaeological, ecological and geological interest, and viewpoints.

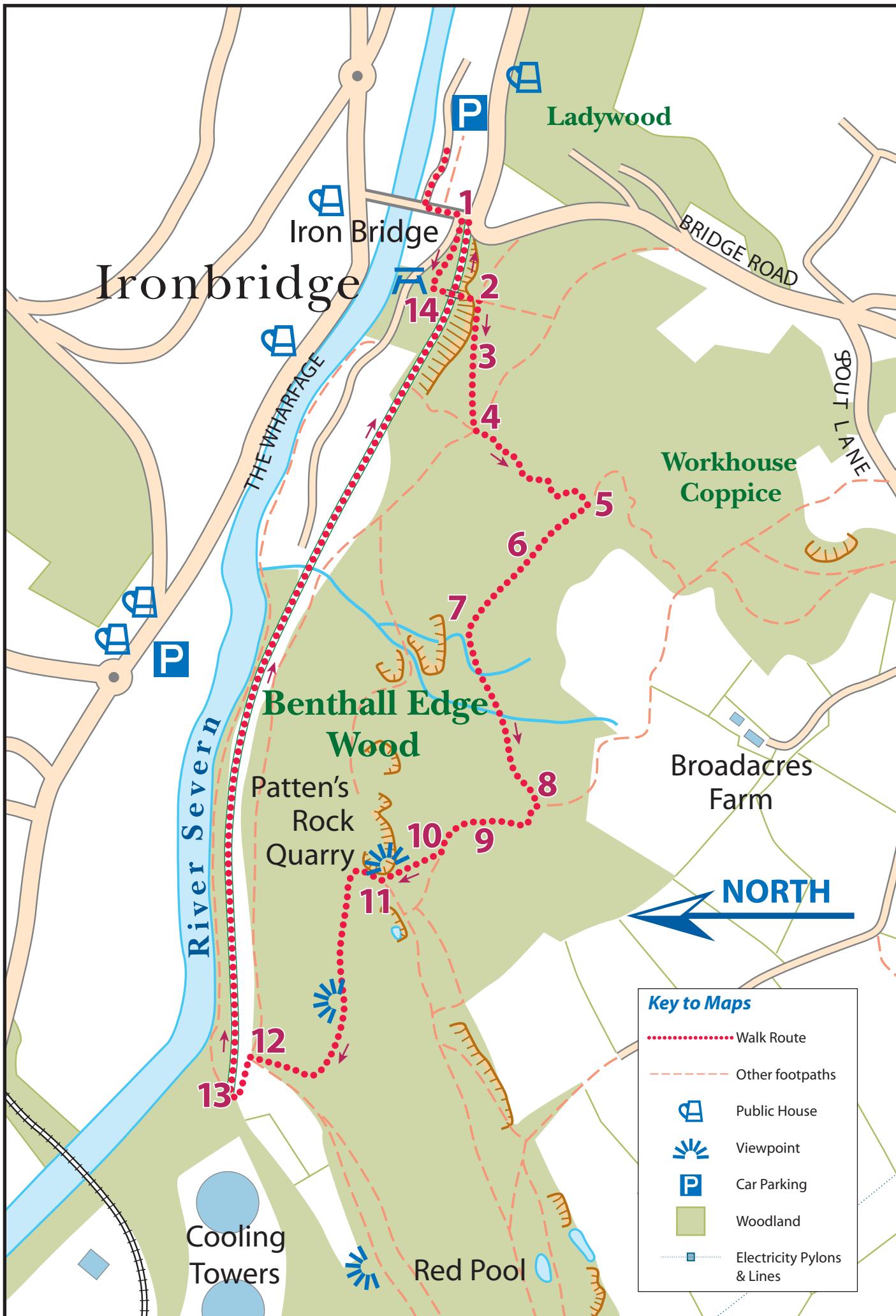
 **Distance:** About 3km, about 1½ hours

 **Car Parking:** Ironbridge Car Park opposite Station Hotel

 **Public Transport:** Buses to and from Ironbridge daily and Weekends

 **Refreshments:** Various cafes, restaurants and pubs in Ironbridge

 **WCs:** Market Square, Ironbridge



Walk No 1 *Ironbridge to Patten's Rock Quarry*

- 1** From the car park opposite the Station Hotel exit just above the Iron Bridge. Turn left for a few metres, then right. There are cast iron bollards to your left and ahead of you is a standard 5-barred gate with a smaller version to the right of this. Pass through this gate. The path divides. Take the upper path to the left (NOT to the picnic area). After about 50 metres you will come to half a dozen steps on your left. Go up the steps to a stile at the base of a brick-built bridge overlooking the line of the old Severn Valley Railway. Pass over the stile onto the bridge. Looking to your right, you can clearly see the line of the former railway below.
- 2** Continue on up over the bridge until you come to a T-junction. Just at the T-junction, on either side of the path, you can see some surviving ironwork associated with the winding mechanism of the old incline. Take the right fork
- 3** Continue walking along this level.
- 4** The path soon comes to a steep flight of steps on your left. Take these and continue up, ignoring any paths off. As you walk up, the underlying geology is beginning to change from clay to outcropped sandstone and ironstone, both of which had a history of being quarried since medieval times. There is some evidence to suggest that the sandstone of Benthall Edge was used to build nearby Buildwas Abbey in the 13th century.
- 5** The steps eventually reach an area of open land and a huge depression clearly associated with another long-disused quarry. At this point there are steps off to the left but you should continue on the right hand steps leading to a level path.
- 6** Continue along this path which may have been another old tramway or wagonway. After about 50 metres there is a more open, fenced off area of the woodland on the left. Inside you may notice a 'bat-friendly' metal grill, covering the entrance to an old adit driven in stone.
- 7** After another 50 metres the woodland appears more open here with a great deal of selectively-felled timber lying haphazardly about.

Soon the path crosses a tiny stream, and subsequently a footbridge over Bower Brook, the principal stream draining Benthall Edge Wood. Beyond is a short flight of steps, before the land climbs steadily uphill. Ash and hazel are conspicuous and the soil supports many lime-loving plants. These include yellow archangel, a flower which is an indicator of ancient woodland and hedgerows, distinguished by its hairy square stem and tiers of yellow flowers. 50 metres on there is a short boardwalk over unusually marshy ground where species such as hairy woodrush are to be found. A further 80 metres on and uphill, the path comes to a marker post, with a path off to the left to farmland belonging to Broadacres Farm, and a path off to the right. Take this path off to the right at the post.

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- 8** The path drops down slightly over old tree roots and steps to cross a tiny unnamed brook helping to drain the hillside.
- 9** Having crossed over the brook, follow the path to the right, which after a while moves sharply to the left, embarking upon a steady climb. After 100 metres the rise culminates in a marker post with a fork to left and right but only a marked arrow off to the right. Take this right fork but before you do it is worth considering the geography and ecology of the woodland at this point.
- 10** Take the right hand fork at the marker post and after 50 metres and a few steps up, you are brought to a magnificent viewpoint looking out across the Severn Gorge to Ironbridge and beyond to newer parts of Telford. Below you is the grassy floor of a huge limestone quarry, known as Patten's Rock Quarry.
- 11** Once you have taken in as many of the views and sounds as you wish, turn about, and, with the quarry on your right, begin the descent down what is a prodigious flight of constructed steps - 469 in all!
- 12** At the bottom of the steps there is a bench and an open area of woodland which is being managed by the traditional means of coppicing. It is fenced off to prevent browsing of the new growth from the coppiced stools, a delicacy to fallow and muntjac deer inhabiting the woods.
- 13** The finger post ahead of you indicates a 'straight on' option downwards. Take this, ignoring paths off to the left and right, and after 20 metres you will come to a gate and step-over stile leading to a broad track. Turn right here, away from the cooling tower which literally towers over you. After the serpentine climb through the woods that you have completed, this rather open straight finale will come as an entirely contrasting experience. In fact, you are walking along the Severn Valley Way which follows the old line of the Severn Valley Railway.
- 14** At the end of the track you will pass under the bridge, constructed to carry the industrial incline, which you stood on at the beginning of the walk. Beyond that, if you have parked in the car park opposite the Station Hotel, you may notice railway lines embedded in the road up from the Iron Bridge, a point that was formerly a level crossing.