

## Walk No 3

# *Ironbridge to Bower Yard Field to Red Pool to Patten's Rock Quarry*

**Starting from Ironbridge car park** opposite the Station Hotel, this fascinating figure of 8 walk takes in the line of **18C/19C tramways and inclines** associated with coal and clay mining. It passes by a **restored traditional meadow**, moves through a section of birch and hazel coppiced woodland with fine views across and up the River Severn, before climbing steadily up the western face of Benthall Edge to **Red Pool**, a rare wetland habitat in a woodland setting, full of life and a mysterious story to tell. The walk moves to **Patten's Rock Quarry**, the largest of the 18C and 19C limestone quarries on Benthall Edge, offering magnificent views across the Gorge, before descending a spectacular flight of constructed steps and thence along the line of the **old Severn Valley Railway** back to Ironbridge.

 **Accessibility:** Boots or other stout footwear are advisable all year round for frequently muddy sections in this largely woodland walk. There are some moderately steep sections, a graded descent via constructed steps. One section is next to a pool – *children will need supervision*.

 **Key Features:** Industrial & cultural history with surviving archaeology, ecological and geological interest, and viewpoints.

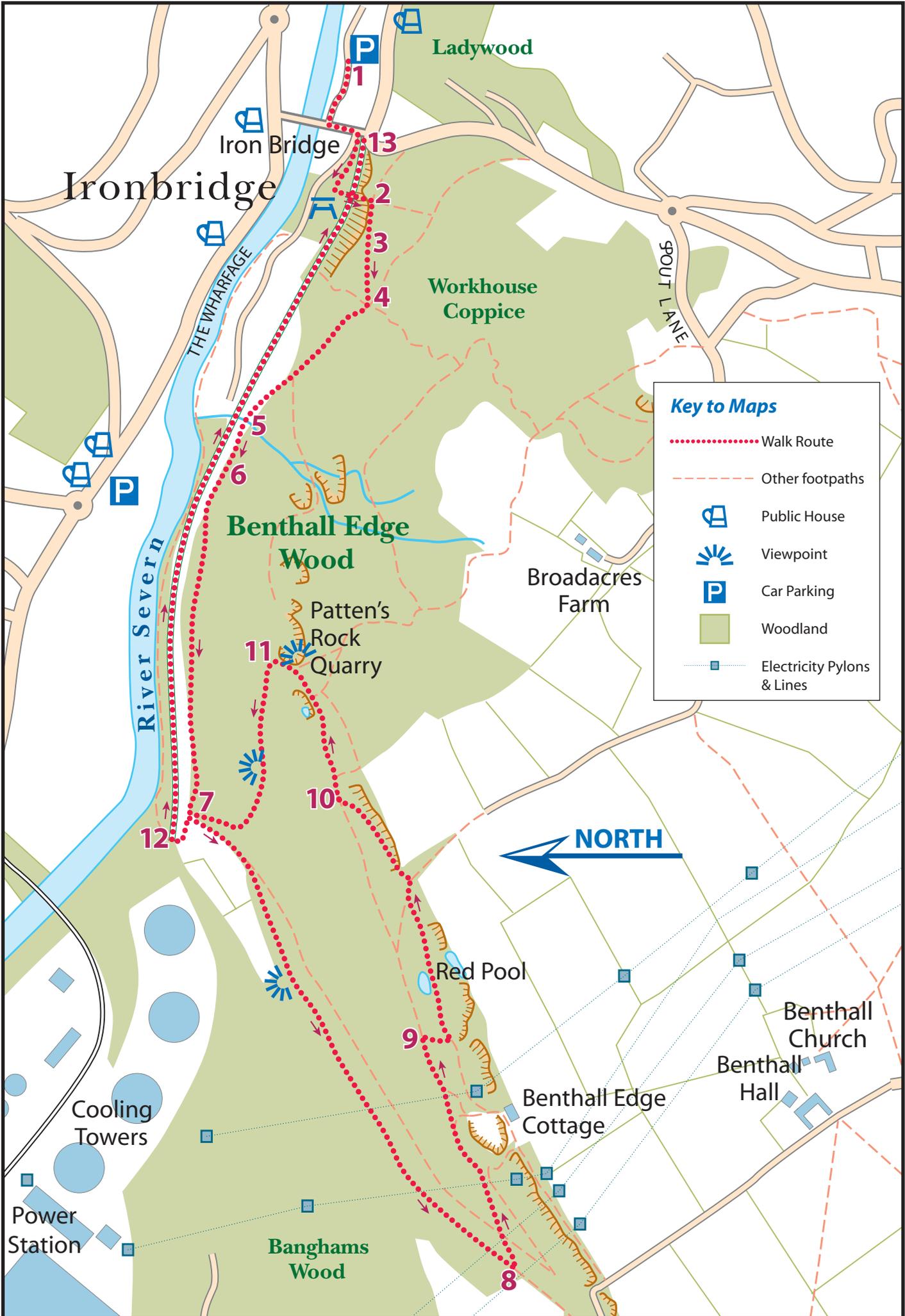
 **Distance:** About 4 km, about 1½–2 hours.

 **Car Parking:** Ironbridge car park opposite Station Hotel

 **Public Transport:** Buses to and from Ironbridge, daily and weekends

 **Refreshments:** Shops, cafes, restaurants, pubs in Ironbridge

 **WCs:** Market Square in Ironbridge



Ironbridge

Ladywood

Iron Bridge

Workhouse Coppice

Benthall Edge Wood

Patten's Rock Quarry

Broadacres Farm

River Sever

THE WHARFAGE

**Key to Maps**

- ..... Walk Route
- - - - - Other footpaths
- Public House
- Viewpoint
- Car Parking
- Woodland
- Electricity Pylons & Lines

NORTH

Cooling Towers

Power Station

Banghams Wood

Red Pool

Benthall Edge Cottage

Benthall Church  
Benthall Hall

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**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 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 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 to left and right. Ignore these steps and continue on the path which now goes gently downwards. On the right you will see a restored traditional pasture known as Bower Yard Field.

The path inclines to the left before coming to two 5-barred gates, one on the right, and one straight ahead. The path squeezes just immediately to the left of the gate ahead, but before you embark on this, notice a low limestone masonry wall on your left.

**5** Pass immediately to the left of the gate ahead [there is no stile, merely a gap]. To the right is a substantial viaduct, providing access to Bower Yard and its dwellings near the river.

**6** Continue on the path, through a squeeze stile and up a flight of steps to a small wooden bridge. If you look to the left, you will see clear evidence for another incline plane that came from the limestone quarry at the top. In fact, the incline, which would have carried tubs of mineral down to the river's edge, passes underneath a brick-built bridge over which the modern wooden bridge has been constructed.

**7** You will eventually come to a fenced-off clearing which is being used as nursery area for traditional coppicing and hedge-laying. Ahead of you is a bench and flight of steps off to the left. Ignore these and carry straight on, passing the bench on your left. One magnificent veteran oak tree on the left marks the start of the gentle incline which you are embarked upon and which soon presents a fork.

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You should take the right fork. [The path to the left is, in fact, believed to be a very old hollow way, almost certainly a working road, carrying timber and minerals out of the wood]. The path continues steadily up the westernmost face of Benthall Edge, showing marked evidence of traditional coppicing and with a great deal of dead timber scattered about.

Beyond the Severn Gorge Countryside Trust 'Welcome' sign, the path significantly narrows and passes a section right on the edge of the woodland where it is in poor shape, requiring the walker to move carefully.

**8** The path eventually levels out at a clearing which joins a broad track. Turn sharp left at this point (as though back on yourself) and walk up the track which soon presents a view of a 5-barred gate and stile ahead. Ignore these, and take instead a narrow path off to the left, which dips before rising again to level out.

Soon you will realise you are walking along a narrow ridge with the steep woodland edge on your left, up which you have recently come. Continue on the path, passing under the crackling power lines, until you come to what is the third - and most pronounced - turning off to the right, with a Shropshire Way marker post.

**9** Take this right path which after about 50 metres comes to a T-junction and marker post. Take the left turn, up a gentle slope. After about 30 metres you will pass an electricity pylon on your right and then a few yew trees.

Continue on the narrow path which winds somewhat and goes up and down. Ignore any of the old industrial runnels off on either side, but continue on, keeping the sheer worked face of the old limestone quarry visible on the right. After a few minutes you will come to a small pool on your left, known as Red Pool or Bloody Pool. In summer it is sometimes covered in green pond weed or green/red algae.

**10** Continue on past the pool until you come to a junction. Take the right fork, and, after a few metres, ignore the 5-barred gate and stile on your right, but continue on the path ahead.

You will shortly come to another junction. Bear right. You are now on the ridge walk of Benthall Edge [part of the Shropshire Way] with the Power Station and cooling towers visible and a steep slope to your left, some of which is due to more limestone quarrying. Indeed, a band of limestone quarries, access tracks and spoil heaps run in the direction you are walking along the whole of the top of Benthall Edge, culminating in the largest of the 18C and 19C quarries, known as Patten's Rock Quarry.

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To get to this, continue on the path you are on, ignoring ALL turns off to the right. The path negotiates one deep depression before eventually coming to the wooden safety fence at Patten's Rock Quarry from where there are magnificent views across the Ironbridge Gorge and beyond to newer parts of Telford.

- 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 bench at the bottom, instead of turning right along the way you came at the beginning of the walk, take the finger post direction straight ahead, down to the line of the old Severn Valley railway. You will come to a gate and step-over stile, turn right here and head back towards Ironbridge and your starting point.
- 13** If you started from the car park, pause for a moment before you get into your car.