

Walk No 5

Ironbridge to Patten's Rock Quarry to Red Pool to Benthall Church to Workhouse Coppice

Starting from the Ironbridge car park opposite the Station Hotel or the nearby picnic area, this long walk lends itself to a half-day or even an all day outing which might be combined with a picnic and a visit to the National Trust's Benthall Hall (check opening hours beforehand). The walk can be shortened, one shortened version being suggested. The route takes in the line of **the former Severn Valley Railway**, then a dramatic flight of constructed steps offering impressive views looking west out of Ironbridge and the Coalbrookdale valley, before moving on to the largest of the 18C and 19C limestone quarries on Benthall Edge, **Patten's Rock Quarry**, with yet more splendid views across the Ironbridge Gorge. From here the trail moves to **Red Pool**, a rare wetland habitat in a woodland context and with a mysterious story to tell, before emerging into an open farmland environment leading to the unusual **17C Benthall Church** and the splendid Elizabethan **Benthall Hall**. The walk concludes by re-entering the woodland known as **Workhouse Coppice**, and thence through the woods back to your starting point.

NOTE: *A pleasant short walk entirely on the level without gates or stiles can be made along the first section of this walk by adopting stages 1–4 and subsequently returning along the same route.*



Accessibility: Uneven with muddy surfaces all year round. Boots or stout shoes recommended. There are step-over and step-through stiles and a kissing gate at key points. One section runs next to a pool - children will need to be supervised. The walk includes one very steep ascent and one steep descent through woodland.



Key Features: Architectural/Industrial heritage, varied landscapes and viewpoints, nature



Distance: About 4½ km, about 2½ – 3 hours



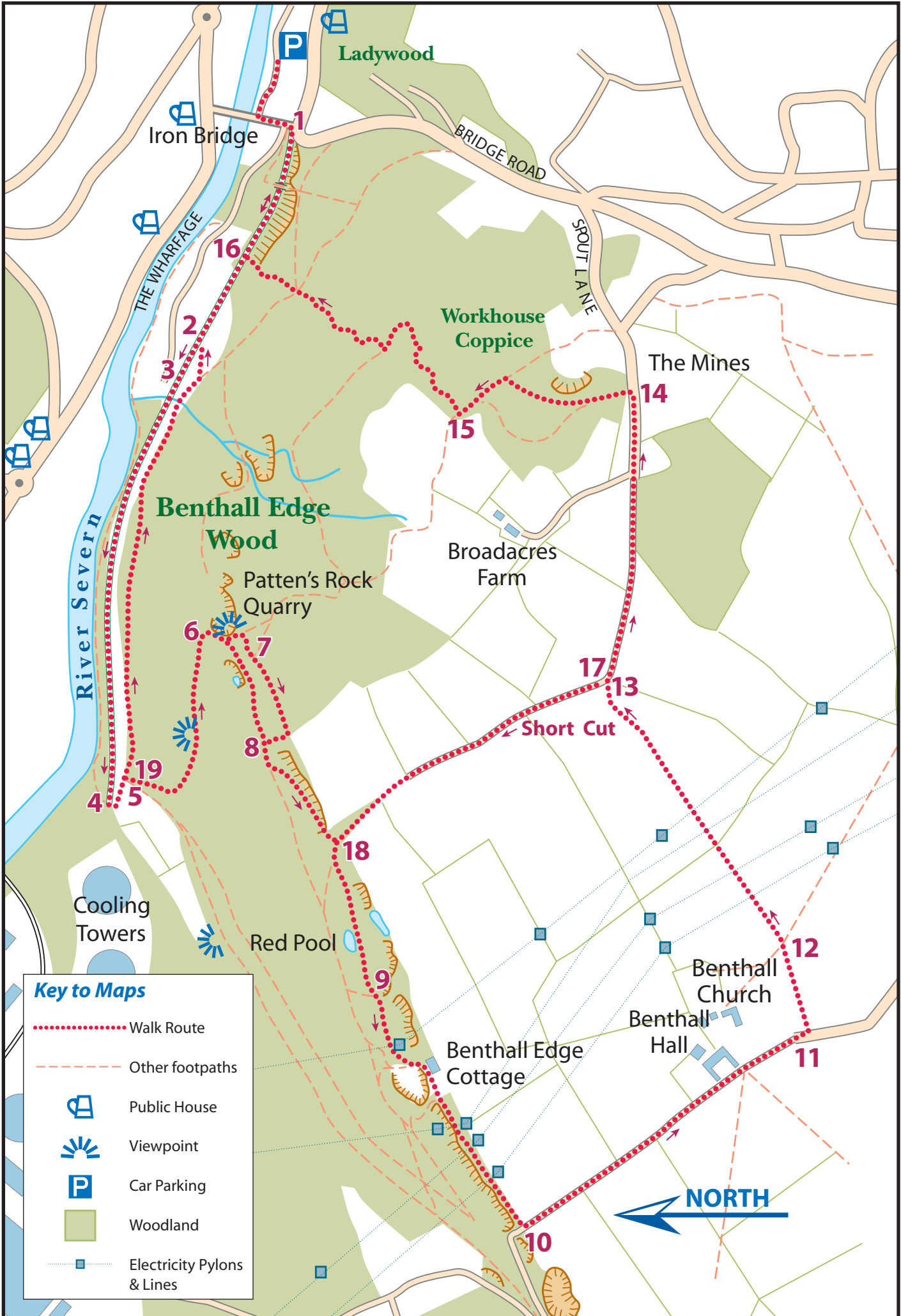
Car Parking: Ironbridge Car Park opposite Station Hotel








Refreshments: Station Hotel in Ironbridge, various pubs, cafes, restaurants in Ironbridge



WCs: Market Square in Ironbridge



Key to Maps

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

NORTH

Walk No 5 *Ironbridge to Patten's Rock Quarry to Red Pool to Benthall Church to Workhouse Coppice*

1 From the car park opposite the Station Hotel exit just above the Iron Bridge. Turn left for a few metres up to a five-barred gate. Pass between two cast iron bollards to the right of the gate. There is a path ahead which you can see passes under a brick bridge. Take this path which is the line of the former Severn Valley Railway.

After a few metres there is a wall on the right. If you take a short diversion off to the right you will come to the present day picnic area which is on the site of a former brick and tile works. After the diversion, return to the main SVR path.

2 Some 500 metres further down the trail you will see a 5-barred gate on the left. Across and over to the left you can see a small field which has been largely cleared of scrub woodland and restored to a wildflower meadow.

3 Continue a little way along the old railway track.

4 Pass over the stile taking the left hand path up into the wood. At this point you will come to an open clearing, a coppiced area, with a flight of steps ahead of you leading up to the top of Benthall Edge.

5 Now begin to make the ascent up the constructed flight of steps ahead of you. You will soon discover you have embarked on a very steep climb indeed, up the scarp face of Benthall Edge.

6 The steps come to an end at the top of Benthall Edge, where on your left you will be rewarded with the best views yet. You are standing at a place called Patten's Rock Quarry [the grassy quarry floor below you] which offers impressive views across the valley to Ironbridge and beyond to newer parts of Telford.

7 With Patten's Rock Quarry/safety railings on your left descend half a dozen steps and take the path ahead for 50 metres until you come to a marker post. Turn right here (even though the arrows on the post do not indicate as much) and continue on the path. Soon the path inclines to the left; continue on through the woodland until you come to the corner of a field on the left (part of Broadacres Farm) just before which the path takes a sharp turn to the right. Near here are a few examples of one of Britain's very rarest native trees - the wild service tree.

Turn right at this corner of the woodland which leads back to the ridge path. Turn left and continue on this path. There are deep old quarries to the right and beyond the trees a glimpse of the cooling towers of the Power Station.

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- 8** After about 30 metres you need to turn left again along another of the many paths on the top of Benthall Edge, legacy of its intense past industrial activity. The map will clarify the twisting and turning necessary over these last two stages. Continue on the path until you come to a gate and stile on your left and an open glade on your right. Ignore the gate and stile and bear off first to the right and then after about 30 m off on another narrow path to the left. As you walk along this path you will see the sheer and dramatic quarry face of Benthall Edge itself, with farm fields beyond, leading right up to the edge. Soon you will come to a small quarry-filled pool on your right [one face of the quarry is clearly visible at the far end]. In summer it is often covered in bright green pond weed or algae, but also red algae at times. It is known locally as Red Pool or Bloody Pool.
- 9** We have a little more twisting and turning before we exit from this section of the wood. From the pool, walk on for about 200 metres uphill, then down a little, ignoring any turns to the left and right, continuing more or less straight on. You will pass under power cables buzzing away and pylons seemingly marching resolutely across fields to your left, just beyond the wood's edge. Soon you will come upon a marker post. Take the left turn and emerge in front of a cottage, Benthall Edge Cottage, known locally sometimes as Bird Cottage [from one particularly notable 20C family of tenants]. Continue on down the track until eventually you will exit from the wood to be surrounded by hedged fields and a wide open sky.
- 10** Walk down the farm track.
- 11** You will come to Benthall Hall Farm on your left and subsequently the church graveyard on your right, exiting into a lane which serves Benthall Hall. Cross over the lane and enter, via a little wooden gate, the grassed area in front of Benthall Church on the left. With the church on your left there is a path (directly straight on from the little gate you entered) across the field and a fine avenue of horse chestnut trees on the right ahead [known locally as 'conker tree avenue']. Half way across this field, look to your left to see the splendid stone frontage of Benthall Hall, now administered by the National Trust.
- 12** The path you are on passes through a gap into a second field, and thence to a third. Keep to the left hand side next to the hedge all the while. At the end of the third field - which is often filled in winter and early spring with flocks of feeding and nesting skylarks - you will come to a kissing gate. Pass through this.
- 13** After the kissing gate you should follow the track off to the right. After about 500 metres you will come to a minor cross-roads. Continue over, the lane now being tarmacked. Soon you will come to the old mining community, The Mines, on the right, and a little way beyond that, an unsignposted gravelled track on the left, opposite a wooden flight of steps on the right.

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14 Take the gravelled track on the left which is actually a public right of way along the driveway to an interesting 17th century private dwelling on the right. The footpath then enters a new section of woodland known as Workhouse Coppice.

As you walk along this initial broad path through the woodland, keep straight on and you will soon be brought to a open area with a handsome oak tree directly in front of you. To the left is a stile and fields. To the right, a rather inconspicuous path leads into the interior of Workhouse Coppice. Take this.

15 Continue along the path leading into the interior of Workhouse Coppice. The path soon begins to bear to the right, then descends a few steps and comes to a stile. Pass over the stile and descend another short flight of steps down to a boardwalk with paths off to the left and right. Ignore these and continue on and down via series of steep steps which wind their way all the way down this face of Benthall Edge, finally coming eventually to a step-over stile onto the line of the old Severn Valley Railway.

16 Step over the stile. Turn right and after about 200 metres you will pass under the brick bridge which carried the old incline and subsequently back to your starting point of the car park opposite the Station Hotel.

SHORT CUT OPTION

17 Once through the kissing gate, turn left down the track known as Spout Lane. This is a glorious lane in summer, filled with hedgerow wild flowers and bird life, including flocks of dunnock and occasional yellowhammers. Soon you will enter the woodland. Within a short while you will notice on your left a small brick bridge spanning a section of another track, like a ditch, which runs parallel to the path you are on.

18 The path comes to a 5-barred gate and stile. Pass over the stile and enter Benthall Edge Wood again. You may recognise this point as one you passed on the way to Red Pool or Bloody Pool. Turn to the right, passing 'Jackdaw Rock' the prominent quarry face revealing the coral reef lines of its geological past. After about 120 metres you will come to the main ridge walk. Turn right and you will soon arrive at Patten's Rock Quarry with the steep flight of steps on your left up which you came earlier on.

18 At the bottom of the steps you may care to vary the last leg back to the car park by taking the right turn at the bench (rather than going down to the line of the old railway). This path is some 20 metres above the line of the old railway and is a very pleasant walk through birch and hazel coppice and fine views of the river below. Eventually you will come to a squeeze stile where you can turn left then right to join the line of the old Severn Valley Railway once again and thence the last few metres back to your starting point at the car park opposite the Station Hotel.