



Walk 5: The Ash Brown Walk

Distance: **8 miles / 12.9km** • Duration: about **4 hours**

Start point: **Whitchurch Civic Centre**

A flat to undulating town/village/countryside walk featuring the Brown Moss Nature Reserve.

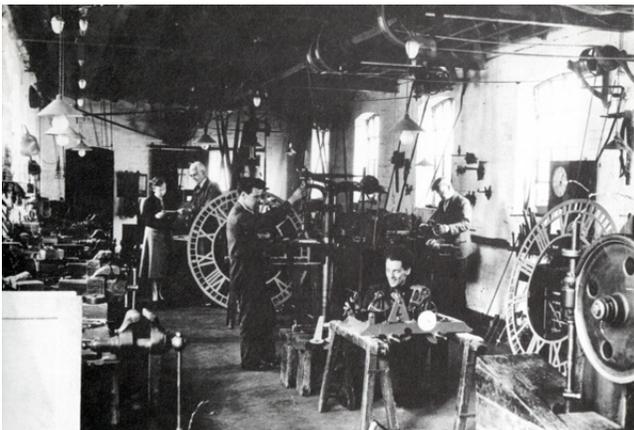
William Joyce – clock man

William Joyce began making longcase clocks in the North Shropshire village of Cockshutt. The family business, eventually known as JB Joyce, was handed down from father to son and in 1790 moved to High Street, Whitchurch, Shropshire. By 1834 Thomas Joyce was making large clocks for local churches and public buildings. In 1849 the company copied the escapement mechanism used in Big Ben and went on to make large clocks for many public buildings both home and overseas – notably the clock in the Shanghai Customs House.



Between 1945 and 1964, when Norman Joyce retired, the company installed over 2,000 large public clocks in Britain and Ireland. The business was sold to Smith of Derby but the JB Joyce brand name was retained for the maintenance of the many original Joyce heritage pieces still in operation in public places around the world.

In 2012, an auction was held to dispose of the surplus items accumulated at the Station Road premises and lovers of the work of JB Joyce competed with interior designers and collectors to purchase a piece of horological history.



Despite its name, Ash Magna is a small village with around 75 houses and a population of around 250. An 1888 map shows about 25 dwellings, one of which is Ash Hall. It is an imposing Queen Anne style building sitting at the highest point of the village and was originally designed as a hunting base. It now combines the role of a working farmhouse and Bed & Breakfast.



Brown (not green) Moss

Brown Moss is one of Shropshire's most interesting nature reserves with over 200 species of wild plants including the rare floating water plantain. Great crested newts are just one example of the fantastic variety of wildlife that live amidst its marshes, pools, heath and woodland. In the late spring/early summer large numbers of froglets can be seen making a mass exodus from the pools.

Brown Moss is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Area of Conservation, and a Ramsar site – a wetland of international importance named after a treaty signed in Ramsar, Iran.

The pull of the Bullring

The Bullring was the place used for the baiting of bulls; once a great national sport. The bull was tethered to an iron ring sunk into a large stone by a 15 foot length of rope attached to the root of its horns. The object was to find whose mastiff or bull-dog had the most courage and was the most cunning in taunting the bull. The last bull-bait in Whitchurch was in 1802. The triangular bullring was the heart of Whitchurch – it is the site of the town's original market place.

The machinery for the market's weighbridge was in Wycherley's saddlery shop, where corn, coal and other loose commodities were weighed, with carters receiving a ticket certifying the weight of their load. The JB Joyce cast iron pillar clock was erected in 1994 when the creation of the traffic-free Bull Ring area concluded the town's street renewal scheme.



Route Description

Leave the Civic Centre ①, go down High Street and turn left at the bottom by a Joyce clock into Green End. Continue to the traffic lights at the top and cross into Talbot Street and on to and over the suspension bridge ② on your right across the railway.

Follow the right hand hedge through two fields to a telegraph pole with a waymarker where you turn left and follow a line of trees to a stile beyond, follow the waymarked path to Moss Farm ③.

Keep to the right of the farm buildings and cross a stile in a fence, then turn right and keep the hedge boundary on your right through a series of gates to reach a minor lane and go straight ahead to meet the A525 Nantwich Road ④.

Cross the road and go a short way down Catterals Lane to a bend and then take a rough lane to the left. Carry on until the lane bends sharply left and follow the waymarkers ahead eventually turning left ⑤ to cross a large field to a bridleway.

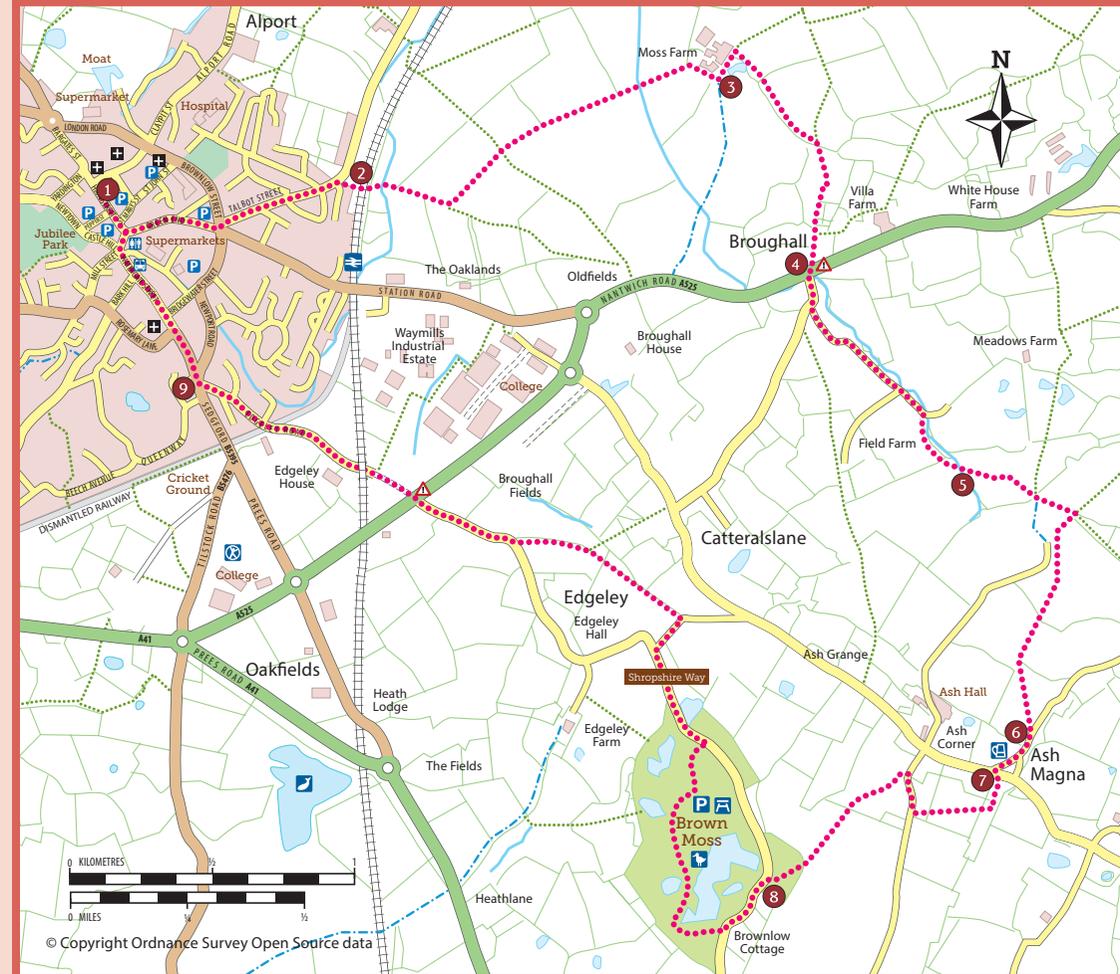
After about 10 metres, turn left through a gate and go on to the next gate where you turn right and go through two more gates. From here the path will bring you into Ash Magna by some garages ⑥.

Turn right at the T-junction with the lane and bear right at the one way system. With the White Lion pub ⑦ on your right go through a wooden gate to the left, opposite the pump. Follow this path through three fields to a lane and turn right, uphill to a gate on the left. Take the path downhill across two fields to enter Brown Moss ⑧.

Follow the path through the wood to a lane. Turn left and walk on to a Shropshire Way signpost. The Shropshire Way signs will take you through Brown Moss to the north and on to a lane, and back to Whitchurch.

Take the right fork and then go through a bridleway gate on your left and across two fields. You will emerge on to Edgeley Bank. **Take care here as it is narrow with no footway.**

Cross the A525, go down Edgeley Rd and back to town via Dodington Lodge ⑨, Watergate Street & the Bull Ring where you will meet the High Street once more.



A bridge in suspense

The single span cast iron and wood suspension bridge was built in 1872 for the London and North Western Railway Company.

This is a very early and rare example of a pedestrian suspension bridge. For more information see page 14.



The whys and wherefores of Ash

With the departure of the Romans, Mediolanum became Westune – a small village with a manor on the western edge of Saxon Mercia. Two small clearings for hamlets in the ash woods on the top of the ridge were named Ash Magna and Ash Parva.