



# Walk 10: Farms & Halls

The Southern Circular

Distance: **9.3 miles / 15km** • Duration: about **4½ hours**

Starting point: **Whitchurch Civic Centre**

A longish walk which takes in parts of other walks and the revised Shropshire Way with plenty of interesting houses and farms along the way.

## Blackoe Cottages and Spark's Bridge

Canal Bridge No. 35 at Blackoe Cottages, known as Spark's Bridge, was originally a typical brick-built arched bridge, but following its near collapse, a modern metal footbridge was erected in its place. As you climb the slight rise after the bridge, note the fine views of the Welsh hills to the west.



## Alkington Hall

By far the largest building in the hamlet of Alkington, the brick-built Hall dates from 1592 when it was constructed for the London merchant William Cotton. In 2010, prompt action by the owners and local fire brigade extinguished a potentially dangerous fire before it did anything more than minor damage.



## Dearnford Hall

The Hall was built in brick, dressed with Grinshill stone in the late 17th century. Originally U-shaped, one rear wing was demolished leaving the building L-shaped for many years. In 2005, the original wing was reinstated and extended along with its partner.



## Route Description

Start at the Civic Centre **1**. For this walk you follow the same route as **Walk 2** – the Stockton Walk – as far as the canal at Danson's Bridge **2**.

Here, instead of joining the towpath you walk across the fields ahead going diagonally to your right. On the far side of the large second field cross a track and then go over a stile.

Turn left and follow the hedge on

the other side **3**. This bridleway formed part of the original line of the recently altered Shropshire Way.

Go down a slope and cross the bridge over Red Brook. The path takes you through the yard at Hadley Farm.

Walk down the drive towards the A525 and about half way along take the small gate on the right hand side which leads you round

## Brown Moss

The name 'moss' derives from the local word for a peat bog. Brown Moss is a flat site that was created at the end of the last Ice Age over 10,000 years ago. As glaciers retreated, pools were formed by the stranded ice rocks, forming kettle holes. Peat is still being created and Sphagnum moss, which is very important for the creation of peat, is found here in abundance.



This Shropshire Council managed Local Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest is also a Special Area of Conservation and part of the internationally designated Midland Meres and Mosses Ramsar site. There are lots of paths around the Moss and if you have time you could take a detour round the main pool before following the Shropshire Way back into Whitchurch.

You might also like to visit Molverley Farm, one of Shropshire Wildlife Trust's nature reserves, which is 2-3 km north-east, within easy walking distance. Hay meadows, high hedges and small fields take you into a different world.

A roughly circular walk of approximately 8 km (5 miles) is possible on footpaths and country lanes.

Hadley Pool. Cross the A525 with care going diagonally to your left to join the track opposite.

Go along the track taking the right hand fork towards Blackhoe Cottages. After the cottages, cross the canal via a modern metal bridge built following the near collapse of the original structure.

Cross the next field diagonally to your right towards the far top right hand corner. Follow the hedgeline, cross a stile and go round the end of a narrow bit of woodland and then back again on the other side 4.

From the far side of the next field you descend into a cutting that was once part of the Cambrian Railway. Take the path on the other side towards a lane. Turn left and in about 150 metres turn right at the junction 5 followed by left at the next. After about 800 metres this lane joins another at Alkington Hall which dates from Tudor times. Turn right at the junction and almost immediately go left to join the restricted byway running between The Beeches farmhouse and farmyard.

After a short length of green lane, turn right and follow the hedge round the field. In the next field you need to go slightly to your right towards a hedgeline halfway across. From a field gate 6 follow the hedgeline on your right. About halfway along, you cross to the other side of the hedgeline and go slightly

diagonally right.

This takes you through the front garden of Dearnford Cottage and through a gate on to the road. At this point congratulate yourself on your navigational skills (or retrace your steps!).

Cross the road and walk to the right of Dearnford Hall through some parkland.

Continue towards a hedge 7 some 500 metres from the road and follow the left-hand side of it. Cross the railway line and go up the lane through the farm, across the dual carriageway and up the track opposite through the antiques centre.

At the end of the green lane 8, cross the stile on the right and walk diagonally to the left aiming for the corner of the hedge opposite. Cross the stile on the right hand side and then three more before you emerge on to Brown Moss.

Take the path almost opposite and head towards the centre of the Moss. You should emerge from the trees into a more open grassy area where there is an oak bench dated 2006 celebrating 30 years of Whitchurch Walkers. From here you follow the Shropshire Way (Route 22) back into the centre of Whitchurch.

