



Walk 6: Brown Moss, Bombers, Butterflies and Big Butties

Distance: **7.4 miles / 12km** • Duration: about **3-4 hours**

Starting point: **Brown Moss Nature Reserve car park**

No hills or banks to climb – a few stiles; in summer there will be crops in some of the fields.

Prees Heath – Bombers to butterflies

Prees Heath is now a butterfly conservation area, and as the heathland is being restored, more wild flowers are appearing. In late summer it is covered in pink heather flowers, yellow St. John's Wort, and edged with purple spikes of Rosebay Willowherb.



The large, square, concrete structure at the top end of Prees Heath is the recently restored Air Traffic Control Tower used when the area was a wartime training airbase (RAF Tilstock). It is to be used as a learning and interpretation centre providing information about the natural diversity of the Heath and its wartime history.



Prees Heath was used as a WWI army base accommodating up to 30,000 men who were trained in the practicalities of trench warfare. The scale and size of the camp brought about the appointment of the first female police officers in the Shropshire Constabulary to manage and restrain local women attracted

by the rewarding prospect of so many eager men. There was also a stores depot with its own branch line and, later, a WWII internment camp (subsequently a POW camp) for 2,000 prisoners.

Ash Parva

Ash Parva, or Lower Ash as it is sometimes called, is small and pretty. It has a classic village duck pond and around 20 houses – mostly small cottages. There is a Methodist Chapel converted to a house and a large restored 18th century farmhouse.



Brown Moss – commoner's rights

Brown Moss was re-registered as a common in 1972. The area has commoner's rights which allow for grazing, cutting of peat, taking of sand and gravel, collection of firewood, swimming, skating and fishing by the registered commoners. No one commoner can exercise all the rights, which are attached to the ownership or tenancy of specified properties.



The Award Winning Truck Stop

At the junction of the A49 and A41 there is an amazing variety of food outlets. The Midway – originally built as a cinema for the army camp – has won awards. Here is an extract from a lorry driver's blog: *'This is a very good place, very much like transport cafés used to be, every table a slightly different style but it adds to the character of the place. The staff are friendly and welcoming, the place is very clean. It has plenty of room and showers – it even has a library.'*



The area is also a convenient viewing point for cycle trials, which regularly take place on the Roman-straight stretches of road in the vicinity.

Nissen Dorma

The remains of the huts in the woods near Higher Heath are Nissen Huts. These were semi-cylindrical prefabricated structures made of corrugated iron, invented by Major Peter Nissen in 1916. Over 100,000 were produced in WWI and many more in WWII.



The Nissen Hut could be packed in a standard army truck and erected by six men in four hours. The world record for constructing one is 1 hour 27 minutes.

Nissen Buildings Ltd. waived their patent rights for wartime production during World War II.

Route Description

This walk starts at Brown Moss. You could also start from Ash Magna **3**, Higher Heath **8**, or Prees Heath **10**.

From the main car park turn right on to the road and go on to the fingerpost by the bungalow called *The Boathouse* **1** – the house name is on a board suspended from the eaves. Go through the wood (there are several paths so keep to the waymarked one) to a galvanised gate, and then on through two fields to a lane, where you turn right. Take care as visibility for cars is poor, and look out for the next path on the left – it is hidden in the hedge on a bank **2**. Now cross two horse paddocks to a wooden wicket gate immediately before a stile, which brings you to the village of Ash Magna, just opposite the White Lion **3**.

Turn right along the road – there is a pavement at first. At the village of Ash Parva, cross the road to a metal wicket gate, and follow the permissive path, which takes you off the road and then rejoin the road by a junction. Cross over towards a large half-timbered house and keep to the right hand side of the Ightfield Road, taking care as it can be quite busy. About 250 yards on, turn right **4** through a decrepit gate and walk along a restricted byway (or green lane). There is a hedge each side and you may have to negotiate an electric fence. The byway leads to a large open area of mainly arable fields.

The path is very good along wide grass headlands and tracks – follow the waymarkers not the Ordnance Survey Map. At a pool, bear right at

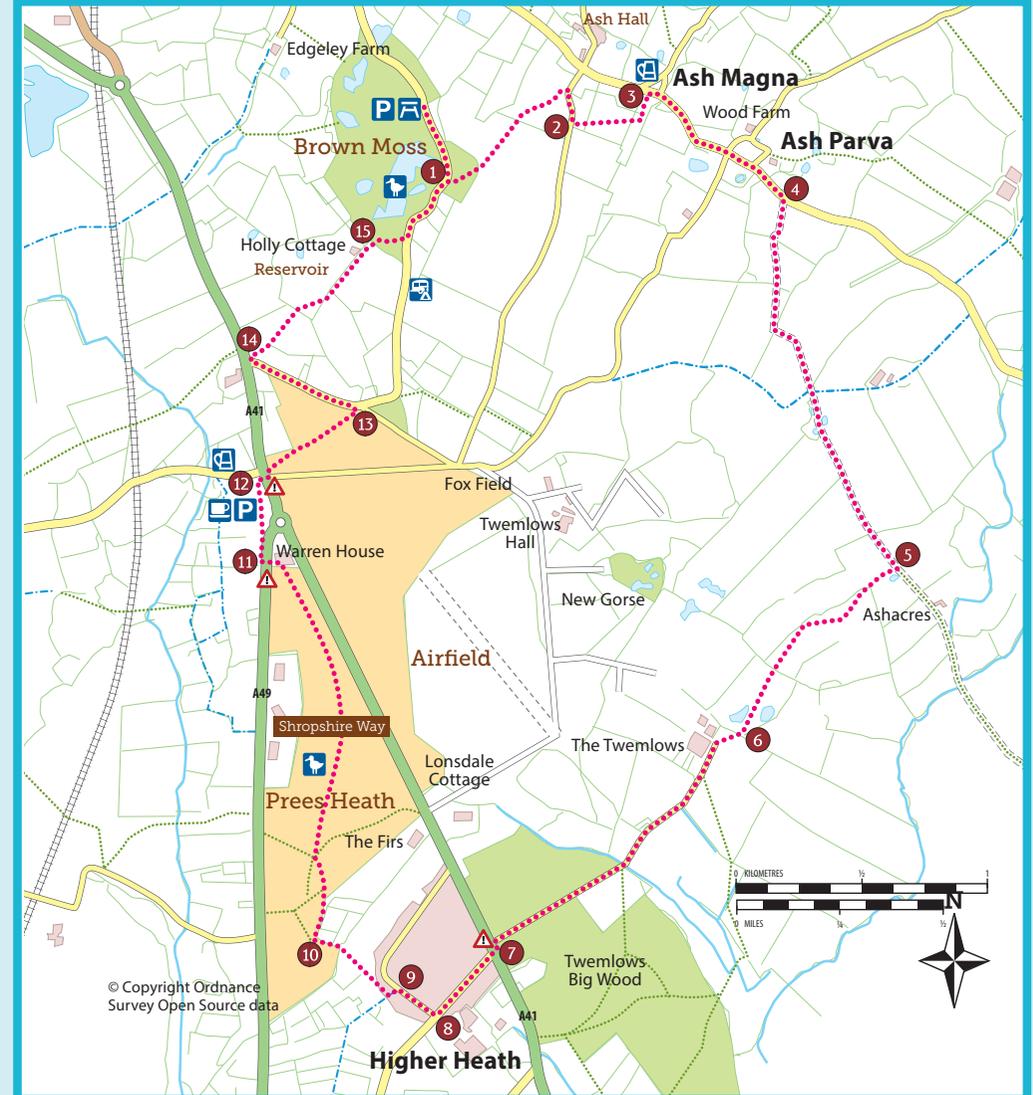
the wooden fingerpost along a track until you reach a cross roads of tracks. Continue straight on – it might be a little muddy here. The track leads to a ‘gated’ electric fence with green waymarkers going left and right – ignore these, and go ahead by using the spring-loaded handle in the fence (please replace the hook in the wire loop). About 90 metres on, there is a small hollow **5** – there should be a waymark post here; turn right to a stile about 180 metres away.

Cross two fields (which may be cropped) and pass by two pools **6**, behind some farm buildings, to join the farm track. *(If there is any problem with this path it is possible, although not a Right of Way, to go through the farm yard, and close any gates as you go.)*

The farm track goes through a wooded area to the main road – the busy A41 **7**. Within this wood there was once a wartime air force base; remnants of Nissen huts can still be seen in places.

Taking care, cross the A41 and go down Heathwood Rd, which goes through the village of Higher Heath. After 270 metres, turn right along Twemlows Avenue **8**, and after 135 metres turn left at a sign for High Corner **9** and then right through a metal kissing gate. This path leads on to Prees Heath. Turn right at a large black kissing gate **10** on to the heath. At an information board on a concrete plinth, bear left following the Shropshire Way waymarkers.

You will emerge on to the A49 road **11** which you need to cross – take care, though traffic visibility is good.



Once across, turn right and go past the filling station, cafés, lorry park, to the Raven pub **12**.

Take care crossing the busy dual carriageway. At the corner of a junction with a minor road is a wooden fingerpost. Follow the footpath to the next lane where you turn left **13**, leading back towards the dual carriage

way. At this junction cross a stile **14** on your right and go across two fields of pasture and then arable fields to Holly Cottage by Brown Moss **15**. Turn right along a track, and then on to a lane, where a left turn will bring you back to the start – along the way you will glimpse the Moss through the trees.