

Start/End	The layby on the north west side of Dobson's Bridge (Bridge 3 on Ellesmere Canal, Prees Branch)
Grid reference	SJ 49218 34261
Distance	Approximately 3 miles
Time	Allow 1 hour
Terrain	Canal towpath, tracks and lanes. Level but muddy in places

Walk over Dobson's Bridge (*this fixed humpback bridge was designated as a Grade 2 listed building in 1987*) and take the steps down to the canal on the far right of the bridge, go under the bridge and follow the canal towpath until you reach the first lift bridge, Stark's Bridge.

Stark's Bridge is a scheduled ancient monument, believed to be unique in this country. It is a parallelogram lift bridge, known as a skewed bridge.

Turn left and cross the bridge and walk along Maltkiln Lane until you reach a T junction. *On your right is Lord Hill House. Originally built as an inn in 1810 and no doubt named in honour of Lord Rowland Hill who was born at nearby Hawkstone in 1772. A statue of Lord Hill stands on a tall column near County Hall in Shrewsbury. A distinguished General, he fought alongside Wellington at, yes, you've guessed it – Waterloo!*



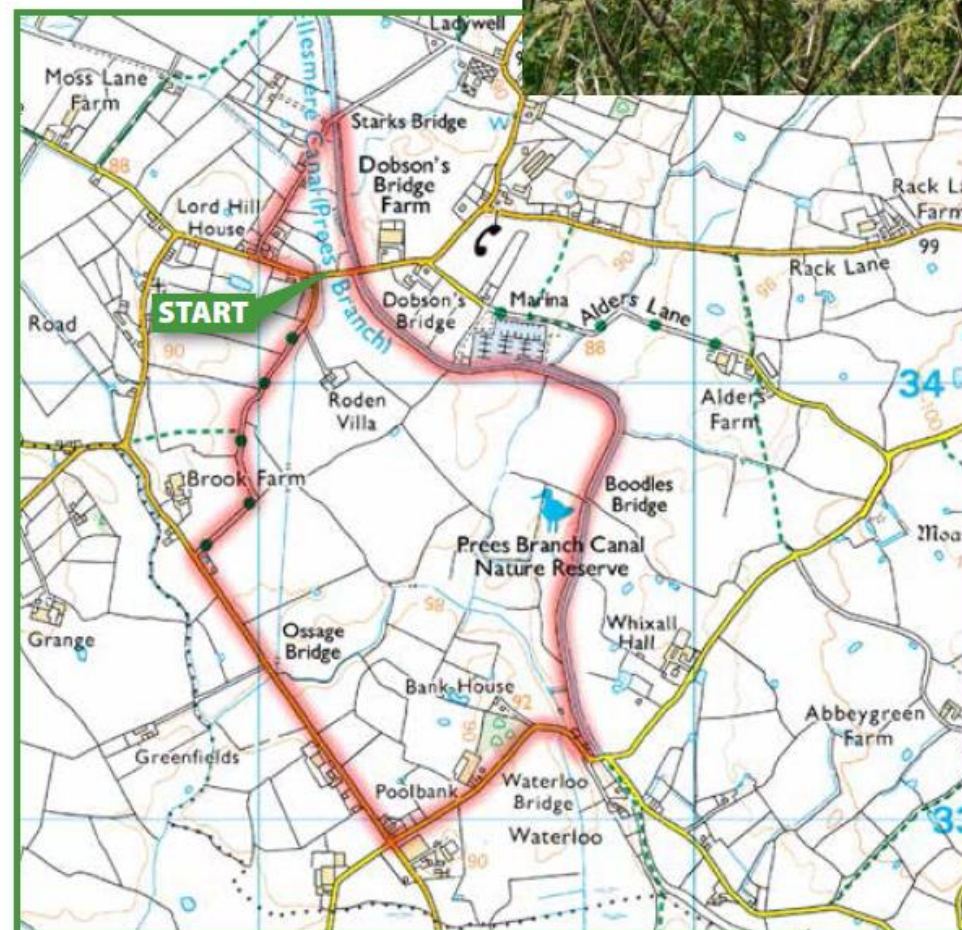
Turn left and take the first right just before the community notice board. When the tarmac veers left along a house driveway continue straight on, and follow this green lane until it meets Ossage Lane. Turn left into the lane and continue to the crossroads with Browns of Wem on the far corner. Turn left towards Waterloo until you reach the footpath and gate on your left at Waterloo Bridge. Go through the gate, behind the houses, not forgetting to read the Nature Reserve information board.

You are now on the Prees branch of the Llangollen Canal although it never did reach Prees, stopping about 3 miles short at Edstaston. It is now navigable only as far as the marina and this stretch from Waterloo is a Shropshire Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve – home to a variety of flora, birdlife and the elusive water vole.

Continue along the canal taking time to admire the wildflowers and look out for any wildlife along the route. Carry on under bridge 4, Boodles Bridge, and pass by Whixall Marina. *This Marina was once an important source of clay which was used to raise the height of the canal banks to prevent the canal from sinking into the peat bog that it was originally cut through. Maintaining the height of the*

canal was a major feat. From when the canal opened in 1804 right up to the 1960s a group of men known as the Whixall Moss Gang was constantly employed to keep this up – these were in fact the longest serving 'navvies' in the country.

Continue along this peaceful stretch of canal until you are back at Dobson's Bridge.



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