

10 Walk along the fringe of the Moss

Start/End	Roundthorn Bridge where you can park over the bridge next to the canal near the Marl Allotment.
Grid reference	SJ 50088 35730
Distance	2.6 miles
Time	Allow 1.5 hours
Terrain	Canal towpath, grass and peaty tracks, possibly muddy.



We recommend taking a pair of binoculars on this walk. If you are walking with a dog please remember that they must be on a lead on the Nature Reserve from 1st March to the end of July.

Roundthorn Bridge sits in a pretty position on the Shropshire Union Canal. The bridge was built around 1800 by Thomas Telford and William Jessop. Taking the canal through such boggy terrain as the mosses was quite a challenge and meant that the banks had to be constantly built up with clay to prevent it sinking. The canal played a key role in transporting peat from the mosses.

From the parking area walk along the canal side to the gateway into the Marl Allotment. *The Marl was once used for extracting marl clay for agricultural use. It is now a nature*

reserve and has undergone restoration in recent years so that it can continue to provide a habitat for wildlife.

Go through the gate and walk straight along the grassy track to the back boundary and turn left by the Mosses Trail post no 4. At the next gate turn right onto the wide track, then pass through two gateways onto the Nature Reserve. Follow the track to trail post no 6, then turn left across Whixall Moss to trail post no 9. *On a clear day, there are distant glimpses of the Berwyn mountain range to the north west.*

You are following one of several trails on the Mosses. Leaflets about these trails can be obtained from Natural England – or look out for the information boards sited around the reserve.

During the summer months a small detour is recommended to view white faced darters and other dragonflies and damselflies. To do this instead of bearing left at post 6 continue on

the path for approximately 200 metres, turn right at crossroads and then right again shortly afterwards to take the path to the pools. If you're very lucky, you may see the small bird of prey called a hobby.

At trail post 9, turn left and at post 10 turn right. Follow trail posts 11 and 12 until you reach the steps going up to the canal towpath. A detour to the right along the towpath takes you to a boardwalk for a view out over the Moss and a pathway to a large dragonfly pool, where you may see hawkers and four spot chasers.

Return to the top of the steps and then follow the towpath, passing under the footbridge known as Roving Bridge.

A roving bridge is a bridge over a canal constructed to allow a horse towing a boat to cross the canal when the towpath changes sides. Bridges at canal junctions and where the towpath is interrupted by side arms are strictly speaking side bridges, but are often referred to as roving bridges. At Roving Bridge

the canal branches. The right hand branch is known as the Prees branch, though only goes as far as Edstaston.

The square house opposite was built at the same time as the canal and was the toll keeper's cottage. It is a listed building and it was designed by Thomas Telford.

After Roving Bridge simply continue along the towpath, past Morris' lift bridge and back to Roundthorn Bridge.



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