

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	Approximately 5 miles
Time	Allow at least 2 hours
Terrain	Towpath, quiet lanes and grassy tracks. This is an all-weather walk, though can be muddy in places after rain.

From the canal-side parking near the Marl Allotment cross Roundthorn Bridge and bear left to take the good tarmac track along Canalside. With the canal on your left you pass several cottages on your right before reaching Platt Lane.

Turn left to cross the bridge on Platt Lane and descend the steps to join the towpath on the other side of the canal, continuing in the same direction until you reach the next lift bridge. *This is bridge no 42, officially called the Tilstock Park lift bridge, but known locally as Brickwalls Bridge. This area can be a good place to see a kingfisher.*

Leave the canal at Brickwalls Bridge by turning left up the quiet lane which shortly meets the road between Whixall and Fenns Bank. Turn right here and, taking care of traffic, walk for about 800 yards to reach a track and footpath on the left leading to Fenns Cottage. Follow

the track past the cottage as it follows the edge of Fenns Wood. *This conifer plantation is a good place to see long-tailed tits and the tiny goldcrest.*

Continue for a short distance until you meet a crossroad of tracks with a Whixall and Fenns Moss map, turn left here onto another wide track to continue skirting the wood on your left with the expanse of Fenns Moss on your right. *This section is sometimes referred to locally as 'the long mile'. At the end of the grassy track, if you take a slight detour to your right, you emerge near a History Trail notice board and leaflets.*

There is information here about the role played by the Mosses during the Second World War when Fenns Moss was a practice incendiary bombing range. Machine gun practice targeted a cut-out train on the peat railway, and there was a strategic 'starfish'

decoy site, where peat would be set alight, in order to divert German bombers from Liverpool. There is now a waymarked trail which takes you to some of the key points of interest concerning Operation Starfish.

Go back to the original track and continue straight on towards Moss Cottages, passing through a metal gate. *Note that the bins outside the bungalow here have Wrexham written on them – the only sign that this walk crosses the Welsh/English border.*



Follow the tarmac track past some houses and the small playing field to the T junction, where you turn right and continue to where the tarmac runs out. *Moss Cottages now form a quiet hamlet on the edge of the nature reserve but 100 years ago they were a hive of activity. A succession of commercial peat firms cut Fenns Moss from 1851 until the Mosses were rescued for wildlife conservation in December 1990. From 1888 to 1915, the English Peat Moss Litter Co. extracted peat on horse-drawn trams to transport it via the mainline railway at Fenns Bank. Moss Cottages were built for their workers in 1889.*

About 400 yards after the last of the Moss Cottages, bear left on another track which curves round to take you back to the canal. When you reach it, turn sharp right on the track as it follows the canal back to the Marl Allotment and Roundthorn Bridge.



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