

Walking the Wildside

Take a walk on the wildside and discover the hidden gems in the South Cheshire countryside.

Grade	Long Distance
Distance	14km/8.5miles
Time	4-6 hours
Start	Parkers Road, Coppenhall. Limited parking on road, or use number 20 'Hanley' bus route.
Map	OS Explorer 257
Terrain	Fairly level terrain over public rights of way (some cross-field) and country lanes
Barriers	Numerous stiles on each section
Toilets	Crewe town centre
Contact	Tel: 01270 686029



Route Details

Take a walk on the wildside and discover mysterious mosses, ancient hedgerows and other hidden gems in the South Cheshire countryside.

This area was one of the most extensive areas of peatland in Cheshire, yet all that remains today are place names such as Moss Bridge and Coppenhall Moss. Four townships met on this peatland area, which was made up of at least five mosses called Warmingham, Minshull, Leighton, Coppenhall and Maplin's or Merbury's.

Once common land, local people had rights of turbary which was the right to cut peat as household fuel. Eventually the mosses were drained, enclosed and converted to farmland. At first, wheat was grown, but later it proved to be very good 'cheese making land.'

If you look closely, there is a very regular field pattern, with hedges made up of mainly hawthorn or blackthorn. Many other mosslands have been drained, but there are some that are still very special for wildlife, such as Wybunbury Moss, a National Nature Reserve and unique floating bog which is home to many rare plants and animals. Sundew, bog asphodel and bog rosemary thrive in the damp mossy conditions, while dragonflies hunt for prey.

Sandbach Flashes are one of the best birdwatching haunts in Cheshire. Large numbers of waders and wildfowl gather in winter, attracting peregrine, merlin and sparrowhawks in search of easy prey. Spring and autumn migration are busy times for birds and bird watchers alike, with a tremendous variety of birds passing through.

Roadside verges and canal towpaths are often havens for insects and wild flowers. The verges near the railway bridge on Clay Lane are especially rich with wild flowers such as ox-eye daisy and knapweed.

Winterley Pool is an old mill pond which was first recorded here in 1572. The pool is now enjoyed by local people, who come to fish or feed the masses of ducks that congregate here. The pool is one of the most important inland refuges for mute swans in Cheshire.

Haslington Hall, a magnificent Tudor house, was built by Admiral Sir Francis Vernon in 1545. As an Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Francis Vernon had the task of dismantling ships from the Spanish Armada and it is rumoured that these ships' timbers were used to build later extensions to the hall.

Standing on the railway bridge, looking towards a low lying brook at the rear of Bridgehouse Farm, there is a native black poplar tree. In winter, it is easy to see the arching branches which made them valuable for building the crucks in timber-framed buildings. Look out for more native black poplars, Britain's rarest timber tree, as you walk the paths in the Crewe and Nantwich area.

Directions

1. At Moss Bridge follow the footpath in a northerly direction along the left side of the railway.
2. Turn right over the railway bridge and cross two fields which were once part of Copenhall Moss.
3. Turn left at the hedge.
4. Turn right after a small foot bridge.
5. Take care crossing the road and follow Groby Road.
6. Take the next path on the left, after the dairy.
7. At Clay Lane, turn left for Sandbach Flashes or right to continue the walk.
8. After Clay Lane railway bridge, take the path on the right.
9. South of Clay Lanes Farm, double back around the electric pylon towards the farm and Clay Lane.
10. Cross over the road and the next two fields.
11. Turn right.
12. Take care crossing Haslington bypass.
13. Turn left at Newtons Lane.
14. Turn right at the junction of Crewe Road and pass Winterley Pool on the left.
15. Take the next path on the left, across the fields (not down the farm drive).
16. Cross Holmshaw Lane, pass Haslington Hall on the left and join the South Cheshire Way. Follow the track in a southerly direction to the next stile on the left.
17. Walk diagonally across the field and carry on across the golf course. Cross Valley Brook and follow the lane.
18. At the main road turn left.

19. Turn right at the next junction along Barthomley Road.
20. Turn right at the path by the railway bridge next to Bridge House Farm.
21. Cross the brook, turn left under the railway bridge and then right across the fields and into a lane.
22. Take the next footpath on the left across a field.
23. Cross the two bypasses and several fields to Weston.
24. Turn left at the main road and the bus stop is on the right by Weston Church.