

Lawton Woods Loop

A short loop through the woods and along the canals.

Grade	Easy
Distance	6 kms/3.5 m
Time	2 hours
Start	Church Lawton church GR SJ822 557
Map	Explorer 258 or 268
Terrain	Field paths, canal towpaths. Muddy patches in winter. Fairly flat.
Barriers	Steep canal bridge at Red Bull.
Toilets	None
Contact	01270 686029



Route Details

The name Lawton originates in the Lawton family with its family crest being the head of a bleeding wolf. Local legend talks about a man saving the Earl of Chester from being killed by a wolf. This act of bravery took place in about 1200, and to repay the deed, this man was given an area of land between Congleton and Sandbach. The one thousand acre estate became the Parish of Lauton, (later Church Lawton), and is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086. The family crest can be found in the church.

Lawton Hall, the country seat, of the Lawton family was built in the 17th century, but was almost destroyed by a fire in 1997. During the First World War the hall was used as a hospital, until this time it was still the Lawton family seat. Later it became Lawton Hall school which closed in 1986. Today it has been renovated into private dwellings.

Iron smelting took place in the woods during the late 1600's early 1700's. Coal mining took place in nearby Kidsgrove and some of the mines extended into the Church Lawton / Red Bull area.

The Trent and Mersey canal is linked to the Macclesfield canal at the Harding's Wood Junction. At the junction of the two canals (point 7) it is well worth turning right and walking further along the Trent and Mersey canal to view the Harecastle tunnel entrances. This detour will take about half an hour. The tunnel on the left was built in 1827 by Thomas Telford and the tunnel on the right was built in 1777 by James Brindley. Brindley's Harecastle Tunnel took eleven years to complete as conditions were treacherous. In 1767 the tunnel was described as "the eighth wonder of the world ..." as nothing like it had ever been attempted.

The tunnels are without a towpath so the boats had to be moved through the tunnels by men who "legged" the boats along. The men lay on the top of the boat and literally "walking" on the stepped roof and sides of the tunnel to send the boat forward.

Directions

1. Take the footpath to the right of the church and follow into woods.
2. Continue ahead, do not take footpath on the left but continue to walk past Lawton Hall Pool. Then continue along a woodland track which leads to houses in Hall Green.
3. Turn right and then bear left into The Spinney and walk to the A34.
4. Turn left and walk along pavement crossing into Moss Lane.
5. Turn right onto the canal towpath and follow to Red Bull and the junction with the Trent and Mersey Canal.
6. At the junction cross the hump back pedestrian footbridge and follow the towpath along the loop (Harding's Wood Junction) where the Macclesfield Canal joins the Trent and Mersey Canal.
7. Turn left on joining the Trent and Mersey Canal and follow the canal back towards Red Bull.
8. Continue ahead following the Trent and Mersey Canal for approximately 2 kms/1.2 miles.
9. Pass several locks then follow the canal as it bends right towards the road bridge of the A50.
10. After walking underneath the A50 road bridge take the next footpath on the right which leads back to the church and the start of the walk.