

Walk No 4

Benthall Church To Red Pool to Patten's Rock Quarry to Spout Lane

Starting at Benthall Church, this walk will take you through a varied landscape of open farmland and the historically-important woodland of Benthall Edge. It visits an interesting and important wetland habitat in a woodland setting, **Red Pool**, with a mysterious story to tell. The walk culminates at **Patten's Rock Quarry**, the largest of the 18C and 19C limestone quarries on Benthall Edge, with its spectacular views across the Severn Gorge to Ironbridge and beyond. Finally, the walk returns through the wood, along a section of former industrial tramway, thence across three fields to the impressive Elizabethan **Benthall Hall** and the **17C church of St. Batholomew's**.

 **Accessibility:** Boots or stout footwear recommended for frequently muddy sections in this walk. This is a comfortable walk, of interest all year round but particularly fine in summer, with few gradients to negotiate. There is one step-over stile, one kissing gate, and a pool - *children will need to be supervised*.

 **Key Features:** Social and industrial history, architecture, ecology, varied landscape, viewpoints.

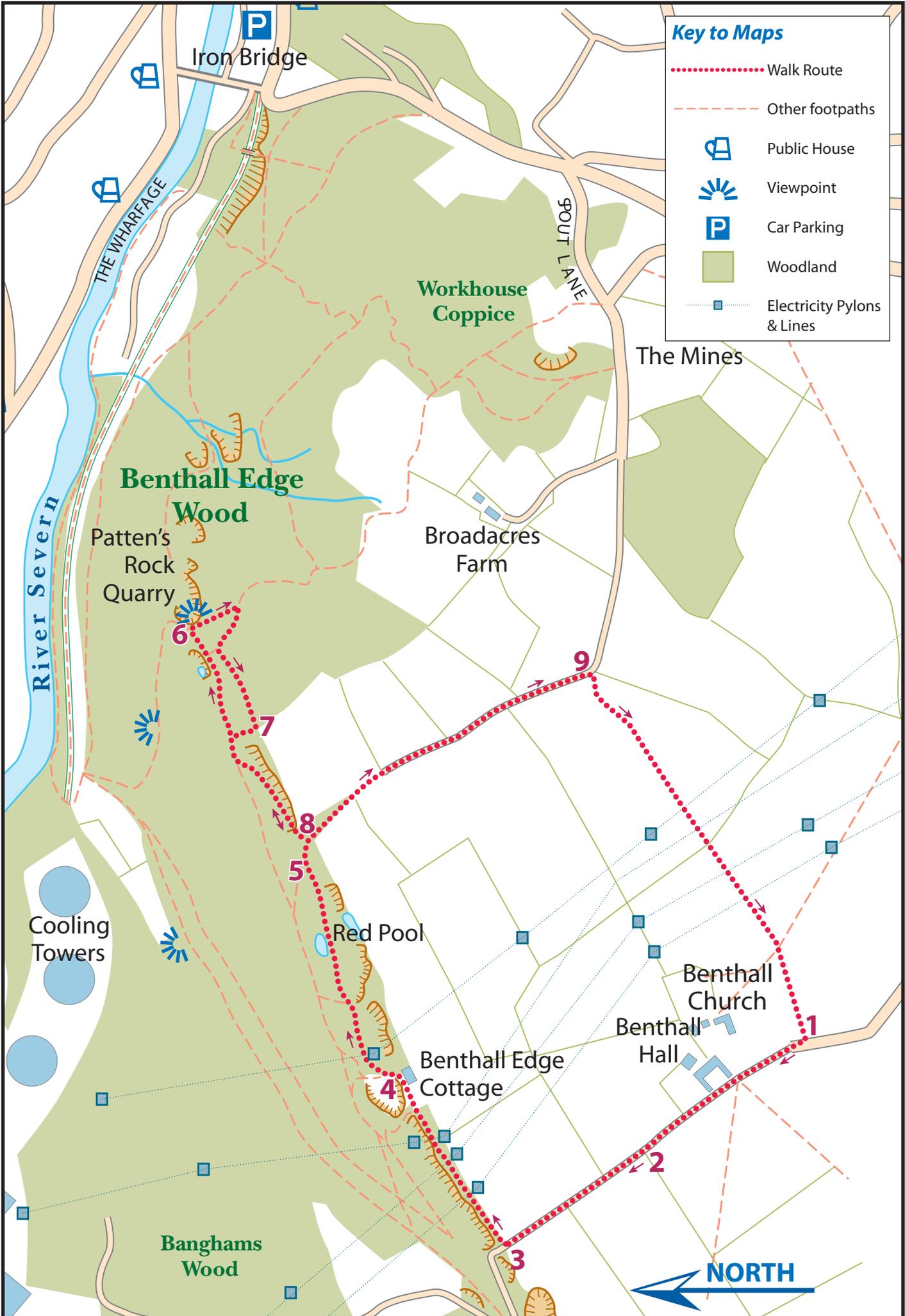
 **Distance:** About 3½ km, about 1½ – 1¾ hours

 **Car Parking:** Near Benthall Church

 **Public Transport:** Buses to/from Broseley

 **Refreshments:** Picnic or other own refreshments

 **WCs:** At Benthall Hall (*when open*).



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- 1** Starting at the National Trust parking near Benthall Church, take a path to the left of the main drive to Benthall Hall. The path passes the graveyard to the left, and subsequently goes past Benthall Hall Farm on the right with its two wonderful old barns.
- 2** Continue straight on down the well-gravelled track.
- 3** At the end, do NOT carry straight on, but take the right hand path leading to Benthall Edge Cottage.
- 4** Continue on the path until you pass in front of Benthall Edge Cottage [sometimes known locally as Bird Cottage], whereupon you should turn sharp left, entering further into the wood. 10 metres on, the path is clearly seen to bridge a huge depression in the ground - an old limestone quarry - visible to the right and left of you.

Just past this 'bridge' take the right fork (NOT the arrow on the marker post indicating straight on) which is another of the many minor paths that criss-cross the top of Benthall Edge, reflecting its rich and complex industrial past.

After about 30 metres you will pass an electricity pylon on your right and then a few yew trees. Continue on the narrow path which winds somewhat and goes up and down. Ignore any of the old industrial runnels off on either side, but continue on, keeping the sheer worked face of the old limestone quarry visible on the right. After a few minutes you will come to a small pool on your left, known as Red Pool or Bloody Pool. In summer it is sometimes covered in green pond weed or green/red algae.

Continue on past the pool until you come to a junction.

- 5** Bear right at this junction, and, after a few metres, ignore the 5-barred gate and stile on your right, but continue on the path ahead. You will shortly come to another junction. Bear right. You are now on the ridge walk of Benthall Edge [part of the Shropshire Way] with the Power Station and cooling towers visible and a steep slope to your left, some of which is due to more limestone quarrying.

To get to this, continue on the path you are on, ignoring ALL turns off to the right. The path negotiates one deep depression before eventually coming to the wooden safety fence at Patten's Rock Quarry from where there are magnificent views across the Ironbridge Gorge and beyond to newer parts of Telford.

- 6** With Patten's Rock Quarry/safety railings on your left descend half a dozen steps and take the path ahead for 50 metres until you come to a marker post.

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7 Turn right here (even though the arrows on the post do not indicate as much) and continue on the path. Soon the path inclines to the left; continue on through the woodland until you come to the corner of a field on the left (part of Broadacres Farm) just before which the path takes a sharp turn to the right. Near here are a few examples of one of Britain's very rarest native trees - the wild service tree.

Turn right at this corner of the woodland which leads back to the ridge path. Turn left and continue on this path. There are deep old quarries to the right and beyond the trees a glimpse of the cooling towers of the Power Station.

8 After about 30 metres you need to turn left again along another of the many paths on the top of Benthall Edge, legacy of its intense past industrial activity. The map will clarify the twisting and turning necessary over these last two stages. Shortly, the path runs past a particularly dramatic limestone quarry face, known locally as Jackdaw Rock.

The path soon comes to a 5-barred gate and step-over stile which you should pass over to enter a pleasant shaded woodland track known as Spout Lane.

Continue on down the track which soon emerges out of the woodland shade to provide an entirely contrasting experience with wide open fields and a big sky. In summer the lane is glorious to walk down with banks of wildflowers, and dunnock and yellowhammers busy about the hedge tops. The path soon arrives at a point where it moves sharply to the left. Here, there is a gate on the right and a kissing gate next to it. Go through the kissing gate.

9 The path now crosses the first of three farm fields. The first of these is traditionally rough grassland, which through winter and spring in particular is home to flocks of skylarks, lovely to hear in the spring sunshine. The track passes through a gap without a gate into a second field.

The path which has hugged the hedge on the right finally passes through a gap into the last of the fields.

10 At the end of the path there is a little wooden gate with an interesting opening/closing mechanism. Pass through this and you are back at your starting point.