

The Red Lion, Longdon and Cannock Chase, Staffordshire



Strenuous Terrain

6.5 miles
Circular
3 to 3.5
hours

120814



Access Notes



1. The route has several climbs and descents throughout. The walking surfaces appear to be seldom used and so can be fairly uneven, muddy, narrow and overgrown in places. There are a couple of short sections of road walking along quiet country lanes so take care of any traffic.
2. The optional loop into the Cannock Chase woodland valley can have standing water after periods of rain.
3. The paths cross several pastures grazed by a mixture of horses, sheep and cattle. You will need to negotiate a number of gates, a couple of footbridges plus around 30 stiles. Some of the stiles are fairly tall and of a vertical ladder design, meaning you will need to climb several rungs (which may be difficult for less able people).
4. Some of the stiles are also fully enclosed with wire and there is one double stile with no gaps alongside, so taking a dog along will be very challenging.
5. With all this in mind you will need to be prepared with good boots, long trousers and a spring in your step!

The Red Lion is a classic village pub, a great place to satisfy your hunger after a morning's ramble in the surrounding hills.

A 6.5 mile (can be shortened to 4.5 miles) circular pub walk from the Red Lion in Longdon Green, Staffordshire. The walking route is fairly challenging due to the nature of the surfaces and the number and design of the stiles but, if you're up to it, you'll be rewarded with fabulous views of the rolling hills throughout. The optional loop within the full walk takes in a pretty section of the Cannock Chase woodland which is awash with wild flowers every spring.

Getting there

Longdon Green is located about 3 miles south of Rugeley, just off the A51 in Staffordshire. The walk starts and finishes from the Red Lion on Hay Lane, alongside the village green.

Approximate post code **WS15 4QF**.

Walk Sections



Start to Borough Lane



Leave the pub car park via the vehicle entrance and turn right along Hay Lane, passing the property Brooklands on the left. At the crossroads turn left into Church Hill. Just a short distance along, immediately before Park Cottage on the left, turn left up the narrow public footpath between tall hedgerows. Cross two stiles along this path and you'll emerge out into a pasture (which may be holding livestock).

Walk straight ahead staying close to the left-hand fence line. About two thirds of the way along the field, turn left through the wooden kissing gate and turn immediately right to follow the fence line now to the right. Keep ahead in the same direction, crossing four stiles (the second of which was missing and the fence lowered to allow passage at the time of writing).

You will emerge out to the corner of a country lane,



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Smithy Lane. Keep straight ahead along this lane, taking care of any occasional traffic. Follow it to the end where you'll come to a T-junction with Borough Lane.

1 → 2 Borough Lane to Horse Gallop



Turn left for just a few paces and then turn right over a stile to join the footpath into the corner of a crop field. The official footpath actually goes diagonally across the field to the opposite corner but, if the crop prevents this (as it did for us), simply follow the right-hand field edge, along the side and then along the bottom of the field.

In the opposite corner you'll find a footbridge over a stream. Cross this (via the two stiles) into the next field. Cross this field diagonally left, at about 10 o'clock, heading just to the left of the tall clump of trees and pass, via a stile, into the next field. Keep ahead (with a fenced off pond on the right) and, as this ends, strike out straight ahead across the field heading for the wide wooden gate visible on the opposite boundary. Pass through the gate (or use the tall ladder stile alongside) and you will emerge into a horse training gallop, a long thin field and track with starting gates, jumps and white railings. The facility belongs to the nearby Longdon Stud, a breeder of thoroughbred racehorses.

2 → 3 Horse Gallop to Forest Driveway



Cross straight over this horse gallop (of course ensuring there are no horses in action before you cross!) to reach the fence corner which juts into the field. Keep ahead with this fence on the left and in the corner you'll find a partially concealed stile within the hedge. Cross this into the next paddock, also part of Longdon Stud. Turn right and walk along the paddock following the fence on the right. Cross a stile ahead and continue in the same direction through the next paddock. In the field corner, turn left along the bottom boundary and after just a few yards you'll see a gate on the right.

Pass through this and keep ahead on the stone access lane, with more horse paddocks each side. In the spring you may be lucky (as we were) to see adorable tiny thoroughbred foals romping in the fields. The track will lead you via a stile out to a T-junction

with the road in Longdon village.

Turn left along the pavement and follow the road as it swings right. Where the pavement ends, cross over and walk along the right-hand edge of the road round the left-hand bend (taking care of any traffic). Continue ahead on the village road, Stockings Lane, passing a number of pretty cottages. Where the road forks, take the left-hand branch, signed as unsuitable for heavy goods vehicles.

Between the houses you'll be able to catch glimpse of the stunning views down into the valley to the left. Keep your eyes peeled for a signed public footpath on the left, between the properties The Cottage and August Hill. You now have two choices:

For the shorter walk (4.5 miles) which excludes the forest loop, turn left over the stile to join the footpath and then pick up the directions from the section called 'Lower Way Stile to Brady Lane'. For the full walk (6.5 miles) which includes the forest loop (the hilliest and muddiest part of the walk!) continue ahead along the village road and continue reading the directions here.

Turn right up Shaver's Lane, passing Gunpowder Cottage on the left. Follow the lane fairly steeply uphill to reach a T-junction at the top. Turn left, passing the village noticeboard and follow the lane taking care of any traffic. Opposite property number 126 on the right, fork left down the stone forest access driveway, passing a curved brick wall on the right.

3 → 4 Forest Driveway to Dump's Covert



Pass to the left of the vehicle gate and keep ahead on the forest track which is straight and leads you steadily downhill. A little way along the track begins to bend left, a short way into this bend turn right to leave the main track and join a minor grass track heading back uphill.

This section of forest is managed by the Forestry Commission as a working forest and is the south east corner of the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Despite being relatively small in area, the Chase supports a remarkable range of wildlife including a herd of around 800 fallow deer and rare birds such as the nightjar. Since the 1800s the local press have reported sightings of a range of strange beasts in the forest such as big cats, werewolves and even a bigfoot, inspiring many local folklore tales.

The track levels off, becomes a little marshy and leads you out to a T-junction with the road. (If there is water in the ditch preventing you getting to the road, just head left for a few yards where you'll be able to reach the road with dry feet!) Cross over and take the woodland track directly opposite. Follow the stone track for just a short distance to reach a crossroads.

4 → 5 Dump's Covert to Lower Way Stile



Turn right onto the minor grass track which heads steadily downhill, towards the area of woodland known as Dump's Covert. At the fork keep right on the path heading downhill. The path can be fairly marshy but you're rewarded with the secluded beauty. The woodland slopes in the spring, before the bracken takes hold, are awash with wildflowers including a carpet of bluebells.

The path eventually begins to level off and continues past some young silver birch trees on the left. Look out for a fork to the right; take this and follow it steadily uphill. You'll pass a number of beautiful old beech, oak and sweet chestnut trees and down the steep bank to the left you'll be able to see a pretty stream.

Some way up you'll come to a fork. Take the left-hand branch and follow this path winding through the trees. You'll pass a fenced off small section with danger signs – a large hole which is evidence of the coal mines that once thrived here. Continue on the path swinging left to reach the village road. (If the road verge ahead is blocked by brambles, keep left and you'll find an easier gap out to the road).

Turn left along the village road and after just a short distance you'll pass the driveway that you took into the forest earlier. Keep ahead along the village road, turn right down Shaver's Lane and then left back along Lower Way. Continue just until you reach the stile on Lower Way (mentioned earlier), on the right, between August Hill and The Cottage. Cross this stile to join the footpath.

5 → 6 Lower Way Stile to Brady Lane



Follow this footpath steadily downhill, taking care to avoid the holly each side! At the end, pass through the gate into a hillside meadow. Keep ahead for a few yards and then follow the path as it forks left across the centre of the meadow (taking a moment to enjoy the stunning views).

At the far side of the meadow, pass through the gate and walk straight ahead. Stay close to the fence for the horse paddock on

the right and cross the stile ahead. If you look closely you'll see a choice of two paths ahead. Take the left-hand of these, a less obvious path which leads you towards the white garage. Go up the steps and cross the stile. Turn right past the garage and follow the property's driveway out to the road (don't worry, this is a public footpath!). You'll emerge to a T-junction with Brady Lane.

6 → 7 Brady Lane to Pylon



Turn left and follow the road as it swings right. As the road swings left, turn right up the stone slope to reach the corner of a field. Turn left under the power lines, following the fence on the left. At the end of the field, cross the stile ahead and join the wide fenced footpath between horse paddocks. Pass through the gap in the hedge ahead and go through the gate into the paddock (once again you're in Longdon Stud territory so you're likely to be sharing the fields with horses).

Cross the paddock straight ahead and cross the double stile within the hedge on the opposite side. Cross the next field diagonally right to reach a stile in the bottom corner. Cross the stile and you will emerge to the end of a grass track, with a gate to the right. You need to enter the field to the right; if the gate is open simply pass through this, if not you'll need to cross the double stile ahead and then the one to the right.

Once within the correct field, stand with your back to the gate and walk ahead (in the direction that would be the continuation of the line of the track) across the field. As you reach the far boundary you'll see a small corner of field stepping back. Once you're close up, you'll see a stile within the left-hand fence of this corner. Cross the stile into trees and cross the footbridge via another pair of stiles. You'll emerge to the next pasture (which may be holding cattle).

Walk straight ahead, close to the left-hand boundary. Cross the stile ahead and continue along the left-hand edge of the next pasture. A stile at the far end leads you out to Borough Lane. Turn left along this, taking care of any occasional traffic, and continue only until you reach a vehicle gate/stile on the right. Cross the stile and walk diagonally across the field passing just to the right of the electricity pylon.

7 → 8

Pylon to Broomy Fields



Continue across the rest of the field and pass through the gate. Cross the next field in the same direction and another gate leads you into a crop field. Turn left along the field edge and, in the corner, turn right to follow the left-hand boundary.

Cross the stile in to the next crop field and this time follow the right-hand boundary ahead. Pass through the gate and continue along the right-hand edge of a meadow. You will emerge via gates to the access lane for Broomy Fields, with a cattle grid to the right.

8 → 9

Broomy Fields to End



Cross over the lane and go ahead into the large meadow, passing to the right of the two oak trees. Over to the left you'll have good views of Longdon Hall, once part of the Bishops of Lichfield Estate. The 18th century Grade II listed manor house has a beautiful Queen Anne facade with red brick and multiple chimneys. During World War II the hall was commandeered as an RAF hospital. The food grown in the Victorian walled kitchen garden along with the quiet surrounding served the recovering airmen well.

After the second oak tree, keep ahead for a few yards and then begin to swing left to reach the stile within the left-hand hedge (this is just to the left of another large oak tree). The stile leads you out to Smithy Lane. Turn right along this, taking care of any occasional traffic. You'll come to a T-junction with Hay Lane. Turn left and after just a short distance you'll come to the Red Lion on the right for some very well-earned hospitality.

Disclaimer

This walking route was walked and checked at the time of writing. We have taken care to make sure all our walks are safe for walkers of a reasonable level of experience and fitness. However, like all outdoor activities, walking carries a degree of risk and we accept no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal effects, personal accident, injury or public liability whilst following this walk. We cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that result from changes to the routes that occur over time. Please let us know of any changes to the routes so that we can correct the information.

Walking Safety

For your safety and comfort we recommend that you take the following with you on your walk: bottled water, snacks, a waterproof jacket, waterproof/sturdy boots, a woolly hat and fleece (in winter and cold weather), a fully-charged mobile phone, a whistle, a compass and an Ordnance Survey map of the area. Check the weather forecast before you leave, carry appropriate clothing and do not set out in fog or mist as these conditions can seriously affect your ability to navigate the route. Take particular care on cliff/mountain paths where steep drops can present a particular hazard. Some routes include sections along roads – take care to avoid any traffic at these points. Around farmland take care with children and dogs, particularly around machinery and livestock. If you are walking on the coast make sure you check the tide times before you set out.

