

07 | Central England Oswestry, Shropshire

• Distance 10km/6 miles • Time 3hrs • Type Country

NAVIGATION LEVEL



FITNESS LEVEL



Plan your walk



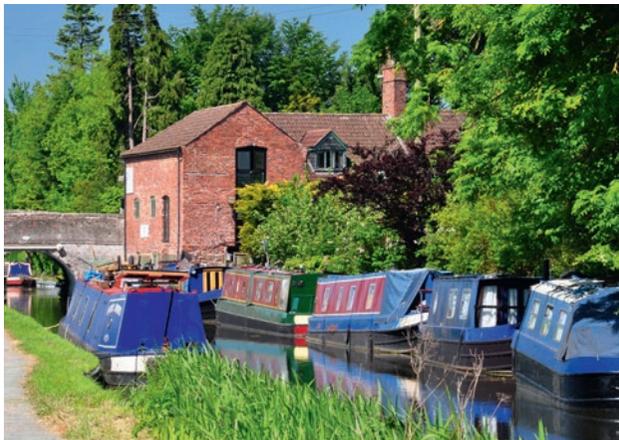
WHERE: Circular walk near Oswestry, northwest Shropshire.
START/END: Queen's Head (SJ339268).

TERRAIN: Easy walking on towpath, back lanes and field paths. Some sections might be boggy, and watch out for flying golf balls near the end.
MAPS: OS Explorer 240; Landranger 126.

GETTING THERE: Queen's Head is a hamlet off the A5, three miles southeast of Oswestry. There's a car park opposite the pub by the canal. Arriva bus service 70, between Shrewsbury and Oswestry, runs regularly (not Sundays) and stops outside the Queen's Head pub (© 0871 200 2233, www.traveline.info).

EATING & DRINKING: The Navigation Inn, Maesbury Marsh (© 01691 672958, www.thenavigation.co.uk) – a convivial canal-side dining pub with great local produce and beers. Closed Mondays and Tuesday lunchtime. The ▶

PHOTOGRAPHY: NEIL COATES



Constructed in the 1790s to serve the limestone quarries at Llanymynech, the Montgomeryshire Canal eventually reached Newtown, in mid-Wales, in 1821. It closed after a breach in an embankment east of Queen's Head in 1936. Over the past 30 years, disparate groups have worked on restoring sections of the canal to use, including this tranquil stretch not far from its junction with the main Llangollen Canal. Along the way the walk diverts to find St Winifred's Well, a secluded, medieval place of pilgrimage still visited by the faithful to this day. The return is along quiet country lanes and through landscaped estate farmland.

1. START Leave the car park (SJ339268) and turn R over the canal bridge, then R again to the towpath. Put the canal on your R to commence a tree-shaded walk along this peaceful waterway. The

whole canal is a linear nature reserve and the number of boats strictly limited, meaning only an occasional narrowboat will disturb your wildlife watching. After two miles, the canal bends sharply R to reach Bridge 78. Slip up to the L and through the adjacent bridlegate. From the foot of the earth ramp, head to the far-L corner of the field and a stile 20 paces L of the oak. Follow the old hedge on your R to a boggy corner and a footbridge. Cross this to reach the half-timbered building guarding St Winifred's Well here at Woolston hamlet. In AD1138, the bones of St Winifred were rested overnight by zealots, who were taking her relics from Holywell (Flintshire) to Shrewsbury Abbey. As with other places where her body was said to rest, a spring immediately issued from the ground. This miracle ensured that pilgrims were drawn here to pray and take the waters, said to cure broken bones, bruises and eye ▶

Continued...

Queens Head, Queen's Head
(© 01691 610255).

SLEEPING: The White House,
Maesbury Marsh (© 01691
658524, www.maesburymarsh.co.uk); Fitzwarine House,
Whittington
(© 01691 680882, www.fitzwarinehouse.co.uk).

VISITOR INFORMATION:
Oswestry Visitor Information
Centre, Mile End
(© 01691 662488, www.oswestry-welshborders.org.uk).

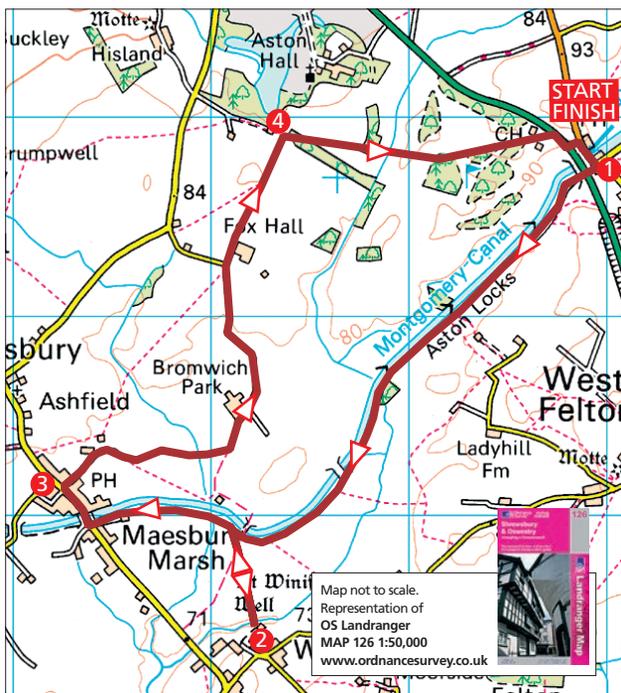
GUIDEBOOKS: *More Favourite Walks around Oswestry and the Borders* by Peter Carr (£4.95, Ramblers, ISBN 978 0956902108); *Best Shropshire Walks* by Les Lumsdon (£8.99, Sigma Press, ISBN 978 1850588535).

LOCAL RAMBLERS GROUP:
Oswestry Ramblers
(© 01691 662149, www.ramblers.co.uk/groups).

conditions. The well still flows and a few hardy pilgrims still take a dip. The chapel building is now a Landmark Trust holiday let.

2. Return to the canal and turn L, continuing to Maesbury Marsh – a former canal port still with remnant warehousing, a crane and a former bone works nearby. There's also a welcome pub, the Navigation Inn, here at a settlement, which essentially developed as Oswestry's distant canal wharf.

3. Leave the towpath and walk past the inn. In 200 yards turn R along Waen Lane, remaining with this roughening byway all the way through to the imposing Bromwich Park farmhouse. Continue along the tarred lane for a further 900m to a sharp-L bend, keeping ahead-R here towards nearby Fox Hall farm. Within 50m look on your L for the fingerposted stile and turn R inside the hedgeline. Keep immediately L of



To download this route and hundreds of others, visit www.ramblers.org.uk/routes

the spindly firs skirting the farmyard and remain with the hedge, which shortly becomes a line of ancient, gnarled old lime and beech trees, ending up near the secluded Keeper's Cottage.

4. Go through the gate farthest-R of the cottage and then ahead to use another gate at the near end of a wooded strip. Bear R along the field (not the wooded strip), aiming to pass immediately R of the stand of 6 trees visible ahead. Off to the L, the imposing façade of Aston Hall draws the eye, and nearby is the creeper-clad ruin of the estate church. You may share

this parkland pasture with a herd of pedigree highland cattle, for which the estate is renowned. Climb the waymarked stile (look out for the electric fence!) and go ahead through a gap onto a woodland path. At the far side, look for the stile and cross the narrow field to a tree-shaded footbridge leading onto Oswestry Golf Club. Frequent waymarked posts keep you on the path, eventually reaching the clubhouse. Walk through the car park, carefully cross the very busy A5 road and turn R to the nearby L-turn for Queen's Head.

Route devised by Neil Coates

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

PARAMO
DIRECTIONAL
CLOTHING SYSTEMS

NEW MEN'S BORA

HILL-WALKER'S FLEECE & WINDPROOF
COMBO GIVES WATERPROOF
PROTECTION EQUIVALENT TO ANALOGY
LIGHT IN A VERSATILE PACKAGE.

