

HILLWALKING IN SHROPSHIRE

32 HILL AND COUNTRY WALKS

by John Gillham

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WALK 31

The Ironbridge Gorge

Start/Finish	Station Road car park, Ironbridge (SJ 673 033)
Distance	6¼ miles (10km)
Total ascent	918ft (280m)
Grade	Moderate
Time	4hr
Terrain	Steep steps to Lincoln Hill, woodland paths and tracks, meadowland, railway trackbed, country lanes and canal towpath
Map	OS Explorer 242 – Telford Ironbridge & the Wrekin
Refreshments	Numerous cafés and inns in Ironbridge, cafés at Maws Craft Centre and the China Works

While it is not really a hillwalk, it would be sad to come to Shropshire and not see one of its finest treasures – the Ironbridge Gorge – so this route takes to the hillsides and the gorge, visiting many of the historic buildings (and the museums if there's time). You'll cross Thomas Telford's iconic Iron Bridge and come across the recreated Victorian town at Blists Hill before descending to the well-restored buildings of the Coalport China Museum. On a more modern note, you'll pass through a recently reconstructed, landscaped and stabilised hillside before returning to the bridge.

From the Station Road car park, turn right to cross the **Iron Bridge** to the village centre. Turn left along the road to the **Museum of the Gorge**. Just beyond its car park, turn sharp right along a street called Lincoln Hill.

After nearly 100m uphill turn sharp left along a stony drive, then fork right by the gateposts of Rotunda House, following a path signed to the Rotunda. The path soon turns sharp right and climbs through steep woodland slopes in a series of wooden steps to reach the site of the Rotunda.



The Severn at Ironbridge

INDUSTRIES OF THE IRONBRIDGE GORGE

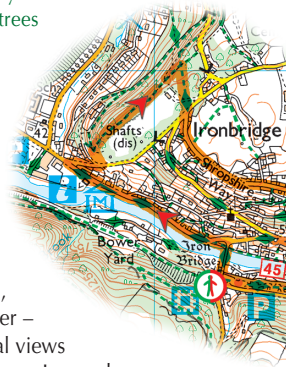
Lying deep in a wooded gorge gouged out by the River Severn, Ironbridge has become synonymous with the Industrial Revolution – a fact recognized by its achievement of becoming a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In 1708 Abraham Darby III leased the Coalbrookdale furnace and started iron-smelting with coke. His plant would become the world's first mass producer of cast iron. Thomas Pritchard designed the first cast iron bridge in 1779 to link the important industrial towns of Broseley and Madeley. The towns would become known throughout the world for the production of tiles, clay pipes and bricks. John Wilkinson, a precision engineer of Broseley, built cylinders for early steam engines and also produced the first iron boat.

Built in the 1790s by iron master Richard Reynolds, the **Rotunda** would have been a round, bandstand-like structure with cast iron pillars and a lead roof. Views would have been wide, encompassing the village below, the Severn and the Ironbridge. Today, although you can still see some of the bridge, trees obscure much of the town.

Continue along the path but turn right at the junction, taking the path signed to Lincoln Hill road. This joins and turns left along the drive of Limeburners before coming to the road.

Turn right along the road, then next left along Hodge Bower – a quiet, high lane with occasional views up the gorge. This passes the Crown Inn and comes to the busy Madeley Road opposite a rather ornate old chapel.

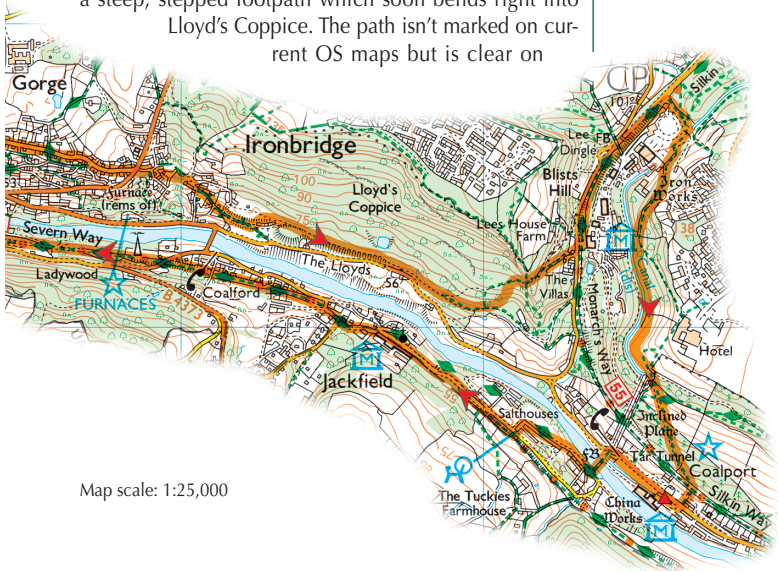
Cross the road and follow a tarred footpath along the left-hand side of the old chapel to reach the Golden Ball Inn. Follow the lane left of this and continue along Wesley Road. This descends to the main road through





the valley, but just before reaching the road turn left on a steep, stepped footpath which soon bends right into Lloyd's Coppice. The path isn't marked on current OS maps but is clear on

The Iron Bridge



Map scale: 1:25,000

Rare great crested newts are known to live here.

the ground and passes a series of woodland pools, some of which dry up in the summer. ◀

Ignore the first path on the left, signed to Blists Hill. Take the second, but not before detouring a few yards along a signed right fork to see the ruined Ice House, which was part of the old Madeley Wood Hall.

The required path to Blists Hill climbs steeply and is partially stepped. Halfway up the wooded slopes it comes to a four-way intersection of paths. Go right here, signed Blists Hill, and follow the path down to the Madeley Road. Across this you take a signed path leading left down to the old railway, part of the Monarch's Way, and follow it northwards to the entrance to the Blists Hill Victorian Town visitor attraction.

Follow the drive past the car park before turning right on a signed track. Within a few paces the path forks right away from the track and, guided by a fence, passes above the old town through woodland, before running alongside a canal. The path is highlighted by the green arrows of the South Telford Way. It briefly climbs across rough

*The China Works
at Coalport*





grassland but then descends to pass the canal-end at the top of the Hay Incline.

Go through a gate and take the path signed Coalport Bridge not the path descending alongside the incline. Ignore the left fork a short way downhill. Enter the woodland at another gate. Cross an old railway trackbed and follow cycle path signed ‘Severn Valley Way’, which curves right to a parking area by a house. Beyond this turn left to the road.

Go through the grounds – there’s a youth hostel and café to the left – and turn right alongside the canal, past the old brick-built factory buildings and kilns before crossing the footbridge over the canal. The canal ends beneath the Hay Incline, but the route continues to the left across a footbridge over the River Severn. On the far side you’ll see the Boat Inn. ▶

Turn right on the path parallel to the Ferry Road past the Boat Inn and the **Maws Craft Centre**. The path turns left away from the river and comes to the road at the Maws Craft Centre, where there’s a café.

The Boat Inn at Jackfield

On the door of the inn you’ll see the various markings showing the level of past flood tides.



Ice House, Lloyds Coppice, Ironbridge

JACKFIELD FLOODS AND THE STABILISATION SCHEME

The floods have wreaked havoc throughout past centuries, with landslips burying many of Jackfield's houses. In 2013 plans were passed for the huge Jackfield Stabilisation scheme, which would change the route from here to the other side of the Jackfield Tile Works, for the whole area was excavated, stabilised with huge piles and re-landscaped. The project was completed in late 2016.

Climb along the path parallel to the road passing the craft centre's entrance and turn right along a newly constructed Severn Valley Way path at the top of the road. This will lead the road just short of the **Jackfield Tile Museum**.

Follow the road to the junction with Calcutts Road. Go straight ahead to the old level crossing gates and a short section of old railway lines. This marks the railway trackbed leading back to the **car park** by the Iron Bridge.