

POINTS of INTEREST ABCDEFGHIJK

**H** After Freeth Bridge the canal runs straight for a while and then bends left, as it does so a detour on your right leads to an area of dry heathland, purple in late summer with Heather and Bell Heather. Within this is a small wetland habitat where six species of rush can be found. These illustrate the importance of this area in terms of biodiversity. Return to the canal towpath to continue the walk.



Heathland

After the M6 Toll road bridge you come to two reconstructed tipping chutes. These were originally used to allow the loading of coal from the mines into the barges. Further along the canal you will see the remnants of red brick supports that held an overhead loading mechanism of later date. The washed, sorted and graded coal was sent along an elevator to a hopper situated above the canal where it then fell by gravity into the barges underneath. The blue brick incline further on is an old spillway, which would have been used to allow overflow water from Norton Pool into the canal system. About half way between the Toll road bridge and the dam, is the junction between the sandstones, which underlie nearly the entire Parish, and the coal measures extended towards Rugeley and Cannock which form part of the South Staffordshire Coalfield on which the industries of the Black Country developed.

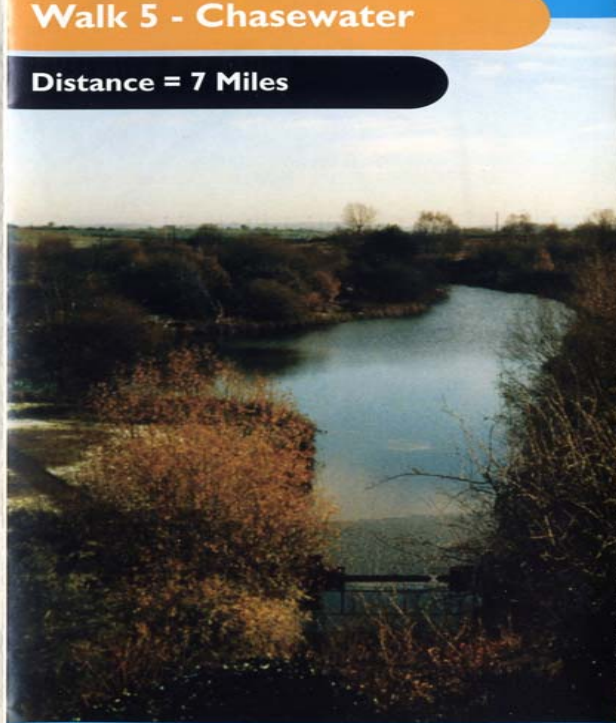


Tipping Chutes

# THE Hammerwich WALKS

## Walk 5 - Chasewater

Distance = 7 Miles



Walk 5 is along village roads, canal towpaths, across fields. Easy walking although some sections may be muddy. Care should be taken when walking along roads without footpaths, and near field ditches.

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**A** Dark Lane is clearly marked on the Tithe Map of 1844 and probably gets its name from the high hedges and overarching trees. The old Ash trees in the small woodland are a favourite haunt of Green Woodpecker. Our only native maple, the Field Maple can be seen on the left, just before the storage sheds. Its bright yellow foliage in October is unmistakable. This area is also a nesting site for Kestrels and Sparrowhawks. Birds abound here and include Blue Tit, Great Tit, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Yellowhammer and Grey Partridge. Butterflies that are regularly seen from April are Orange-tip, Speckled Wood and Small Tortoiseshell.

**B** The Crane Brook has been modified with the building of the M6 Toll. In places a graded stone bottom has been laid to cause riffles and niches, the ideal habitat for the native White-clawed Crayfish. In summer Sand Martins hawk over the fields looking for food and nest in the quarry on the other side of the A5 road.

**C** The steel trough over the new M6 Toll, can be seen on the left and has been constructed on behalf of Lichfield & Hatherton Canal Restoration Trust, which is working to reopen the old Wyrley & Essington Canal. The aqueduct was constructed at a cost of approximately £1 million. Provision has been made for the construction of a deep lock immediately adjacent to its eastern end, to raise the canal water level, enabling barges to cross over the M6 Toll. Installation was completed in August 2003.



Aqueduct

**D** Grasmere Garden Centre has stood here for thirty-five years, before this sand, gravel and coal was extracted from the site. Light refreshments are available from the coffee shop during opening hours. The old Wyrley & Essington Canal used to run behind the Centre and in front of the old cottages. If you turn left when you reach the towpath and walk onto the bridge you can see the end of the old canal and a small basin.

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**E** In 1850 Birmingham Canal Navigations brought a spur from the Wyrley & Essington Canal through to the side of Hammerwich Collieries No. 1 pit near the end of Chasewater dam at a cost of £6000. This was called the Anglesey Spur, coal from the mines was transported along here to the Black Country. It was kept supplied with water by way of feeder streams from Norton Pool.



Anglesey Spur

**F** The outcrop of soft reddish sandstone seen on both sides of the canal just past Anglesey Bridge is about 180 million years old. This indicates the desert conditions that existed when the land was much nearer to the equator than it is now. In places this rock (formerly known as Bunter Pebble Beds) contains pebbles of quartzite and quartz smoothed by water action.

**G** This quiet section of the canal up to the M6 Toll bridge abounds with flora and fauna. The verge contains over 70 species of plants, of particular note are Gypsywort and Skullcap, both of which can be found clinging to the canal walls. Water Dock occurs in the margins, as does the tall pink Flowering Rush. If you are lucky you may see Bullfinch, Reed Bunting, Long-tailed Tits and even a Kingfisher. The Blue-tailed and Emerald Damselflies may both be seen along here. The Emerald perches with its wings partly open, whereas most damselflies hold their wings close together over the top of their abdomen. Dragonflies are more robust and their wings are held wide open when at rest. The large Migrant Hawker may be seen patrolling over the water.



Emerald Damselfly



Blue-tailed Damselfly

MAP & DIRECTIONS

Walk 5 - Chasewater

PLEASE FOLLOW THE COUNTRY CODE



1. From the Y&CC car park, face the Post Office and follow Hall Lane to the right then turn right up Church Lane.
  2. Passing the Church on your left keep straight on along a track known as Dark Lane. As the hedges end, follow the edge of the field straight ahead and then left to a stile in the fence line.
  3. Cross the railway track, over two more stiles. Walk ahead keeping the hedge on your right. The official footpath cuts across the field where the hedge turns right. Looking ahead you can see the stile in the fence line. A more interesting route has been left around the field boundary on your right.
  4. Cross the stile in the fence line (40 metres left) and walk left keeping close to the fence, to a footpath sign where you can access the tarmac footpath alongside the A5.
  5. Turn right on the tarmac footpath and cross the M6 Toll bridge and continue towards the island.
  6. Just before the island turn left to cross the A5 towards Barracks Lane (B4155) and continue along the road to the next island.
  7. Turn right at this island walking carefully ahead as there is no footpath.
  8. At Grasmere Garden Centre cross the road and continue along the grass verge in the same direction. Just before you reach the canal bridge go down a set of steps leading to the canal towpath.
  9. Turn right and follow the towpath passing under the Anglesey, Middleton, Freeth, Burntwood Road and the M6 Toll bridges. Continue to follow the canal to its end and take the tarmac road uphill towards the dam wall.
- The outward walk ends here, simply reverse the route to return to Hammerwich. Refreshments are available from the Innovation Centre, which can be seen on the lakeshore.
- If an extension to the walk is wanted then you can follow a path around the edge of Chasewater, adding a further 4 miles. Leaflets available from the Rangers office or the Innovation Centre.