



Royal
Geographical
Society
with IBG

From fossils to fiery furnaces

A self-guided walk around the limestone hills of Dudley



Walk through 428 million years of the Earth's history

Search for fossils in one of Britain's most important geological sites

Discover the inspiration for Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings

Explore a green corridor in the Black Country full of trees and wildflowers

www.discoveringbritain.org

the stories of our landscapes
discovered through walks





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Cover image: Seven Sisters Mine © Dudley Museum and Art Gallery

From fossils to fiery furnaces

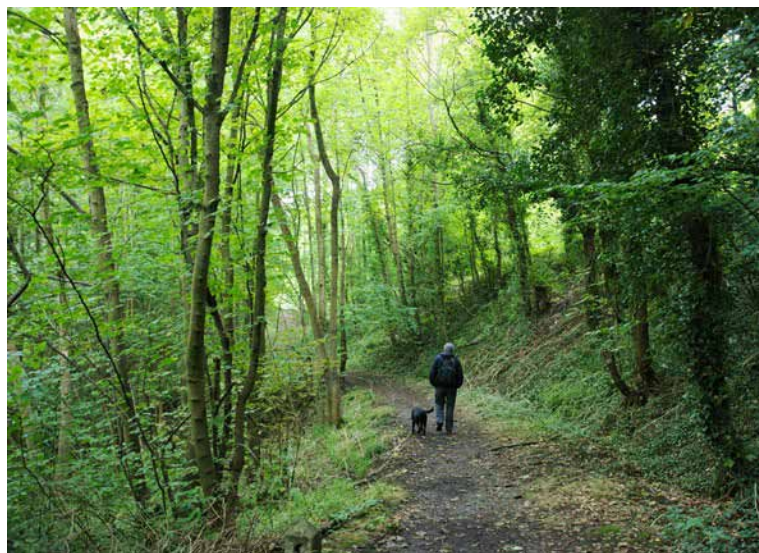
Discover how Dudley's unique geology fuelled the Industrial Revolution

During the nineteenth century the West Midlands became the centre of industrial Britain. The area was transformed from one of green valleys and fields to a "landscape blackened by day and red by night".

But have you ever wondered why?



This walk answers that question by crossing four limestone hills and journeying through 428 million years of the Earth's history.



Discover why this area is one of the most important geological sites in Britain. Find out how local stone was mined to fuel the Industrial Revolution. See how a wide variety of plants and wildlife have thrived since mining ceased.

Enjoy this five-mile ramble through a green corridor in the heart of the Black Country.

Top: 'Coalbrookdale by Night' by Philip James de Loutherbourg (1801), Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

Bottom: Spring in Castle Hill Woods © Mike Jackson

Practical information

Location	Dudley, West Midlands
Getting there	<p>Train – The nearest stations are Dudley Port (3 miles away) and Sandwell & Dudley (5 miles). Frequent bus service to Dudley run to and from both.</p> <p>Bus – Dudley bus station is in Fisher Street with services to Birmingham, Wolverhampton and other local destinations.</p> <p>Car – Access via the A461, B4176 and M5. Parking is generally available in Priory Road alongside the Priory Park tennis courts. Other nearby streets have a 1-hour time limit Monday-Friday. No time limits at weekends.</p> <p>Bicycle - National Cycle Routes 5, 54 and 81 pass near to Dudley town centre</p>
Start point	Dudley Priory, Priory Park, DY1 4AY
Finish point	Greenleighs bus stop, Wolverhampton Road, Sedgley, DY3 1QR Bus number 1 takes you back to the start of the walk
Walk distance	5 miles
Level	Moderate - There are some steep climbs to the top of the hills.
Terrain	A mixture of town footpaths and rural paths.
Conditions	The rural footpaths can be muddy especially after rain.

Suitable for

Families – children will enjoy searching for fossils

Dogs – must be kept on a lead alongside roads

Refreshments

There are various cafés, restaurants and pubs in Dudley town centre. Along the walk route we recommend:

- The Brook Inn, 29 Bourne Street (between Stop 11 and 12)
- The Beacon Hotel, 129 Bilston Street (between Stop 12 and 13)

Toilets

Toilets are available in Priory Park close to the start of the walk. Customers can use the facilities in the pubs.

Places to visit

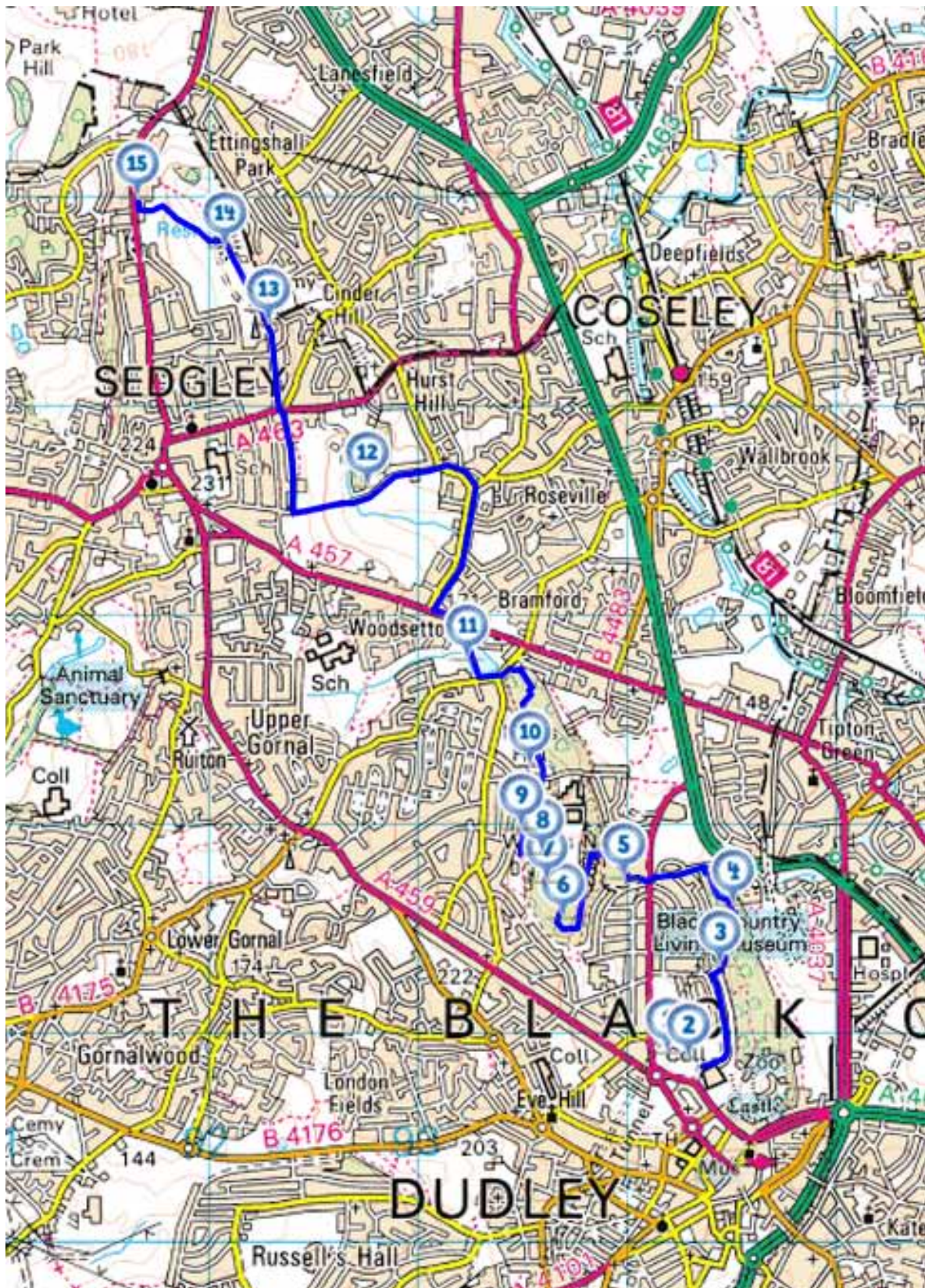
Dudley Canal Trust run boat trips into the limestone mines, ranging from 45 minutes to 6 hours. For timetable and admission prices visit <http://dudleycanaltrust.org.uk> or Tel: 0121 557 6265.

The Black Country Living Museum in Dudley is a 26-acre open air museum that tells the story of the Black Country, including over 50 period shops, a fairground and running trams. For prices and admission times visit www.bclm.co.uk or Tel: 0121 557 9643.

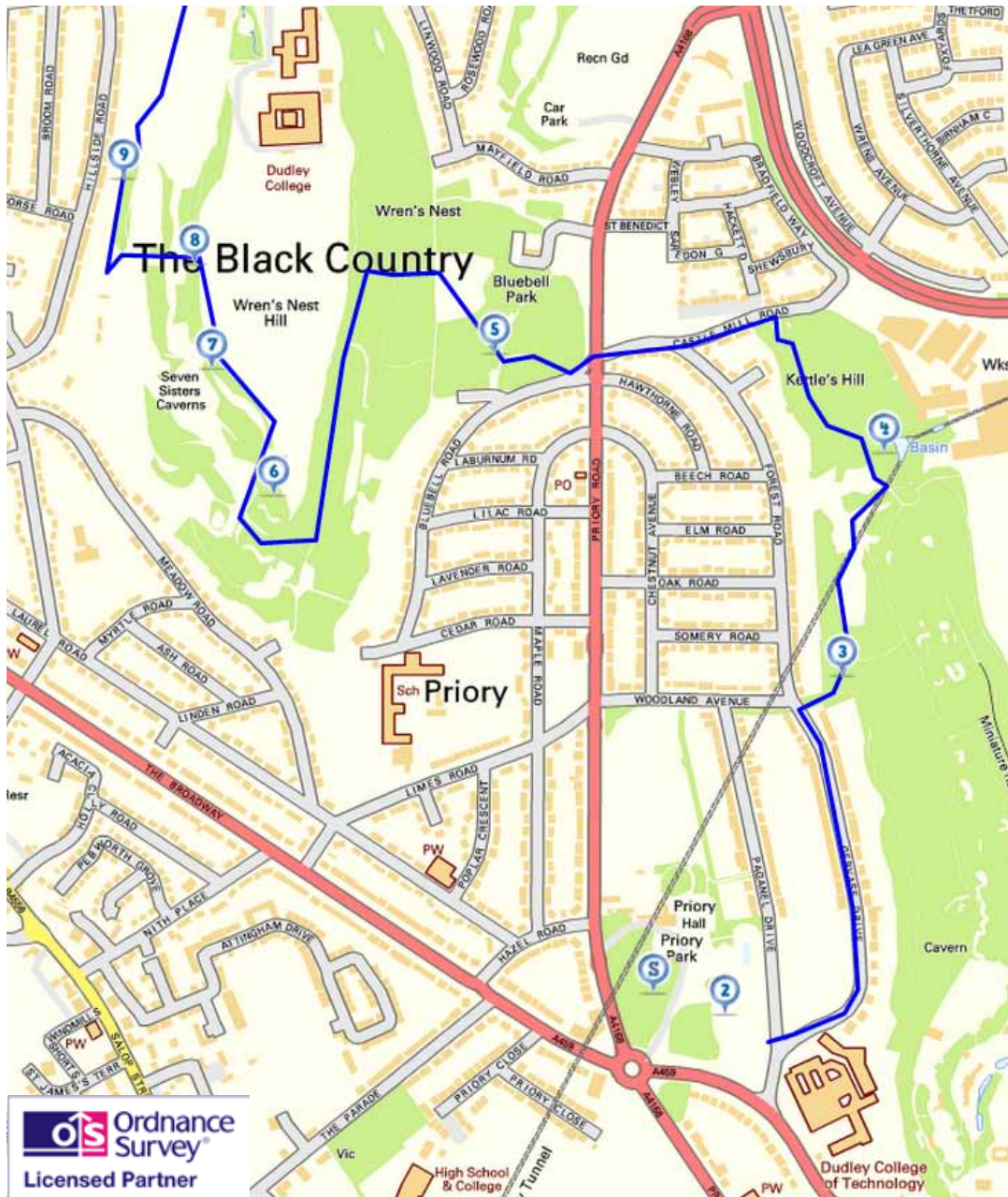
Dudley Museum & Art Gallery includes a large geological collection of over 15,000 fossils, rocks and minerals. Free entry, open Mondays to Saturdays 10am to 4pm. Tel: 01384 815575

Dudley Zoological Gardens are located on a 40-acre site in the grounds of eleventh-century Dudley Castle. Various family-friendly activities. Open daily from 10am, admission charges apply. Visit www.dudleyzoo.org.uk or Tel: 01384 215 313

Route overview



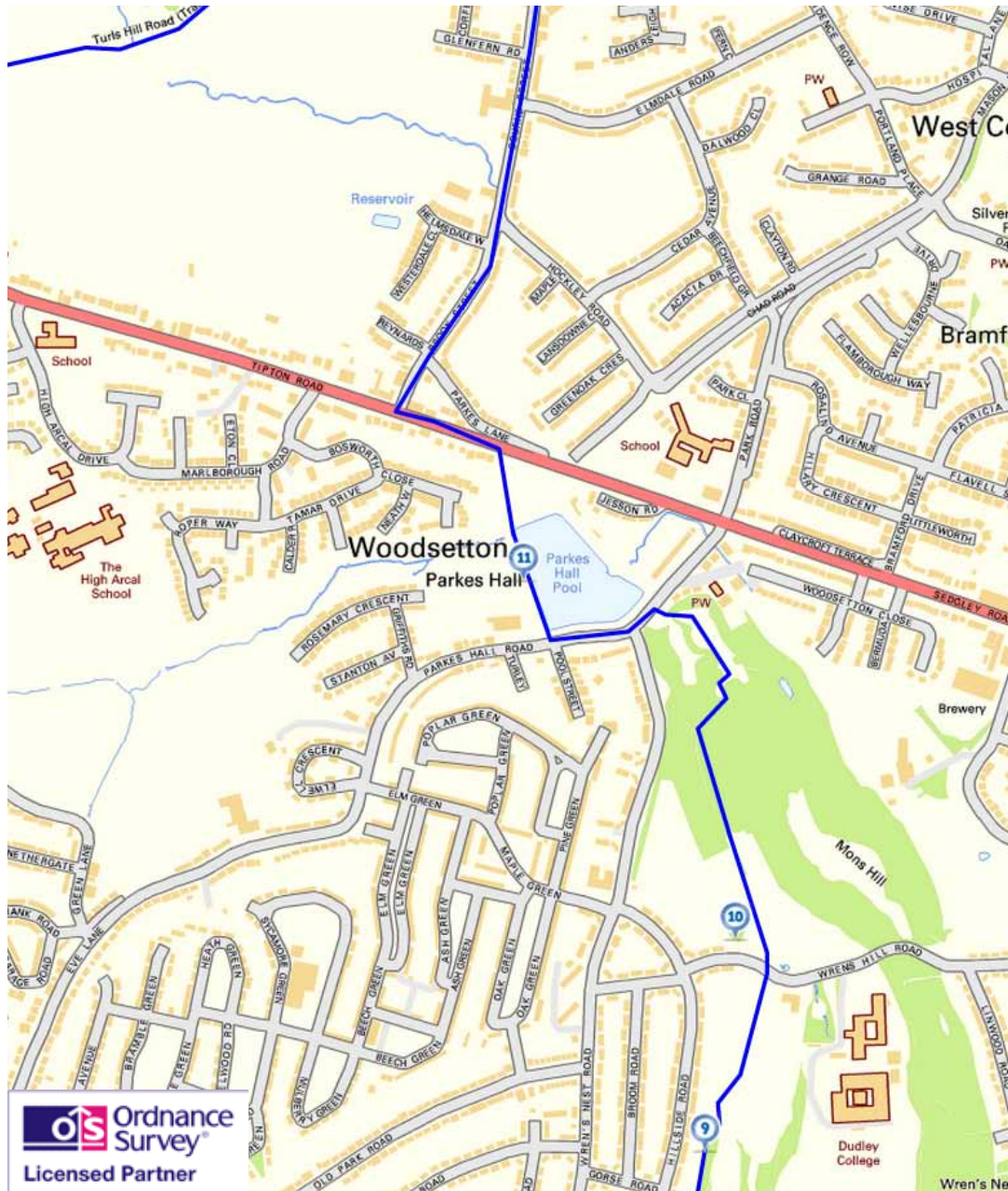
First section of the route



Stopping points

1. Priory Park
2. Sutton Chapel information board
3. Large crater, Castle Hill Woods
4. View above Castle Mill Basin
5. Rocks at entrance to Wren's Nest
6. Murchison's View top of Wren's Nest Hill
7. Entrance to Seven Sisters Mine
8. View over Marsh's Quarry

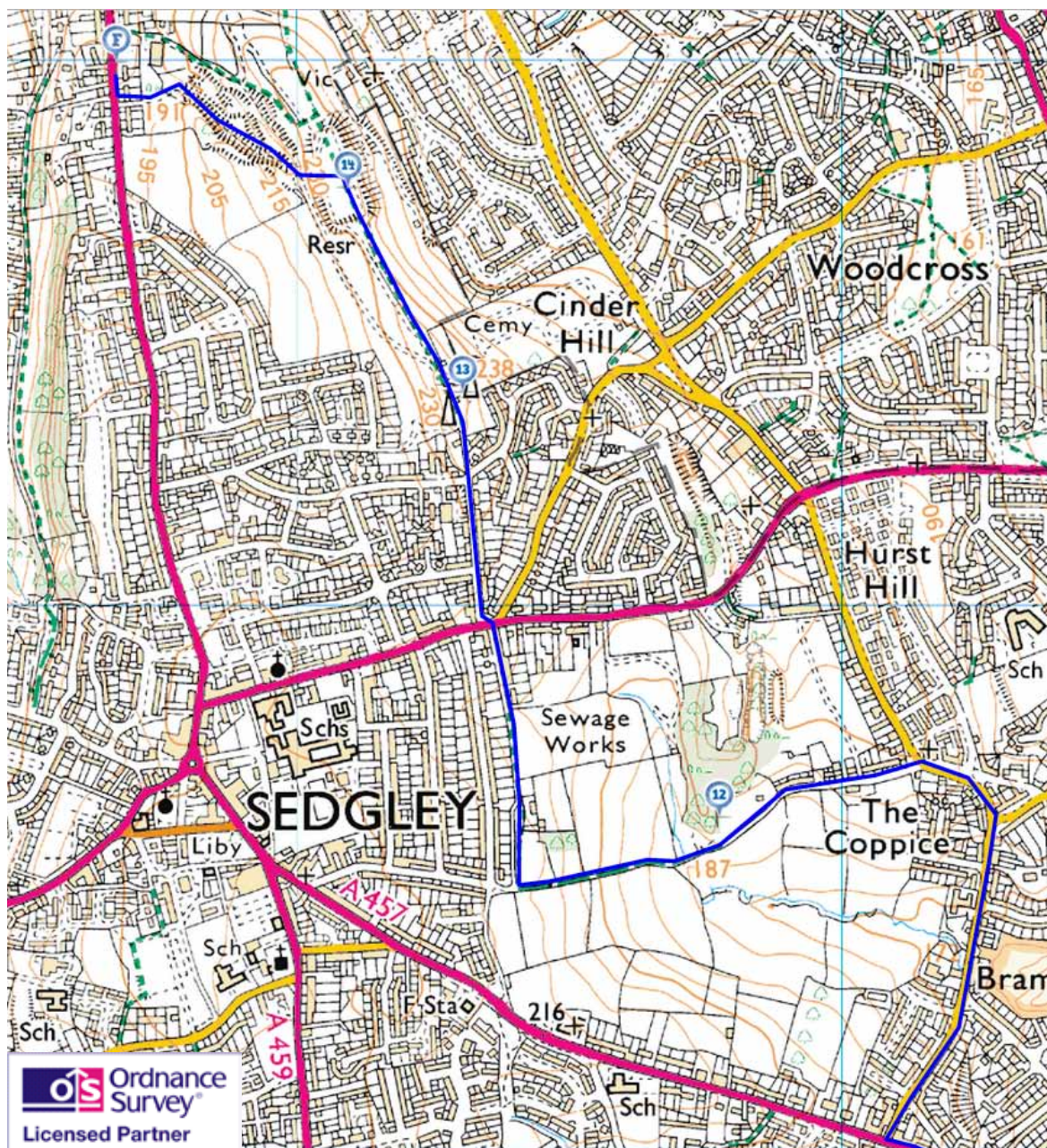
Second section of the route



Stopping points

- 9. Ripple beds, Marsh's Quarry
- 10. Mons Hill
- 11. Parkes Hall Pool

Third section of the route



Stopping points

- 12.** Turls Hill Road and Hurst Hill Wood
- 13.** Sedgley Beacon
- 14.** Beacon Hill Quarry
- 15.** Greenleighs bus stop, Wolverhampton Road

Directions

These directions are for use with the audio commentary. Listen to each track then read the directions below to get to the next stop.

1. Welcome to Dudley and the Black Country

Priory Park

Directions 1

Find the information board near the archway of Sutton Chapel. Stop here and listen to Track 2.

2. Building blocks

Sutton Chapel information board, Priory Park

Directions 2

Leave the priory by crossing over Paganel Drive. Turn left into Gervase Drive by a red post-box. Walk the length of the road until you reach Woodlands Avenue on the left. Take the footpath opposite on the right (through the trees). Turn left after 50 metres at a T junction. Stop when you reach a huge crater-shaped hole in the ground to your right.

3. That sinking feeling

Large crater, Castle Hill woods

Directions 3

Continue along the path until you come to a T junction with a green metal fence in front of you. Turn left here and follow the fence (keeping it on your right) until you see a path uphill. Go up the steps and turn right off the path by a large beech tree (with tree roots twisting up the trunk). Climb the bank and walk until you can just see over the green metal fence into the water at the bottom of the cavern below.

4. Canal fever

View above Castle Mill Basin

Directions 4

Retrace your way back to the path at the top of the steps. Continue on the main path (ignoring paths off to the right) until you reach a road. Turn left here into a residential road and continue until to a busy crossroads. Go straight over at the crossing and into Bluebell Road then bear right up steps into the woods. Continue straight over at a crossroads and through a metal kissing gate. Go straight up through the woods and stop when you pass a large outcrop of grey limestone either side of the path. Listen to Track 5.

5. 428 million years ago...

Rocks at the entrance to Wren's Nest

Directions 5

Continue ahead then turn left at a crossroads. Follow the main path up some steps and then downhill through the woods and until you reach an obvious set of steps leading up the hill on the right. Stop at the top of these by the information board. Listen to Track 6.

6. The King of Siluria

Murchison's View information board, top of Wren's Nest Hill

Directions 6

Continue on the gravel footpath and stop when you reach entrance to the Seven Sisters Mine. Listen to Track 7.

7. Quarrymen in the cavern

Entrance to Seven Sisters Mine

Directions 7

Continue along the footpath until you reach an interpretation board with a view of Marsh's Quarry below and rows of residential houses in the distance. Listen to Track 8.

8. Fossil hunt

View over Marsh's Quarry

Directions 8

Take the path left down the steps and go into the bottom of the quarry. Follow the path bearing round to the left and stop by the green gate and information board in front of a large limestone cliff. Listen to Track 9.

9. Ripples through time

Ripple beds, Marsh's Quarry

Directions 9

Retrace your steps but instead of going back up the hill by the quarry, continue on the path below it until you reach a road with the Old Caves pub on your right. Cross over the road to the footpath on the other side and stop just after the entrance to Mons Hill. Listen here to Track 10.

10. Natural recovery

Mons Hill

Directions 10

Continue along the path through the wood, bearing right where a path leads off until you reach a junction where a path comes down some steps from your right. Turn left here and continue down some steps to a road. Turn left onto the pavement of Parkes Hall Road. Cross Wren's Nest Road and Pool Street and then take the path immediately across the road. Stop when you have a view of the reservoir to your right. Listen to Track 11.

11. Water to the people

Parkes Hall Pool

Directions 11

Continue along the side of the reservoir until you reach the corner where the path turns right. Leave the reservoir by taking the footpath through a gap in a wall into a field. Turn right and cross the field to a road. Cross Tipton Road carefully and follow the footpath left for about 150 metres. Turn right into Brook Street and continue downhill past The Brook pub, then uphill and around a bend to your left. Turn left into Turls Hill Road and stop just before a gate by a bridleway. Listen to Track 12.

12. The old ways

Turls Hill Road and Hurst Hill Wood

Directions 12

Continue to the end of the bridleway (ignoring the path to the right). Just before a white gate onto the road, turn right onto a footpath along a stone wall. Follow this until you reach a main road. Turn left and immediately right into Beacon Lane past the Beacon Hotel and Sarah Hughes' brewery. Continue uphill past a radio mast and stop by a round brick tower. Listen to Track 13.

13. Sandstone signal

Sedgley Beacon

Directions 13

Do not take the surfaced road downhill but take the grassy footpath along the ridge of the hill. Stop when you reach a flat plateau near some picnic benches with fantastic panoramic views. Listen to Track 14.

14. West Midlands panorama

Beacon Hill Quarry

Directions 14

Retrace your steps back to the beacon and follow the surfaced path downhill until you reach a concreted area. Take the path through the green fence downhill and head towards two houses (one with a dark gabled roof with white V-shape). Emerge into a field and exit over a stile by a wooden gate onto Wolverhampton Road just up from the bus stop. Listen here to Track 15.

15. Limestone legacy

Greenleighs bus stop, Wolverhampton Road

Directions 15

To return to the centre of Dudley take the number 1 bus from this stop.

Credits

The RGS-IBG would like to thank the following people for their assistance in producing this Discovering Britain walk:

Mike Jackson FRGS for creating the walk and providing photographs

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Caroline Millar for producing the walk materials, providing photographs and editing audio files

Rory Walsh for editing the walk resources

Wolverhampton Art Gallery and **Dudley Museum and Art Gallery** for kind permission to reproduce images from their collections

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Further information

The Black Country Geological Society

www.bcgs.info

Black Country History

<http://blackcountryhistory.org>

Black Country Living Museum

www.bclm.co.uk

Dudley Canal Trust

www.dudleycanaltrust.org.uk

Dudley Museum and Art Gallery

www.dudley.gov.uk/see-and-do/museums/dudley-museum-art-gallery

Geology Matters

<http://geologymatters.org.uk>

Wolverhampton Art Gallery

www.wolverhamptonart.org.uk/visit/wolves

Wren's Nest National Nature Reserve

www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/environment/countryside/nature-reserves/wrens-nest-nnrwrens-nest-nnr/

Friends of Wren's Nest National Nature Reserve

www.friendsofwrensnest.org.uk/index.html

Wren's Nest Fossils

www.wrensnest.ukfossils.co.uk

The Guardian – Britain's best views: Dudley canal tunnels

(Video: 5 minutes 19 seconds)

www.theguardian.com/travel/2011/feb/03/dudley-black-country-canals-fossils

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