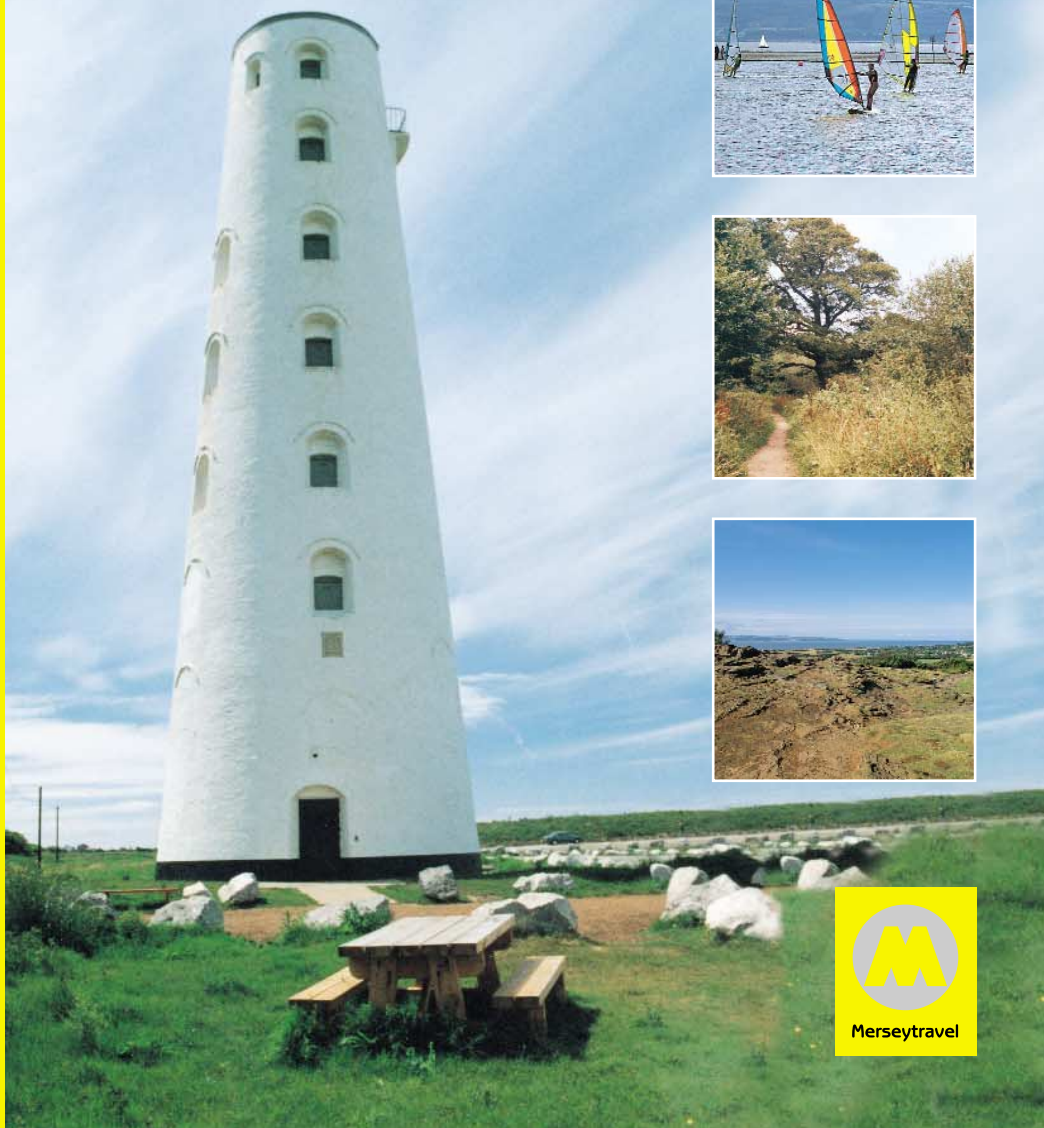


Walkabout

MERSEYSIDE COAST & COUNTRY



The Wirral



Walkabout

MERSEYSIDE COAST & COUNTRY

Whatever the time of year, a walk in the Wirral holds a promise of something new, migratory birds on the wing, the changing seasons of the commons and woodland, and sunsets over the Dee to remember on the journey home.

The Wirral coast and countryside is ideal for a break. Miles of seashore and inland walks across heaths, commons and woodland to entice you back, time and again, on your local train or bus.



Thurston Common (Walk 4)

Merseyrail's Wirral Line brings the Wirral peninsula within easy reach for everyone. Only a few minutes by train from central Liverpool, it's the ideal choice for a day or half day outing. There is also an excellent network of local bus services which make the Wirral easy to get to every day of the week.

Here are five possible walks suggested by Wirral rangers. The walks are easy going and low on mileage but full of interesting things to see and fine views. They're good fun for all the family and make a great little outing in Autumn and Winter too. Wrap up well!

Each walk introduces a part of the Wirral coast or a well known inland area featuring a local common or country park.



Walk 1 Dibbinsdale & St Patrick's Well

A peaceful walk in Merseyside's oldest woodland, also passing through great reed-beds, wildflower meadows and visiting St. Patrick's Well, once blessed by Ireland's Patron Saint.

See page 4.

Walk 2 Mockbeggar Trail

Passing by a restored 18th Century beacon lighthouse at Leasowe, the walk runs between reed fringed pools and wild flower meadows to formidable sea defences where migratory birds can be seen during the Autumn and Winter, continuing to Meols by way of Dove Point.

See page 6

Walk 3 Red Rocks Trail

A very pleasant coastal walk to Red Rocks and through the thriving dunes at Red Rocks Marsh Nature Reserve before reaching the sands of West Kirby, where there are good views of the Dee estuary and the Hilbre Islands Local Nature Reserve, one time haunt of smugglers.

See page 8

Walk 4 Thurston Common

A contrasting walk from Royden Park to Thurston Common, land used for grazing throughout the centuries. You climb Thurston Hill for excellent views across the Dee estuary to Wales before returning to the Visitor Centre.

See page 10.

Walk 5 Heswall Dales

A walk to Heswall church and to the Wirral Country Park, a haven for wildlife between Hooton and West Kirby. Leave it to climb the heathland of Heswall Dales, a Local Nature Reserve with exceptional views over to Wales.

See page 11.

The Wirral Peninsula



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These walks are probably unsuitable for wheelchair users due to adverse surface conditions and restricted access.

This information can be provided in alternative formats on request.

The walks described in this booklet have all been specially selected because they can be reached easily by public transport.

Merseyrail's Wirral Line network, with services from Liverpool and Birkenhead to West Kirby, New Brighton, Hooton and Shotton make the Wirral peninsula accessible from all parts of Merseyside. The area is also well served by buses. The full Merseyrail Network is shown on the map on the back cover.

For further information on rail, bus and ferry services phone the **Traveline** on **0870 608 2 608** or visit your local Merseytravel Centre.

Walk 1 - Dibbinsdale & St Patrick's Well

Start and Finish: Spital Railway Station (Wirral Line, Chester or Ellesmere Port trains)

Walking time: 1¾ hours

Distance: 2½ miles / 4 km

A nature reserve, peaceful woods and meadows strung along the valley of the Dibbin Brook, a place once blessed by St. Patrick.



St. Patrick's Well

Walk downhill from Spital Station, cross the road and turn right into Vanderbyl Avenue. At the end take the footpath for Brotherston Park, following the path through the woods of Dibbinsdale Nature Reserve. Keep left at a junction, cross the footbridge and bear left along the partly-surfaced path.

Beyond the stream and railings keep the low sandstone cliff to your right. As this fails, turn right along a wide path; St Patrick's Well is off to your left.



Bromborough Woods



Reed Beds

This was once the water supply for the village of Bromborough. Legend has it that in AD432 St Patrick visited the area and blessed the well, giving it curative powers!

Keep uphill, a brook down to your left. At the car park turn left to the lodge house. Turn right along the driveway and then right again to reach Woodslee Cottages and the Ranger's office.



Marford's Wood

The cottages were servants' quarters and stables for a now-demolished Victorian mansion built for a Liverpool shipowner, Donald McIver. Later the property was owned by the industrialist Lord Brotherton, who owned nearby chemical works. Harold Wilson, Prime Minister in the 1960s and 70s, spent his childhood here as his father worked for Brotherton.

Go through the gate for Woodslee Pond. As you reach it fork half-right (**not** the waterside path) through the



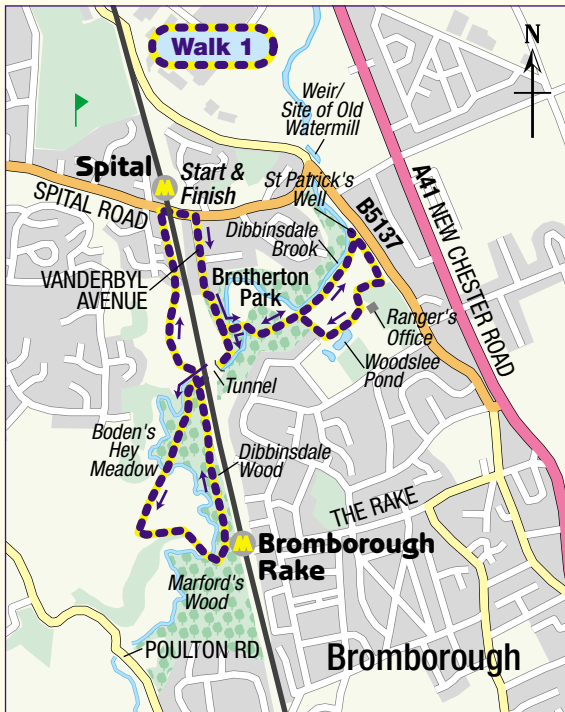
The path to Boden's Hey

woods to reach a viewpoint and bench. Walk downhill, then zigzag down to the valley floor path. Follow this left around to the footbridge crossed earlier, cross this and in 50 yards go left along a path through the reeds to a long, dark tunnel beneath the railway. Once through this, go left and up the long flight of steps on your left. At the top turn left, passing benches to find a gravelled path.

Across the valley is Dibbinsdale Wood, the largest tract of ancient woodland (that is, continually wooded for as long as 10,000 years) in Merseyside. None of the trees are much over 150 years old, however! The old meadows in nearby Boden's Hey have only been mown occasionally since the 1940s and are amongst the best wildflower meadows in the region (best in early summer).

Walk along the lip of the deep valley. Keep left at the fork near houses and descend the steps to a point near a wide sleeper-bridge across Dibbin Brook. Don't cross it; instead continue ahead across the foot of Boden's Hey meadow, bearing left at the far end to cross a footbridge. To cut short your walk climb the wide steps to Bromborough Rake Station (about 300 yards). Otherwise turn left to follow the path through the woods just above the brook.

The great variety of trees is home to countless small birds all year round. Larger birds include jays, greater spotted and green woodpeckers, living amidst the



massive beech, oak and chestnut trees that line the walk and dot the valley side. In late April and May the woods have a magnificent show of wildflowers - bluebells, celandine, anemones and dogs mercury are common.

At the main path junction keep right, within about 300 yards reaching the tunnel. Just before this, climb the long flight of steps again, but this time keep ahead at the top. Keep right of the climbing frame and along the edge of the pasture for another 150 yards to find a narrow path to the right (just past the low logs). Wind with this between housing and the railway back to Spital Station.

Walk 2 - Mockbeggar Trail

Start: Moreton Merseyrail Station

Finish: Meols Station

Walking Time: 1½ hours

Distance: 3 miles / 5 km

From Moreton rail station go right along Pasture Road towards the coast. At the bridge over the Birket, cross the road and follow the public footpath along the right bank of the stream to Lingham Lane.



Leasowe
Lighthouse

This delightful path, brushed by water loving plants, allows an unusual view of Leasowe Lighthouse, built in 1763 as a beacon to seafarers in those early times. It is now a visitor centre for the North Wirral Coastal Park which is open to the top on 'Lighthouse Open Days'.

At Leasowe Common turn left to walk past the lighthouse towards the sea and 200 metres beyond,



One of North Wirral's sandy beaches



Along The Birket

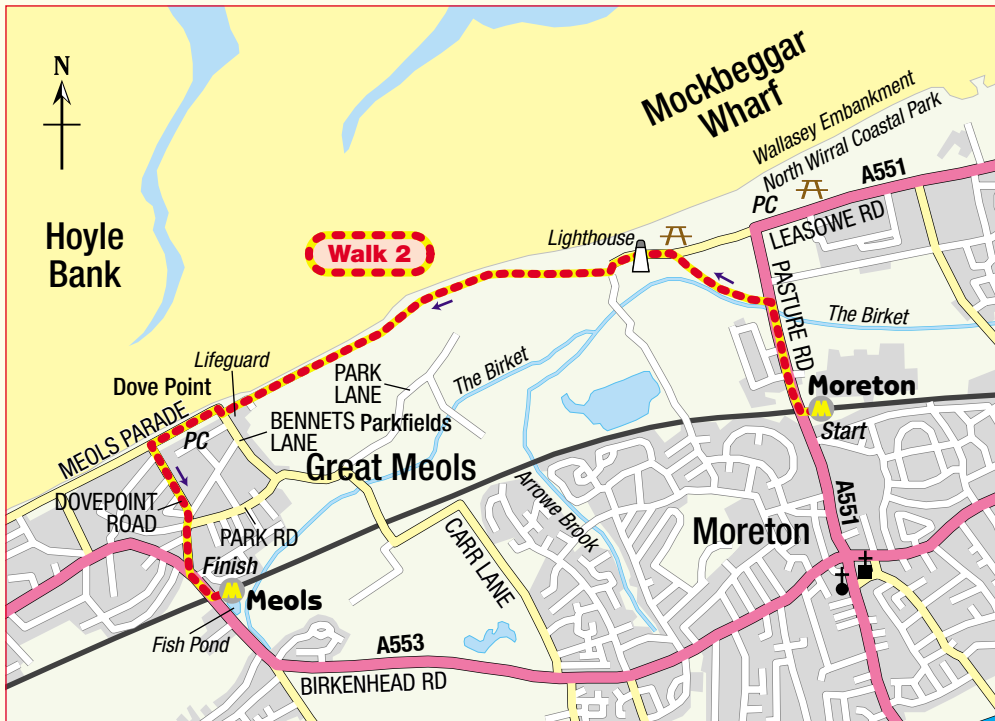
take the public bridleway on the right (not the footpath).

This runs through a conservation area where special protection is afforded to wildlife. Heading in the direction of the sea wall, there are several shallow ponds and reed beds on the left which attract frogs, newts, and all manner of water beetles. On the right is grassland and wild flower meadows which lead up to the sea defence itself, built to protect the Wirral from flooding in times of high tides and storms.

The bridleway now follows the rear of the sea wall. However, where the bridleway turns sharply left you should follow the route straight ahead and up to the embankment.



Shrimping boats at Dove Point



Dove Point Anchorage

From here you can see the North Wirral Foreshore Site of Special Scientific Interest, a section of coast which is alive with migratory birds between September and April each year. There are also known remains of a submerged 5,000 year old forest here, flooded by the sea as the climate has changed.

Walk along the top of the bank, where there are fine views across Liverpool Bay. At the end of the Wallasey Embankment stands the Life Guard Post and Dove Point slipway, a popular place for launching and mooring boats.

You now leave the North Wirral Coastal Park to walk along Meols Parade for approximately 300 metres. Then, turn left into Dovepoint Road which in 800 metres joins Birkenhead Road (A553) near Meols Station.



Shrimpers



Marsh Orchids

Walk 3 - Red Rocks Trail

Start: Hoylake Merseyrail Station

Finish: West Kirby Station

Walking Time: 1½ hours

Distance: 2½ miles / 4 km

Please Note: This walk should not be attempted 1 hour either side of high tide.

From Hoylake Station walk across Station Road and keep ahead to cross Market Street by the roundabout, then follow The Kings Gap towards the seashore.

The road is said to have been named after King William III. In 1690 elements of his army were loaded onto ships on the sands near Red Rocks at low tide and sailed to Ireland prior to the Battle of the Boyne.

Once on the beach, turn left to walk the sands towards Hilbre Point where you should make a short detour (if tide and weather permit) to visit Red Rocks, also known as Bird Island.



'Lady of Hilbre' Lifeboat at Hoylake

Return to the mainland and put Hilbre Point to your left. Walk just past Stanley Road slipway (ice-cream van here in summer!) and then look on the left for a gap in the low dunes and a path off the beach. This shortly picks up a boardwalk into the dunes.



On the sands at Hoylake



Hilbre Point from Red Rocks Marsh Reserve

This whole area is the Red Rocks Marsh Nature Reserve, managed by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust. The thick reed-beds are home to the rare water rail and natterjack toad; a string of small ponds mean there's a good number of colourful dragonflies.



Marine Lake, West Kirby



Natterjack Toad

The boardwalk winds between the reed-beds and the dunes sheltering the Royal Liverpool Golf Course. Not far past the viewpoint (fine views to the Hilbre Islands and North Wales) and as the reeds recede, slip ahead-right onto a wide path at the edge of the dunes. You'll soon reach Dee Lane slipway and the Marine Lake in West Kirby, often bustling with dinghies, surfboarders and canoeists.

The Hilbre Islands can be seen across the sands, these are cut off by the tide at high water for up to 5 hours. The Islands have been inhabited throughout the ages, and there are still five private residences, although the only permanent home is that of the Ranger.

It is possible to visit the Islands at low water and the most enjoyable way is to join one of the guided walks. Parties of 5 or over need a permit from Wirral



Main Island, Hilbre

Country Park before visiting. Contact the Rangers on 0151-648 4371 for details. Take note of the tide times and other information posted on the board near the Marine Lake.

Make your way along Dee Lane past the supermarket to West Kirby Station in the centre of the town.

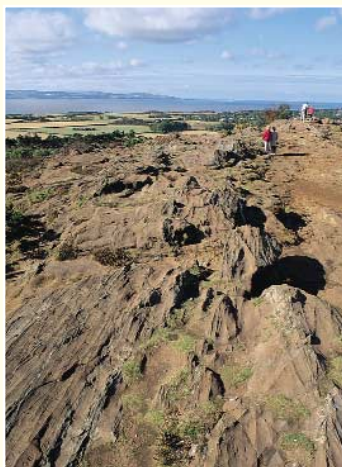
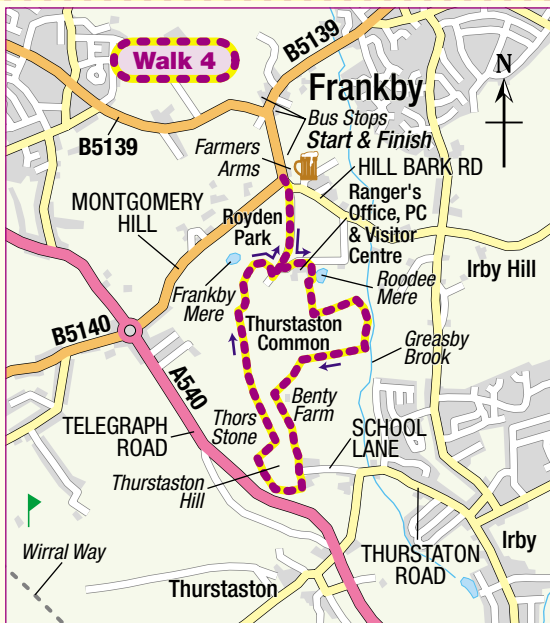
Walk 4 - Thurstaston Common

Start and Finish: Bus stops by the Farmers Arms, Frankby*

Walking Time: 2 hours

Distance: 3½ miles / 5.5 km

From the Farmers Arms take the drive into Royden Park. Keep left of the toilet block and Ranger's Office to find the miniature railway. Roodee Mere is on your left. Keep left at the sign for Irby Hill. Beyond the elevated railway, go ahead into Thurstaston Woods, picking up the line of a wall on your left. Turn right just before the plank bridge and keep Greasby Brook on your left.



The Dee Estuary from Thurstaston Hill

At the rustic bench, fork right to a kissing gate. Take the wide path across the heath to an unusual handgate. Turn left to go through two kissing gates and past Benty Farm. Where the electricity wires cross the gravel lane, take the narrow path directly beneath them to find a kissing gate at a road corner. Take the steps opposite and climb to the top of Thurstaston Hill. From here may be magnificent views across the Dee to Wales and north to the Lake District's mountains.



Thor's Stone in Winter

Take the bedrock path to the right of the plinth and behind the benches. Just a few paces past an obvious, high step-down on this path, fork right along a path through the trees to reach Thor's Stone, a prominent outcrop. Turn sharp-left here past a pond to reach another outcrop. Go straight across this (nb, not left), and two subsequent outcrops to reach a stone pillar and sleeper bridge. Keep ahead on the main path, past an occasional boundary stone to a gap in a wall.

Head for the imposing Hill Bark House, the half-timbered, former Bidston Court moved here by the wealthy Sir Ernest Royden. Follow the path in front of it, winding with this through the rhododendrons to a woodland-edge carriage road. Turn right to the car park near the Ranger's Office. Turn left to return to the Farmers Arms.



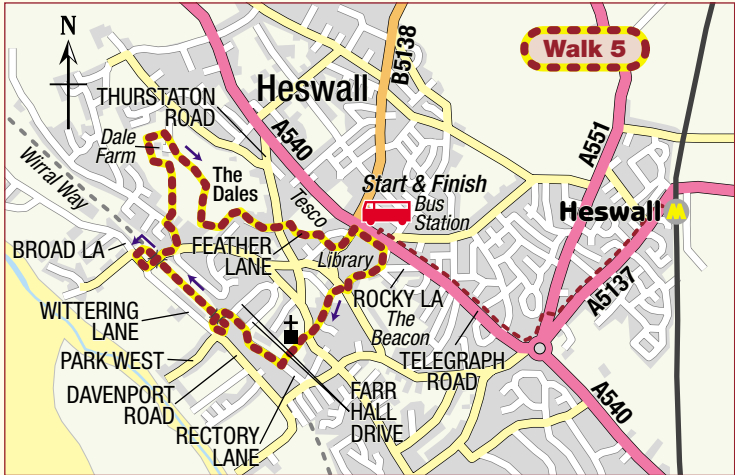
Walk 5 - Heswall Dales

Start and Finish: Heswall Bus Station*

Walking Time: 1½ hours

Distance: 3 miles / 5 km

Cross to the library from the bus station and walk up the right side to the Jug & Bottle pub. Turn left to Rocky Lane and right along this. Cross to the War Memorial and take the railed path down to School Hill. Turn left down this and at the Black Horse pub, cross into the churchyard opposite.



Take the path to the left of the church, down through the graveyard to the rough Rectory Lane and turn right. This reaches Farr Hill Drive; keep left to cross a bridge. At the junction, look left for the way onto The Wirral Way footpath and join this disused railway. Some 150 yards beyond the second bridge go left at the sign for Banks Road. Turn left, loop round over the bridge and go uphill to Pipers Lane. Turn left along this.

In 600 yards fork right up Oldfield Drive. Opposite Heathside, go right through the stile and up the narrow path into Heswall Dales.

Go straight over a cross path, climbing gradually through scrubby woodland. Go through the gate at the top and turn right along the rougher lane. At the bend go left back into The Dales. Pass an information board and stay on the wide sandy path. Fine views open out across the Dee Estuary.

Remain with this path, marked by blue waymark discs. Go down a series of widely-spaced steps. As a bungalow comes into view, go through the gap in the railed fence, left and trace this path to a junction by a slab bridge. Then turn right to reach Thurston Road. Cross and take FP14, opposite. Keep right at the bollards and walk through to steps near Tesco's. Go right, through bollards and along rough Feather Lane. Turn left up the tarred road, then right to find the bus station.



Fine views over the Dee Estuary

* For information about how to get to the Farmers Arms near Frankby (Walk 4) and Heswall Bus Station (Walk 5) by bus, phone the **Traveline** on **0870 608 2 608**. Alternatively on Walk 5 you can walk from Heswall Rail Station to the start of the walk near the Bus Station (see map).



When walking through the countryside, you are reminded to follow the countryside code which can be viewed on www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk/countryside_code

Every care has been taken in ensuring the accuracy of the details given in this publication, but neither Merseytravel nor their agents can be held responsible for any inconvenience arising from errors or omissions.

